

THE GENDER IMPLICATIONS OF MEN'S SHIFT FROM CASH-CROP FARMING TO DAIRY FARMING IN CENTRAL KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Until the late 1980s coffee- and tea farming was considered a male role while dairy farming was reserved for women in central Kenya. However, the last two decades has witnessed a gradual shift from cash-crop farming to dairy-farming, thanks to low cash-crop prices. This has resulted in the reconfiguration of gender roles in the region, whereby men have abandoned *kahua* (coffee) for *Karia* (milk). Combining secondary and primary data collection techniques, this paper looks at the impediments to cash cropping in central Kenya and the dynamics behind this rural socio-economic reconstruction. The study shows that to perpetuate patriarchy, men can shift from 'masculine' economic activities into activities that are considered 'feminine'. The paper notes a rise in male involvement in agricultural activities especially food crops not only as a strategy of alleviating rural poverty but as a way of engendering agriculture in Kenya. On the other hand, this shift results in further economic marginalization of women. The paper recommends policies that would ensure women are not economically marginalized further when men encroach on traditionally feminine roles.

Key Words: *gender implications, cash-crop farming, dairy farming, Central Kenya*

Introduction

Agriculture has for a long time been central in economic development of Kenya. Indeed agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy. Over 80 per cent of the Kenyan population is largely dependent on agriculture for food and income- employment and general livelihood and agriculture contributes over 25 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 70 per cent to employment (Muriuki <http://www.ilri.org/infoserv/webpub/fulldocs/sout>). Kenya's development blue print aims at achieving increased productivity of crops and livestock (GRK 2007: 6).

In central province, the major cash crops are coffee and tea. Food crops have been milk, maize, beans and potatoes. However, coffee for a very long time has been the most important crop. Due to low payments, coffee politics and uncertainties in this crop particularly from 1990s; coffee production has been in jeopardy. Consequently, the dwindling coffee production has contributed

to an increase in poverty levels in the province. Population growth rate has also resulted into subdivision of land, with the small-scale farmers devoting larger proportions of their land to food crops rather than to coffee and tea. As a way of diversifying their economic base farmers have embarked on dairy farming and have now devoted sections of the land to Napier grass. This is out of the realization that by concentrating their efforts on a narrow range of crops, farmers place themselves at a risk if crops fail (Hall 1990:46).

This paper looks at the factors contributing to the impediments to cash cropping in central Kenya and the dynamics behind this socio-economic reconstruction with a focus on the coffee and dairy sectors in central province of Kenya. Central province is a rich agricultural zone. However, farmers in the area largely live in conditions of poverty. Farmers in central province like other Kenyan farmers produce both for local consumption and for export. Farmers in central province are involved in both large scale and small scale farming. Majority are in small scale farming. Dairy farming in Kenya is predominantly run by smallholders (Muriuki <http://www.ilri.org/infoserv/webpub/fulldocs/sout>)

Since independence, the growing of food crop has been affected by the overemphasis on the cash crop production for export. In the past, farmers have been encouraged to grow export crops such as coffee, and there is less emphasis on food crop production. This poses a threat to the food security in the country. The production of tea and coffee has been enforced by the government and it is illegal to uproot the tea and coffee even when the farmer does not benefit from the crops.

There is nothing in nature that ordains that African agriculture should be impoverished (Gakou, 1987: xi). However, the reality is that most peasants in Africa live in abject poverty. In his conceptualization of peasants in Africa, Klein (1980:11) says that peasants are:

1. Agriculturalists who control the land they work either as tenants or small holders.
2. Organized largely in household units which meet most of their subsistence needs.
3. Ruled by other classes, who extract a surplus either directly (rent) or through control of state power (taxes). Peasants do not sell their labour the way workers do. They must provide a part of their production to those who control the coercive machinery of the state.
4. Peasant culture is distinct from, but related to, the larger culture of the dominant group.

Contemporary peasantry is either totally or partly derivative from capitalism; or a capitalist structure characterized by capitalist relationship (Klein, 1980:222). Indeed, agriculture is viewed as the most stabilizing factor, even by farmers with off-farm jobs; most of them define themselves primarily as farmers. Indeed, taking up a job that has nothing to do with agriculture is only considered when profits are insufficient (Vera, 1990:26).

