

ABSTRACT

The introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and trade liberalisation resulted in agricultural reforms in Kenya and other developing countries. Hence the Kenya government no longer gives incentives to small scale farmers. Therefore, the small scale farmers, extension service and the government at large have to look for all ways to increase maize production in the country, hence the study. Men and women both make significant contributions in maize-based farming systems and livelihoods, although gender roles in maize cultivation vary greatly across and within regions. Their contribution to agricultural work varies even more widely, depending on the specific crop and activity. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of Farmers' Gender on Factors Affecting Maize production among Small Scale Farmers in the Agricultural Reform Era: The Case of Western Region of Kenya. This is because maize is the main staple for most of the Kenyan population and Western Region is the food basket. The study used Ex-post facto research design via cross sectional survey. Busia, Bungoma, Mt. Elgon and Lugari Counties were purposively selected to represent the Western Region of Kenya. Two sub-counties from each of the four Counties were selected by simple random sampling. For uniformity purposes 200 small scale farmers were selected from focal areas through systematic random sampling hence ensuring that they all had been exposed to extension staff. Four key informants were sampled purposefully based on their positions of authority. In addition, 52 extension staffs were sampled through systematic random sampling. The small scale farmers were interviewed with the help of interview schedule containing open and closed ended questions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of the multiple regression illustrated that there was a statistically significant relationship between factors affecting maize production among small scale farmers (adoption of improved agricultural practices, attitude towards maize farming attitude towards farmer organizations and attitude towards opinion leaders) and farmers' gender. The results showed that the adjusted $R^2=0.090$, $F=3.830$ at $p < 0.01$ and $df=8$. The study recommended that the Kenya government, extension service and researchers should pay more attention to the women small scale farmers, who form a large percentage of the small scale farmers in the western region, yet produce less bags of maize in order for Kenya to be food secure. There was therefore need for further research to find ways of motivating women small scale farmers to increase maize production in the Western Region of Kenya.