

Abstract

Fish contribute 7 billion shillings to the Kenyan economy annually and fish processing, value addition and marketing provide excellent opportunities for the development of Public-Private partnerships. Government intervention in fish farming in Kenya started in 1921 when the colonial government introduced trout, common carp and black bass into the country. Despite many government initiatives, fish farming has not been fully integrated with other farming systems and its contribution to the national economy is small. A study was done to characterize fish farming practices in Mwea Division of Kirinyaga County, in Kenya. Specific objectives of the study were to evaluate how social-economic and gender factors influenced fish production, and to explore the preliminary influence of the Fish Farming Enterprise and Productivity Program (FFEPP) on fish farming practices and production in Mwea Division. Over 80% of fish farmers in the division were recruited and funded through the FFEPP. Gender had a significant influence on fish management practices. Farmers funded through the FFEPP had larger ponds and stocked and harvested more fish than self-funded farmers while the latter group fertilized and drained their ponds more frequently. They also took less time to harvest (7.6 compared to 9.2 months) and harvested heavier fish (0.5 kg) than farmers under the FFEPP (0.27 kg). Most of the fish harvested were sold on the farm to neighbours, friends and family. All the extension officers sampled had at least a diploma and all of them indicated that they walked to meet farmers. The findings of this study are useful to policy makers, Ministry of Fisheries Development, Researchers and other stake-holders in Agriculture and Development