The rural poor in central Kenya include the small scale farmers, farm labourers, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, single parent-households particularly those headed by women, people with disabilities and the HIV-AIDS orphans. Women are particularly vulnerable because they do not

have an equal access to social and economic resources. For about 80 per cent of women, subsistence farming is the primary and often the only source of livelihood.

According to Chambers (1983:103) five interlocking disadvantages trap rural people in deprivation: poverty, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness. Rural poverty is because rural masses are not really integrated to the larger society and economy. The situation is either characterized by exploitation and isolation of the traditional economy from the modern sector (Higgs, J 1977:11).

We cannot deny the fact that small scale farmers are a vulnerable group. Included in the category of the vulnerable groups in rural areas are the small holder's food and cash crop producers. The vulnerability of the peasants arises due to the limited access to land and resources for intensive agriculture; geographical, environmental and climatic factors which condition their productivity and the varieties of crops they may produce. The smallholder and cash crop producers however have wider options due to the possibility of cash cropping. Beyond their own food production, they have access to market sources for cash incomes (Ochoro 1989:26). The objectives for rural development strategies thus include: agricultural production; better use of scarce resources; improved use of capital; creating employment opportunities; income redistribution; raising levels of living of the rural populations and participation at the community level (Higgs, J 1977:12).

Factors impeding Cash-Cropping (Coffee) in Central Kenya

Central Kenya is one of the regions in the country where coffee is grown in large-scale coffee plantations and in small scale by the peasant farmers. Coffee is the major cash crop grown in Central Kenya. The main variety of coffee grown in the region is arabica (*Coffea arabica*). *Coffea arabica* is said to have a superior taste and lower caffeine content compared to Robusta coffee (*Coffea canephora*). The grade of coffee is determined by the size of the bean where AA is largest followed by A and B.

The following variables are the indicators of the performance of the coffee sector in central Kenya:

Coffee payment for the beans delivered to the factory

Until early 1980s coffee farming was doing very well and there was a vibrant rural economy. From mid 1990s the government has paid farmers very low prices and in some cases, they have not been paid at all for coffee delivered to the factories. In response, farmers have neglected coffee and some of the farmers have gone to an extent of uprooting the crop-which is illegal. However, majority did not uproot but they decided to chop down the coffee plants and grow food crops in the farms. Coffee has ceased to be an important economic undertaking and instead become a liability. Most farmers in the region cannot show anything substantial earned from the coffee trees. Furthermore, coffee profits are not percolating down to the farmers (Mulama, 2006). They complain that they do not receive the rightful share of earnings, with the bulk going to millers and exporters. On the positive side, payment of farmers for their coffee has recently improved with Farmers being paid as high as Kshs 61 per kilogram in Gikanda farmers' co-

operative society in Nyeri County, thanks to high global demand- spurred by the spread of café culture to emerging powers such as India (Gitonga 2011). There is however lack of regular remittance of these payments. Whenever they come, it is after a protracted period.

Coffee Spraying for Coffee Berry Disease

Coffee is affected by diseases such as the leaf rust and the Coffee Berry Disease (CBD). The coffee plants are also attacked by many insects at different stages. Some farmers now spray coffee to protect it from CBD. This had stopped, as farmers cannot put their money in the crop without being sure of the returns. Some of the farmers are also using insecticides to manage black ants. A lot still need to be done to protect the trees from diseases that could easily be managed if the farmers were to be financially empowered.

Mixing coffee with other crops

Farmers are growing food crops alongside coffee. They no longer have full trust in the coffee sector. Majority grows beans, maize and potatoes in the coffee farms. Some farmers also grow Napier grass on the coffee farms as they have found milk production to be more profitable.

Coffee and politics

The public seems sensitized on the misuse of their money by politicians. For instance, the giant Gatukuyu coffee co-operative society in Thika district of Kiambu county has for a long time been controlled by one politician whose accountability is suspect. Farmers throughout central Kenya complain that there have been coffee wars which in some cases have resulted to death of some farmers who were vocal against political meddling. Definitely, coffee is a major issue in the local politics of central Kenya. Farmers are now more politically enlightened, more informed, and they are suspicious of politicians who have exploited them in the past.

Coffee transportation

Generally, the state of the roads is bad. Farmers complain that, though the major roads have received some murrum carpeting, the feeder roads have been neglected. Compounding this is the shortage of factories, which makes them walk long distances to deliver the coffee beans.

