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Commercialisation of Smallholder Horticulture: Gender and Intra-Household Dynamics and Poverty Implications in Kenya

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Abstract

Commercialisation of agriculture is often associated with decline in women control even for previously women-managed crops such as vegetables. This in some cases has resulted in negative effects on household food and nutrition security and social gender relationship. The emerging drivers of commercialisation such as rural-urban migration, globalisation among others are expected to change further gender dynamics in agriculture commercialisation as demand for food increases and thus new market opportunities. Here, survey data of over 300 smallholder vegetable producers in selected regions in Kenya is utilised to access the gender roles in commercialisation of vegetables. Drawing from past studies on the disadvantages of women in commercialisation of agriculture, the study further assesses the constraints and determinants of women participation in commercialisation of vegetables. Further, using an empirical method underpinned by the bargaining household model, this study evaluates the impact of women control over production and revenues generated from horticulture on households' wellbeing. The results shows over 83% of the vegetable plots are owned by men. Men dominate in management of export market vegetables (average 55%), while women have a substantial share of management of domestically consumed vegetables (34%). Women have limited access to vegetable production and marketing trainings, to extension services, to agriculture credit and also to membership in farmer producer organisations compared to men. Men receive and manage a larger share of income derived from commercialised vegetable enterprises. Using empirical model that allows for possibility of endogeneity and self-selection, the study show that female participation in commercialisation of horticulture is positively influenced by individual female membership in farmer groups, younger age, education, high dependency ratio, large number of female adults in a household, female ownership of assets and female access to business. On poverty implication, instrumental variable (IV) regression estimates show positive effects of the share of female controlled income derived from domestically marketed vegetables on per adult equivalent asset. Policy implications focus on the need to integrate gender considerations in any agriculture commercialisation-led development strategy, including identification of commodity preferences and roles of men and women at different stages of value chains. Both men and women should be integrated in vegetable value chains and provided with gender training to prevent against negative intra-household effects from market development and commercialisation programs.

Keywords: Commercialisation, gender, horticulture, Kenya, poverty, smallholders