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Thesis Title

AN ANALYSIS OF FARMERS' AWARENESS OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DEVOLUTION AND PREFERENCES FOR PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROGRAMS IN KENYA

Thesis Abstract

In Kenya, agricultural extension has suffered various shortcomings including inadequate farmer involvement in development and designing of extension programs. The County governance system in Kenya devolves agricultural sector to lower administrative levels with the aim of bringing services, such as extension service closer to the people. Lack of empirical evidence on farmers' preferences for agricultural extension programs (AEP) limit policy making on demand-driven extension. The study analyzed farmers' awareness of agricultural extension devolution and analyzes willingness to pay (WTP) for AEP by farmers in high and low potential agricultural zones of Meru County in Kenya. Primary data were collected through household surveys using a structured questionnaire. A binary logit model was employed to assess the possible determinants of the level of farmer awareness of agricultural extension devolution. Further, farmers' preferences for various AEP scenarios were estimated using a random parameter logit (RPL) model.

Results show that the awareness level of agricultural extension devolution is about 44 percent. Farmer and farm factors found to influence awareness include attendance to farmer field days, tenure security, income and education. The findings also show that farmers prefer an extension program, which focuses on the agricultural activities they engage in at the county level; where linkage support between the research, extension and farmers is provided; and regular monitoring and evaluation of the program is scheduled. However, farmers would like to be paid for their participation in developing the content of extension programs. Education, source of market information and tenure security were found to be the main sources of farmers' preference heterogeneity between the two zones. These findings have important policy implications for the design of AEPs for different categories of farmers.

