

A study of some socio-economic factors influencing roadside farming in Kikuyu and Limuru divisions Kiambu district

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This is a case study of roadside farming in Kikuyu and Limuru divisions, Kiambu district, Central Kenya. Roadside farming is an illegal activity involving the cultivation of food and fodder crops in addition to the grazing of animals on major road reserves belonging to the Government. The underlying objective of this study is to investigate some of the socio-economic factors motivating farmers to encroach on the road reserves and networks in order to establish roadside farm plots. Some basic concepts are reviewed and hypotheses and methods of data collection and problems encountered are elucidated. A background survey of the nature of the physical and human environments in which farmers base their decisions is provided, including the historical perspectives on land-population problems and transport and communication networks. The profile of roadside farmers and farm characteristics as well as the relationships between the attributes of roadside farming are presented. According to the Chi-square and regression analysis results, it is demonstrated that there are no significant relationships between: (a) Family size and roadside farm size; (b) Other legally-owned farms and roadside farm size; (c) Family income and roadside farm size; (d) Age of the roadside farmers and roadside farm size; (e) Distance between roadside farmers' residences and their farm plots; (f) Educational levels of the roadside farmers and the size of the plots owned. However, the factor analysis results yielded three factors including; financial gains attained from roadside farming, demographic factor and low family holdings which are used here to explain the existence of roadside farming in the study area. And, on the light of these findings, some policy implications and considerations are highlighted which could be implemented in an attempt to solve some of the roadside farmers problems. These are; land reform/redistribution, land resettlement, change of priorities in resource allocation towards rural areas, reduced population growths, provision of farm inputs and extension services and an improved physical planning of the local market centres in order to create better living conditions. In conclusion, it should be mentioned that roadside farming is a very controversial issue especially when considering the limited supply of the road reserves in relation to the ever increasing demand. Thus the livelihoods of the farmers can only be improved if the socio-economic problems are addressed to by policy makers and development planners.