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FOOD SECURITY IN KENYA: AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS AND FOOD SHORTAGE ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES AMONG THE PRE-COLONIAL KIPSIGIS OF RIFT VALLEY PROVINCE

Food security is and has been a central issue of survival and existence in the history of mankind. This is more so in Africa in the last one century when the continent has experienced major agricultural disruptions as a result of colonialism, unprecedented population increase and the subsequent pressure on land; factors agricultural technology has not been able to match as the continent undergoes a major agricultural crisis. This paper seeks to provide historical insights on food security from the Kipsigis community in the Rift Valley to underscore the importance and resilience of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in tackling hunger in the pre-colonial period. It examines the variety of agricultural systems, the diversity on food production and the dynamic food processing and storage techniques in forestalling food scarcity. It also examines the broad social mechanisms of alleviating food shortages and famines. It is demonstrated that the Kipsigis pre-colonial agricultural systems were dynamic, innovative, diverse, efficient, self-reliant and suited to the needs of the peoples involved. It is argued further that the Kipsigis agricultural organization was sound and rational and based on the people's knowledge of environment. The paper laments the loss of such indigenous knowledge systems that could substantially alleviate the current food crisis not only among the Kipsigis but in Kenya at large.

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