

ROLE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTs) IN ACCESSING INFORMATION ON BEST AGRONOMIC PRACTICES AMONG SMALLHOLDERS TOMATO FARMERS IN KIRINYAGA COUNTY

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Abstract

Tomato farming is of a significant economic importance in Kenya as it is one of the key enterprises among small-holder farmers. However, despite the economic importance, the sector still faces numerous challenges. This includes agronomic challenges such as pests and diseases and physiological disorders, poor post-harvest technologies and institutional constraints such as lack of access to credit and poorly organized rural and urban market infrastructures that permit unpredictable price fluctuation. In order to deal with these challenges, farmers need to be able to access up-to-date information from relevant stakeholders such research institutions and the government. The use of information communication technologies (ICTs) such as internet sites and mobile phone technologies could be the solution in tomato production. Regardless of the advancement in the ICTs sector in Kenya, there is lack of empirical information on specific ICTs platforms being used by the smallholder tomato farmers to access information.

Therefore, the current study proposes to address this knowledge gap by analyzing the role of ICTs in accessing the best agronomic practices among smallholder tomato farmers in Kenya. To achieve this, the study will employ both qualitative and quantitative research design on a randomly selected sample size of 196 smallholder tomato farmers within Kirinyaga County, Kenya. The study will use Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate both descriptive mean, frequencies, percentages and standard deviation while inferential statistics will include Correlations and Chi square tests. A binomial logistic regression model will also be used to evaluate factors influencing the use of the ICT tools in accessing information on good agronomic practices. The information that will be generated from this study will be useful to relevant stakeholders such as tomato farmers, policy makers and other related government agencies that have interest in linking ICTs and agriculture.

Key words: Tomato, Smallholder farmers, Information Communication Technologies, Kenya