

ABSTRACT

Finger millet has been an alternative form of sustenance for resource-poor farmers, especially in arid and semi-arid areas in Kenya. However, lack of innovational improvement has often locked small producers into subsistence production and less commercialization. As a result, integration of smallholder farmers into finger millet output markets is still limited. Recently, research and development organizations facilitated the development of new innovations and market linkages for finger millet and other traditional crops for marginal areas in Kenya. But, little is known about the role of these innovations on finger millet commercialization. This study, therefore, sought to determine the level and factors that influence finger millet commercialization in the rise of innovation promotion. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a total of 384 smallholder finger millet farmers from Elgeyo-Marakwet County, Kenya. The household commercialization index was used to assess the degree of commercialization, while the double hurdle model was used to determine factors that influence market participation and intensity of participation. The mean household commercialization index was 0.33. The results of the study indicate that education, finger millet yield, finger millet crop area, contact with extension officers, integrated pest and weed management, improved finger millet variety, off/non-farm income and membership to finger millet group marketing were the major determinants of market participation. The study found out that many smallholder finger millet farmers are subsistence oriented. Thus, the study recommends that innovations that help farmers reduce market transaction cost could be promoted alongside yield-enhancing innovations to facilitate farmers' participation in output markets hence increased incomes and food security.

Keywords: Agricultural innovations, output commercialization, finger millet, smallholder