

Abstract

Production of horticultural products for export is a major cash cropping practice in Kenya which is ranked third in terms of foreign exchange earnings after tourism and tea. Available evidence in the debate of the impact of cash cropping systems on food security however shows mixed results. Different potential negative and positive impacts can be identified which vary with choice of cash crops and the situation in which they are being grown and marketed. To assess impact, food security was measured using per capita calorie intake, 7-day recall and propensity score matching method employed. Results indicate that export horticulture farming has a positive effect on food security status in Kirinyaga County but a negative effect in Mbooni County. Small holder farmers in Mbooni both growers and non-growers were consuming less than the recommended per capita calorie intake. The study recommends that policies aimed at encouraging smallholder farmers to participate in export horticulture farming should be promoted in Kirinyaga but further investigation to be carried out on the production and marketing conditions of export horticulture and food consumption behavior and intra household income distribution in Mbooni. A clear strategy to achieve food security should also be devised.