Coffee brokers

There are reported cases of brokers who buy coffee directly from the farmers. Some farmers prefer the brokers because they pay cash on delivery. The brokers move around the villages in pick-ups and bicycles collecting the coffee. Some of the farmers prefer them because of the distrust they have for factories. The problem however is that the brokers encourage coffee theft in the farms. In addition, it becomes difficult for the farmer to consolidate the coffee earnings because the brokers pay cash on collection.

Uprooting of coffee

There are incidents where farmers have uprooted the coffee. However, majority simply neglected the crop without uprooting. They did this in the hope that they would revive the crop once the prices got better. Nevertheless, some farmers are planting new seedlings to replace the uprooted and the withered. They prefer the *Ruiru 11 breed* because it is disease resistant and has a higher output.

Application of fertilizers and manure

Farmers are not willing to spend their money on buying fertilizer for coffee. They would rather buy fertilizers for the food crops particularly maize. Most farmers prefer to apply manure on the sections of their land where they plant food crops. It is only after they have applied the manure on those parts of the land that they use the manure on the coffee farm.

Youth and coffee production

The youth are not supportive of the coffee production. The young people have seen their parents being exploited by taking coffee to factories, which they are never paid for. Secondly, coffee is bulky and it is the young people who are expected to deliver it to the factories. Added to this, the picking of coffee is mostly done by the young people. They are expected to pick the coffee without payment as the coffee belongs to the family- specifically the father who is the head of the family. However, the young people particularly those out of school see this as a form of exploitation by their parents. Parents are no longer keen to subdivide land and give to their sons. As a result the young people are not interested in coffee farming. Due to idleness and unemployment some of the youth have run into drinking of illicit brews and others have joined the *mungiki* sect for survival.

There are concerns in the coffee sector as the generation of coffee farmers mostly aged 55 years thins out due to attrition. There are fears in coffee growing areas and in government circles that most farms may become unproductive when the old men who have been driving the sector die (Gitonga 2011).

Coffee and gender

Traditionally, coffee has been a man's crop. This is in line with the traditional discrimination of women in property ownership. There was a perception that if women were allowed to own property they can become irresponsible and rude to their husbands (Onsongo *etal* 2006:91). Men mostly do the pruning of excess twigs off bushes although women are gradually getting involved. The crop generally benefits men in the area as payments go directly to their accounts. Most of them never inform their wives when the money is paid. The burden of picking coffee is in women and "their" children. This has always made women apathetic towards coffee and they have in the past concentrated more on food crops and dairy farming, which are seen as feminine crops. This is a big threat to the cash cropping as women who do the weeding concentrate on the food crops ignoring the coffee. While women have concentrated on the food crop, men have

always had more interest in coffee arguing that whenever there is shortage of rain, food crops would such as maize would fail but they would always harvest some coffee. It is also easier to save money got from coffee as it is mostly sent to the bank and is paid lump-sum unlike payments for food crops, which are difficult to consolidate. Women mainly benefit from coffee only when it is pruned, as it is their major source of firewood. The proceeds from coffee have also contributed to family crises as farmers resort to extra marital sex activities during the so-called coffee boom which are however rare. Commercial sex workers migrate to the neighbouring urban centers and this poses danger to the rural women and men because of the exposure to HIV-AIDS.

Coffee and child labour

Available statistics show that the incidence of child labour is relatively higher in developing countries. For instance, it is estimated that about 41 per cent of all children in Africa between 5 and 14 years old are involved in some economic activity (ANPPCAN, 2005). Child labour is not child work. Child work is all that work that all of us do to prepare for future roles. It is part of socialization. Child labour on the other hand is work that denies the child the process of being a child. It pushes the child into premature adulthood. It makes children to do what adults are supposed to do. It deprives children the opportunity of schooling, it is exploitative, denies children the opportunity to be children and makes them assume adults' roles prematurely. They work in hazardous conditions and they are paid very little (Ngunjiri, 1998).

Child labour in Kenya is most prevalent in the agricultural sector especially in the tea and coffee sectors. In the Central Kenya of Central Province, coffee and tea farms significantly utilize child labour. Some parents in the region even withdraw their children from school during the coffee picking seasons to accompany them mostly into the plantations and also in the smallholder farms in order to increase output.

Diminishing acreage under coffee

The problem of coffee farming is compounded by the diminishing acreage under coffee due to subdivision of land as population grows and competing activities that push cash into the pocket much faster than coffee (Gitonga 2011). In addition development of real estate has cut the acreage under coffee in traditional growing parts of central Kenya.

