

Factors influencing the level of commercialization among smallholder cassava farmers in Taita-Taveta and Kilifi Counties, Kenya

Amos Nyangira Tirra^{1*}, Willis Oluoch-Kosura¹, Hillary Nyanganga¹ and Agnes W. Mwang'ombe²

¹Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.

²Department of Plant Science and Crop Protection, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.

Received 1 June, 2019; Accepted 11 July, 2019

Commercialization of farm produce is a decision made at the household level. However, the decision is influenced by different socio-economic and institutional factors which in turn affect the level of commercialization. Therefore, cassava farmers in Taita-Taveta and Kilifi counties participate in the market at different commercialization levels due to their difference in market orientation. The Household Commercialization Index (*HCI*) was used to categorize cassava farmers into four different commercialization levels. This study has been informed by the decision theory which is concerned with the reasoning underlying an agent's choices in the presence of options. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires from a sample of 250 smallholder cassava farmers. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and an Ordered Profit model was used to analyze the cassava commercialization levels. The results show that credit access, pest management, seed buying and area under cassava positively influence the level of commercialization while distance to the nearest market negatively influence the level of commercialization. Therefore, policy makers should initiate policies targeting the specified socio-economic factors in order to introduce incentives that will motivate smallholder cassava farmers to participate in cassava marketing at higher categories of commercialization level.

Key words: Cassava, commercialization, farmers, market, Profit.