

ABSTRACT

Maize is the main staple food crop in Kenya and is of vital concern to agricultural policy decisions, food security and overall development of the sector and the economy. It is also the dominant staple food crop in Kuria east sub-County. However, there has been a declining trend in maize production among farmers in the study area threatening household food security. This study was conducted in Kuria east sub-County using cross sectional survey research design and sought to achieve the following objectives: to determine the role of household level factors in influencing maize production in the study area; to determine the influence of environmental level factors on maize production; to examine the role of other agricultural land use practices on household maize production and to assessment of household food status and adoption of the mitigation measures used to overcome food shortage in the study area. A sample of 316 households was selected through stratified and systematic sampling techniques from Kegonga and Ntitaru divisions. Data was collected by use of pretested questionnaire and Key Interview Schedule. Key Informants were picked through purposive sampling method. Rainfall validated data for the period 2010-2014 was obtained from Kisii meteorological station while maize yield for the period 2010-2014 was collected from the Ministry of Agriculture office in Kuria east sub-County. Microsoft Office SPSS software, version 20 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze household level factors affecting maize production and the mitigation measures adopted by the farming households to curb food shortage. Data presented in this study support the following findings: household level factors have a significant influence on maize production, farming households have varied perceptions on environmental level factors and their effect on maize production; incomes received from sale of cash crops have greatly helped in the purchase maize, especially during periods of food shortage; the study area has adequate food which has been made possible by the adoption of a number of mitigation measures by households during food shortage. Based on these findings, although majority of the households in the study area have adequate food supply a small proportion is faced with food shortage. This calls for formulation of specific and elaborate policies to more effectively address food deficits at both household. The study thus made the following recommendations; there is need to encourage cash crops farmers to ensure that they use the income earned cash crop growing to purchase food stock. Farming households should be encouraged to engage in non-farm activities as an alternative source of income to help cushion and increase food assets during the period of food shortages.

Keywords

Maize crop production -- Small-scale farmers