The Shift from Coffee to Dairy Farming in Central Kenya

Farmers in Kenya are currently trying to rehabilitate the dairy farming which since independence has provided an important source of livelihood to the farmer at the grass root level. Kenya's dairy sub sector is already changing: a buoyant market for dairy products offers producers an opportunity to increase their income and an incentive to invest in new technologies. In response, market-oriented institutions are evolving and private-sector service providers are stepping into the arena. However, market development is more advanced in some areas than in others,

providing an opportunity to gain insights into the process of change by comparing more- and less-developed areas (Schreiber: 2002).

Although decisions on whether and how to innovate ultimately rest with farmers, other individuals and organizations provide farmers with the necessary information and technology to support their decisions, thereby constituting “sources of innovation” for them. These actors can be classified as belonging to the social, economic, or public domains. Family, friends, neighboring farmers, and other social contacts constitute the social domain. The economic domain includes actors involved in market transactions with farmers, such as input manufacturers and suppliers, marketing agents, processors, and consumers. The public domain includes governmental institutions, such as ministries, and public-sector organizations, such as research institutes. Actors in the public domain are involved in policy making and the provision of a wide range of services, such as research, extension, breeding, disease prevention, and marketing. In practice, however, market development tends to blur these distinctions, as private-sector entities increasingly take on what have traditionally been public-sector functions, and as entities that had their origin in the social domain—for instance as self- help farmer groups—become more market-oriented and evolve, for example, into organized cooperatives (Schreiber: 2002).

Central Kenya is in a highly productive and densely populated part of the country. Dairy farming is carried mostly on small family farms using intensive zero-grazing systems. Farmers rely largely on grazing, with some supplementary feeding of concentrates. In Central Kenya, most of the farmers have already adopted Artificial Insemination (AI) and so they have improved the dairy breeds. Some have also introduced new protein-rich fodder crops and methods of calculating rations. They have further reduced their stocking rates (resulting in a further specialization in milk production). There is also an improvement of the fodder crops. Some farmers have dug boreholes to ensure that they have a reliable source of water.

The Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC) used to be a vibrant industry in Kenya but it came to a downfall due to poor management. It was revived by the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government in 2003 and renamed new KCC. Today new KCC and Brookside dairies are the main companies that purchase milk from the farmers. The milk market is largely dominated by itinerant milk dealers despite a policy that discourages milk hawking. The Milk vendors (hawkers) are now worried that there is an increasing trend of milk dilution as some middlemen have been found to dilute milk with water and add margarine to make it appear creamy. It has been alleged that middlemen are using hydrogen peroxide, soap and other dangerous chemicals as milk preservatives. Tests carried on some samples by the Kenya Dairy Board (KDB) have revealed that milk has been treated with chemicals such as formalin, hydrogen peroxide, sodium bicarbonate, sodium carbonate and boric acid. Quite often, it is adulterated with water. The use of hydrogen peroxide, formalin and boric acid is normally for the purpose of arresting bacterial or viral growth. Sodium bicarbonate and sodium carbonate on the other hand are used as neutralizing agents to lower the acidity of milk (Neondo: 2002) The dairy sector is now the most promising source of livelihood for the peasants in Central Kenya.

In the past dairy farming was the preoccupation of women but with the near collapse of the coffee farming, men have taken the dairy sector. Men have shifted to dairy farming. The advantages with milk production are that farmers are able to sell milk on dairy bases. This ensures that farmers have a regular source of income unlike coffee which is harvested once in a year. Men have realized that milk is more productive and have therefore taken the previously feminine undertaking. It is common to spot men in the region carrying jerricans of milk early in the morning and in the evening taking milk to the collection points. Men have realized that milk production is more profitable and that if milk is left to women, it would be a challenge to patriarchy as women will become financially empowered. On the positive side the shift to milk by men has made dairy farming to become more innovative with men adopting cattle breeds that are producing more milk than in the past. However, there are various obstacles to the growth of the dairy industry in central Kenya. These include:

Poor transportation Networks

The road network has deteriorated and it is difficult to deliver milk to the collection points during the rainy season. Farmers have to walk for long distances to get to those points. Sometimes they are also forced to milk the animals as early as 4.am so that they can deliver milk to the collection points on time.

