

Household allocation of labor time in two types of smallholder farming systems in rural Kenya

The study analyzed the effects of gender and farming systems on time allocated to work by agricultural households in rural Kenya. A total of 289 participants were selected from Njoro and Kikuyu divisions. Spot observations, personal observations, questionnaires, and focus groups methods were used to collect data. Ecological zones influenced the amount of time allocated to work. Households in Njoro spent less time on work than households in Kikuyu. Females spent more time on household and agricultural work than males. Younger males spent more time in agriculture than females of the same ages. Female-heads were not different from other women on time they allocated to work. Respondents from female-headed households spent more time in agriculture and household production and less time in income generation than their counterparts from two-parent households. Presence of a husband in a household made members worked more hours doing household activities than when he was away. Age and educational attainment influenced the time females allocated to work. For males, the factors were age, educational attainment, type of family and the size of farm. For every additional year in age, females contributed increasing amounts of time to household and agricultural production while males' time decreased. To cope with bad weather and economic hardships, livelihood strategies such as reducing consumers, shifting members' maintenance responsibilities, increasing sources of income and depending on remittances were used. Men were conscious of their reduced time allocated to work in the home, acknowledged the role of women in agricultural production and allowed their spouses to make management and production decisions on their farms. Women were performing male designated chores, conscious of their roles in households subsistence, bias in traditional division of labor and its consequences and were seeking alternative solutions to manage the effects of emigration of men. Mothers were more liberal than fathers in allocating gender designated responsibilities to their children. Boys contributed more time to agriculture than male adults and even their counterpart females. Division of labor in the communities were based on relative power, social ideology, and moral economy.