Farmers' Baobab (*Adansonia digitata* L.) Knowledge and Utilisation Practices in Kilifi and Kitui Counties of Kenya: Implications for Designing Information and Training Interventions

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Abstract

The baobab tree has been used for centuries in different parts of Africa as a source of food and medicine and its exceptional nutritional properties are increasingly being recognised. In marginalised areas of Kenya where the tree can commonly be found, communities are yet to realise the full potential of this natural resource as a means to achieve food security and improve their living standards. A survey was therefore conducted in Kilifi and Kitui Counties of Kenya to assess community knowledge and training needs on baobab production and utilisation. Primary data was collected using predetermined questionnaires from a sample of 120 and 136 households in Kilifi and Kitui, respectively. The raw data was analysed using descriptive and inferential methods. The descriptive analyses revealed remarkable differences between both locations. While a majority of households (69.2 % in Kilifi and 87.5 % in Kitui, respectively) owned naturally occurring baobab trees on their land, the baobab pulp was used more in Kitui (80 %) compared to Kilifi (15 %) as an ingredient in food preparations. Baobab leaves were mainly used in Kitui as food (27.2 %); while >87 % of households in both areas did not use baobab oil. The majority of households (Kilifi 55 %; Kitui 76 %) owned below 10 baobab trees. Yet, most of these trees were not only actively managed as only 10 % and 5 % of the households in Kilifi and Kitui respectively undertook any baobab husbandry and management activities. There was generally very limited knowledge among farmers on the various products that can be derived from baobab, and their nutritional value; all this courtesy of inadequate agricultural extension services. The inferential analyses investigated the influence of various socio-economic characteristics (e.g., tree tenure, household food security status, presence of baobab traders etc.) on the farmers' knowledge about the baobab tree and their management and utilisation practices, as well as the association between knowledge and actual practices. The study derives recommendations and priorities for tailor-made education, awareness and capacity building interventions addressing local communities in both localities and beyond to make farmers appreciate the nutritional and economic value of the baobab tree and its products.

Keywords: Baobab products, information needs, Kenya, marginalised areas, training needs assessment

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