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Evaluation of Coping Strategies among African Leafy Vegetable Farmers in Kenya

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Abstract

Production and consumption of African leafy vegetable (ALVs) has a great potential in mitigating malnutrition as well as being a source of households income. However, production and marketing shocks have adversely made the vegetables to receive little attention in terms of their contribution to household poverty alleviation and food security. ALV producers in developing countries use different *ex-post* coping strategies such as asset accumulation, selling livestock, use of informal networks, seeking help from government, and increasing or shifting labour supply in response to such shocks. However, there is insufficient evidence as to why households choose a specific type of coping strategy. This study, therefore seeks to determine the factors affecting the choice and the extent of coping strategies to production and marketing shocks among smallholder ALV producers in Kenya. The study focuses on rural (Kisii, and Kakamega counties), and peri-urban (Nakuru, Kiambu, and Kajiado counties) areas, which represent different production potentials and proximity to urban centres. A semi-structured and pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect data from smallholder producers through face-to-face interview. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select 1232 respondents, which were subjected to a Heckman two-step selection model to determine the factors that influence the choice and extent of coping strategies among ALVs producers. The preliminary results showed that availability of water for irrigation, high-valued market access, individual land tenure and variable representing farmers whose main occupation was farming significantly and positively affected the likelihood to cope with production and marketing shocks while only age was significant with negative effect. With regard to extent of coping with production and marketing shocks, private land ownership, access to credit financial services, high-valued market access, and access to extension services were significant with positive effect while age was significant with negative effect. The conclusion is that the incentives and drivers that are deemed necessary for coping with production and marketing shocks among smallholder farmers needs to be enhanced and improved across all the producing areas. This study therefore recommends that government and other stakeholders should formulate and implement effective policies related to promotion of efficient ALVs production and marketing coping strategies.

Keywords: African leafy vegetables, coping, Kenya, marketing, production, shocks, strategies