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FOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Innovation platform for improving rice marketing decisions among smallholder farmers in Homa-Bay County, Kenya

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Abstract: Smallholder farmers are normally faced with making a decision on market participation and consequently choosing the appropriate marketing channel for their agricultural produce. This study focuses on how a multi-stakeholder innovation platform approach for improving the uptake of System of Rice Intensification and rice productivity influences marketing decisions among smallholder rice farmers. The study relies on primary data collected from 102 households in Homa-Bay County, Kenya. Logistic and multinomial logistic regression models were used in the analysis. The practice of system of rice intensification, membership to farmer groups, frequency of access to extension services, distance to the nearest market and access to transportation facilities were important determinants to market participation among farmers. A farmers' choice of marketing channel was commonly influenced by size of land under rice cultivation, access to transport facilities and whether rice was to be sold collectively or individually. We therefore conclude that the multi-stakeholder innovation platform approach improves decision making in marketing. We thus recommend that governments embrace multi-stakeholder Innovation Platforms as a framework for

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Ms Matilda A. Ouma is an agricultural extension and rural innovation specialist. Over the years she has done a lot of work in participatory technology development and dissemination. As extension scientists she has been involved in capacity building of farmers and stakeholders in various agricultural projects in many parts of Kenya. Over the years her research work has been in agriculture and rural innovation covering the following areas, effectiveness of Participatory Video in Learning and Dissemination of 'Push-Pull' Technology among Smallholder Sorghum Farmers, and Innovation Platforms for Market Development and Market-led Technology Adoption. Her current environmental orientation is research in climate smart technologies.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The fact that the Sustainable Development Goals are not to be met is not due to a lack of appropriate technologies or the lack of scientific expertise—but rather the very low rate of adoption of technologies. With this, we do not say that the scientific community is "off the hook" and we can blame the small scale subsistence farmer for their rather lethargic adoption rates—it is most probably our own limited understanding of the adoption/innovation process and the incentives for investment and production beyond the household's immediate needs. In this paper, we examine how decision-making in marketing can be improved through the multi-stakeholder innovation platform approach in the context of smallholder rice farming. Specifically, we explore how innovation platform activities such as trainings, extension reinforcement, improving market information and transport access and other activities influence rice market participation and choice of markets.