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“Resilience of agricultural systems against crises”

## Crop Production and Livelihood Strategies in Solio Village 3, Nyeri District, Kenya

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### Abstract

This Sustainable Land Use and Natural Resource Management (SLUSE) research project investigates the reconstruction of agricultural livelihoods in a young resettlement community known as Village 3 in a semi-arid area in the central highlands of Kenya. A majority of the villagers are formerly displaced people who were granted land as part of a resettlement scheme initiated by the Kenyan Government in 2007, after some twenty years of living as squatters. In order to better understand the constraints and needs of the resettled community as they begin to construct their new agriculture based livelihoods, the paper explores the importance of crop production compared to other livelihood activities, and the factors influencing farmers' decision-making. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods drawing from both social and natural science disciplines were employed to establish the livelihood activities the villagers are engaged in and how they regard the contribution of these activities to their livelihood strategies. Furthermore the study explored the existing crop cultivation practices and the role of culture, knowledge, property rights, climate, soil fertility, water availability, and access to markets, credit and inputs on the farmers' choice of crop production system. The results from the questionnaire survey, several interviews and a number of PRAs show that agriculture is the most important activity in Solio Village 3, although livestock, casual labour and small businesses are also prominent. Farmers are faced with constraints to their crop production, most notably the difficult climatic conditions, lack of financial capital, and lack of knowledge about the most suitable crops to grow. These factors influence their choice of crop production system, and they now focus on drought resistant crops such as beans, although they still try to cultivate traditional crops like maize. Most farmers are engaged in at least one other livelihood activity than agricultural production, a diversification strategy aimed at increasing their livelihood security.

**Keywords:** Crop production, livelihood strategies, resettlement