Poor payments and price fluctuations

Farmers are paid poorly for the milk. The price fluctuates between 15-23 shillings per litre depending on the supply. This is exploitative given that the current market price of processed milk is 32 shillings for a packet of half litre. During the rainy season when there is enough feed for the cattle and the production of milk increases, farmers do not benefit from the high production because new KCC and Brookside dairies dictates the prices. In addition, some of the farmers sell their milk to middlemen who take the milk to the nearest urban centers. These middlemen are preferred because they pay on delivery, unlike new KCC and Brookside who pay on a monthly basis.

Ineffective marketing of milk and other dairy products by the government has seen the proliferation of unofficial marketing outlets. Increased market demand for milk, necessitated by the increased urban population, has seen an increased number of raw milk vendors out to win over as many buyers in a low priced regime. There is a thriving, unregulated, milk market outlets around Kenyan urban centers and has attracted more farmers as they get paid promptly. The marketing chain involves not only farmers, but middlemen as well who buy milk from farmers to sell it to vendors around estates who in turn sell it to consumers (Neondo: 2002).

High cost of animal feeds

For farmers to achieve high production they have to supplement the ordinary grass and nipier grass with quality but expensive feeds such as bran, maize jam and dairy meal. These feeds are not affordable for majority of the small scale dairy farmers. Farmers are already feeling the pinch

of escalating cost of animal feed. The high cost of animal feed has pushed shelf prices to 32 shillings for a half litre packet. Most farmers rely on poor feeds from their farms thereby lowering milk production. As a result the milk production is dictated by rain patterns that increase water and foliage thereby increasing milk production.

Artificial insemination

The artificial insemination services are very expensive and unaffordable to most of the farmers. This has reduced the quality of the dairy breeds in the area. The government's A.I services died a long time ago and farmers rely on individual service providers who are unreliable.

Cattle dips

Cattle dips in central Kenya require rehabilitation. They are in an unserviceable condition and are no longer used by the farmers. Farmers are forced to use hand sprays to protect their livestock from ticks and other pests.

Politicization of the milk industry

Politics have extensively affected the dairy industry. Some of the upcoming dairy companies are associated with the area's political elite. While appreciating the good work by the marketing companies, farmers say that companies should recognize their efforts through better prices for their milk. Where farmers have formed their own cooperatives they are getting paid higher prices. Farmers are however skeptical of taking milk to some of the societies following the collapse of some societies in the past and the protection of the management by politicians. Indeed collapse of some of the societies such the Gatukuyu dairy society is blamed on the local politics.

The above challenges continue to face the dairy sector. However various interventions are in place in the region which are meant to improve the sector. These measures have gone a long way in improving the dairy farming in the region. These include reforms in the following areas:

Transport

With the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) some roads have been repaired using murrum. However, most of the roads in the region have not been attended to yet this is a priority issue. The use of murrum is also seen as a short-term remedy to a perennial problem.

Marketing of the milk

The revival of the dairy cooperatives particularly new KCC has gone a long way to improve marketing of milk. However politicization and suspicion occasioned by previous mismanagement and waste of farmers' resources remain a big challenge.

Animal feeds

The feeds remain largely unaffordable for majority of the small scale farmers. Attempts have been made by some companies like Brookside to offer credit facilities but farmers complain that the credit facilities are too expensive compared to market prices of milk.

Artificial Insemination

The government has not done anything to bring the A.I services closer to the farmers and this issue demands to be addressed urgently. Farmers are at the mercy of the private veterinary officers some of whom their credentials are suspect. There have been allegations of unscrupulous officers charging farmers without actually offering insemination.

Cattle dips and injections

Despite promises by politicians that cattle dips will be rehabilitated using CDF, very few cattle dips are operational in the region. The government has encouraged farmers to spray the animals in their households instead of using the communal cattle dips. In addition, the government offers injections at lower costs in order to protect the livestock from diseases such as Foot and Mouth disease, anthrax and rift valley fever. Farmers see this as exploitation by the government. Information is disseminated to the farmers in an autocratic way (Top-down approach). Farmers are never consulted yet they are expected to comply by paying for the services offered.

Provision of piped water

With the CDF kitty, some areas have been provided with water. This has helped in a big way because dairy farming requires that farmers have access to clean water. In addition it has eased the burden of fetching water from the rivers which is largely the role of women. This means that women have the time and energy to concentrate in other income generating activities. As of now, farmers in some parts of the region still have to walk for long distances to get water. Some have dug boreholes down to 100ft in order to get this vital commodity.

