

ABSTRACT

Background

Empirical evidence on the link between agrobiodiversity and dietary diversity appears to be inconclusive. Thus, there arises a need to determine other factors that could significantly influence dietary diversity in different agro-ecological zones, as factors may vary from region to region.

Objective

The objective of this study was to document the status of agrobiodiversity and dietary diversity and to assess the determinants of dietary diversity among women of reproductive age in two different agro-ecological zones of Rongai Sub-County in Kenya.

Design

A cross-sectional study of 384 women aged 18–49 years was conducted. Agrobiodiversity was measured using the Shannon-Wiener index, species richness (count) and production diversity score. A 24-hour dietary recall was used to determine minimum dietary diversity for women (MDD-W) of reproductive age.

Results

Although the level of agrobiodiversity was different between the low and high agro-ecological zones (using Shannon-Wiener index); the women's dietary diversity was not different ($p > 0.05$) between low (3.78 ± 0.99) and high potential areas (3.84 ± 1.05). In multivariate logistic regression, there was no association ($p > 0.05$) between agrobiodiversity indicators and dietary diversity across the two agricultural zones. Factors influencing MDD-W in two agricultural zones were different. In low potential areas, woman's education level positively determined dietary diversity, while in high potential areas household gender, woman's education level, woman's age and family size influenced MDD-W.

Conclusion

The proportion of women who met minimum dietary diversity was low. Although agrobiodiversity was different in the two agro-ecological zones, women's dietary diversity scores were similar. In low agricultural potential areas, only education level influenced women's dietary diversity while household gender, education level, age and family size were the important determinants in high agricultural potential areas. Therefore, it is recommended that nutrition interventions focusing on lessening malnutrition and improving dietary quality should pay special attention to differences in agro-ecological zones to develop region-specific interventions instead of generalizing interventions.

Keywords: Agro-biodiversity, agro-ecological zones, women's dietary diversity, determinants, rural Kenya

