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INDIGENOUS LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION BY SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN LAKE VICTORIA BASIN, KENYA

Abstract

The developing world, Kenya included is already grappling with extreme climate related events and such events pose a serious threat to agricultural production and particularly to the smallholder farmers. In Kenya, about 11% of arable land could be affected by climate change, including a reduction in cereal production, which is about 16% of the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP). To avert this situation, adaptation to the effects of climate change is critical and of concern in developing countries particularly in Africa where vulnerability is high because the ability to adapt is low. However, a number of socioeconomic and culture specific factors of the farmer could be influencing the ability of the farmers to adapt to the effects of climate change. This informed the purpose of this study which investigated the influence of indigenous local knowledge on climate change adaptation by smallholder farmers in Homabay County, Kenya. The study employed cross-sectional survey design in which data was collected from smallholder farmers in one survey round. Quantitative data was collected from 398 smallholder farmers, while 48 key informant interviews and 12 focus group discussions were used to collect qualitative data to buttress information from farmers. Data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations and chi-square at 0.05 significance level. The study established that indigenous local knowledge influences individual values and choices of climate change adaptation strategies. The study recommended the need to document the indigenous knowledge indicators across communities and how it has been used in climate change adaptation at household level. The study also recommended integration of indigenous knowledge with modern scientific knowledge in climate change policy documents at national and county levels for appropriate climate change adaptation.

Key words: Indigenous local knowledge, climate change adaptation, smallholder farmers, Homabay County.

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