



**Daphne Muchai** is currently working as a Manager with Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF) the National farmers Umbrella organization, at its Nairobi office where she is in charge of Institutional Development and Organization Strengthening (IDOS). She has completed a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Agricultural Resource Management from the University of Nairobi; she holds a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree in Agriculture from Kenya Methodist University and a Diploma in Agriculture and Home Economics from Egerton University. Her current portfolio entails mentoring and capacity building of farmer organizations, conducting action research to inform policy and for Lobby and advocacy, project design and implementation. Before joining KENAFF, She worked in various positions as an Extension officer in the Ministry of Agriculture.

#### **Thesis Title**

**An assessment of the banana supply chain in South Imenti, Meru County, Kenya**

#### **Thesis Abstract**

In Kenya, banana production is a major economic activity of the poor small-scale farmers majority of whom are women in the Western, Central, Eastern and Coastal regions. The production is gradually changing from subsistence farming to cash farming for the small-scale farmers with a potential to penetrate higher value markets. The marketing of ripening varieties is more challenging than for cooking varieties because of increased post-harvest losses during ripening. Such challenges hinder the supply chain from operating optimally in terms of value addition and marketing leading to low earnings to banana producers. The overall objective of this research was to assess the stakeholders' linkages at production level and to access the post-harvest challenges along Banana Supply Chain in Imenti Sub- County, Meru County. A situational analysis was carried out to assess factors contributing to post-harvest challenges faced by farmers and traders along the banana supply chain in South Imenti sub-County. A total of 132 respondents including; 90 farmers and 42 traders were sampled purposively and interviewed using semi- structured questionnaires in June 2013.

The study established that the key players in this supply chain are traders, some of whom also are the transporters, price takers, while the service

providers are mainly the Ministry of Agriculture officers. Actors' linkages, both horizontally and vertically, were generally weak among smallholder farmers limiting access to production and marketing information. The study established that of the farmers interviewed, post-harvest losses ranged between 15 percent and 30 percent. The analysis revealed that main challenges contributing to post-harvest losses were products developing unacceptable qualities such as color and texture due to over ripening, inappropriate post-harvest handling techniques, and lack of structured / organized market for harvested produce, inconsistency in production as a result of reliance on rainfall. Banana producers had an opportunity to increase their bargaining power for better payment of their produce if they embrace collective marketing as a strategy. There was also a ready market of harvested produce since the marketing days per location are already set. Value addition was limited as most produce was sold at farm-gate where some farmers were paid even before the bananas attained two-thirds maturity. The social-demographic characteristics of farmers and traders were that most were 40 years and below, most had not attained tertiary education level, most were smallholders with limited farm acreage and gender based roles and resource ownership discouraged post-harvest handling technology adoption.

To effectively respond to the post-harvest constraints facing banana production and trade, current interventions need to be re-assessed to ensure they are appropriately oriented to meet farmers' needs. There is need to enhance the farmers' capacity to operate in groups to improve their bargaining power and also for them to access inputs cheaply as a group. The study therefore recommends that the service providers in the banana supply chain in Imenti South should capacity build the farmers to form groups for input and output markets, introduce new varieties that meet market demand and invest in value addition and processing opportunities for improved incomes for banana production.