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Determinants of Access to Breeding Services by Smallholder Dairy Farmers in Kenya

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Abstract

Smallholder dairy farming is considered one of the most important activities in the agricultural sector in Kenya. It is a source of income and livelihood for up to 800,000 smallholder farmers who supply for more than 50% of the total milk output. There are several factors that influence farmers' access to various livestock services. It is therefore important to isolate these factors and identify intervention strategies that enhance service accessibility. The objective of this study was therefore to examine the determinants of smallholder dairy farmers' use of breeding services in Kenya, taking the case of Nyandarua and Kiambu counties. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 140 randomly selected respondents. The breeding services considered were artificial insemination (AI), natural bull service, and a combination of AI and bull services. A multinomial logit econometric model was used, fitting AI as the base category. There was a negative relationship between higher levels of education, herd size, and location and the use of bull service. However, education, herd size and credit were positively related to the combined option. The results indicate that uptake of AI services after the liberalisation of the sector is influenced by other factors besides costs-related factors. Factors such as accessibility of breeding services and product markets influenced the farmers' decision to choose among the available breeding services. The effectiveness of the breeding services in terms of successful conception also played a big role in the choice. A need for concerted efforts to increase farmers' knowledge on utilisation and effectiveness of available breeding services is imperative.

Keywords: Access, breeding services, Kenya, smallholder farmers