Gender implications of Men's shift to Dairy Farming

The shift by men from the coffee to dairy farming has got various implications.

Feminization of poverty. This is an event driven poverty. Women have been driven into poverty by men. Women have become poorer as they have been denied control of milk which initially they were in charge of. Men have continued their control of coffee.

Perpetuation of patriarchy. Patriarchy refers to male dominance in society. The dominance can be economic, social-cultural and political. When women are dominated by men economically, it eventually leads to other forms of dominance. The control of coffee earnings by men and now milk helps to reinforce patriarchy.

Engendering agriculture. There is gender inequality in agricultural production. Men are the major beneficiaries of farm produce yet women do most of the work.

Economic marginalization of women. As a result of discrimination of women in property ownership and in farm produce, women are economically weak and marginalized. This has made it difficult for women to participate in women's *chamas* (merry go round groups). Women are working on the farms while men squander the money and engage in alcoholism.

Suggested interventions in the Coffee and Dairy Farming

To improve the coffee and dairy farming and to generally improve the rural economy in central Kenya, there is need to;

Improve the transport network and road surface condition in the area. Thus, more of the CDF money should be directed to this sector. Although there have been attempts to improve the roads, most of the roads are impassible during the rainy season;

Organize training workshops for the farmers so that they can learn about breeding, feeding and marketing of the milk, proper use of insecticides as well as the management of the farms;

Improve marketing by encouraging farmers to start their own processing firms. This will make them enjoy better selling prices. Currently, the market is dominated by a few companies which are exploiting the dairy farmers; the marketing of coffee should also be improved and farmers should be paid promptly. Most farmers start very poor and struggle to buy the first cow. If marketing is improved, the current milk production of 4 litres per cow per day can be increased. This will increase profit and will enable farmers to rear more cows. This will help reduce poverty in the region.

Incorporate the youth in coffee and milk production. Most young people frown to soil their hands on coffee farms. They should be encouraged to delve into coffee and milk production. Currently, the youth see coffee trees as a symbol of oppression because of its hard labour and poor prices. A more pragmatic approach is needed to motivate the youth to take part in coffee and dairy production.

Less politicization of coffee and dairy farming. Politician are largely are guided by selfish interests. As such, they do not strive to empower the rural communities to become self-reliant. Instead they are after own political survival. They therefore ensure that coffee factories and dairy societies are in hands of people who will take care of their interests and not the interests of farmers;

Provide rural electrification to the rural areas. Rural electrification will improve the storage of the milk. Farmers need electricity so that they can preserve the mid-day and evening milk

given that companies mostly collect milk from the farmers in the morning only. Without electricity, farmers have to continue relying on the middlemen for the sale of their daytime milk. With rural electrification, farmers can also engage in other productive economic activities as a way of diversifying sources of income;

Provide piped water to the rural areas. Water pipes in most parts of the region have been dry for many years. Some of the water pipes are worn out as they were installed in the 1970's. Dairy farming requires huge amounts of clean water. There is need to ensure that water is available to the farmers;

Encourage community participation and awareness. While some of the activities by the government such as injection of animals are well intended, farmers are not involved and this makes the farmers disinterested partners. There is need to use participatory approaches in the implementation of the agricultural programmes. Participation is an empowerment process (Mulwa, F 1993:31). Attempts to improve coffee production by forcing farmers not to grow food crops alongside coffee have failed because of adoption of a top-bottom approach to community development. Farmers must participate in making decisions that affect their lives and in the implementation and evaluation of development programmes. There is need to adopt a bottom-up approach in order to achieve rural development (Obudho RA: 1988);

Look at the role of agricultural extension officers. Agricultural extension officers are rarely seen in the field-training farmers. There is need for the officers to go to the grassroots and share with the farmers their concerns, fears and frustrations;

Create a forum of consultation. There is need to create a forum for consultation where the major stakeholders namely the government, farmers, cooperatives and buyers, can address issues that can enhance production and farmer satisfaction;

Capacity building of the farmers. There is need to educate farmers on the various farming methods. Education is an eye opener as it helps to remove soil from the eyes of the community. Farmers' education should focus on the need to do farming as a business, proper marketing of produce, better breed of animals and more productive and fast maturing variety of coffee such as Ruiru 11 and Batian.

Women empowerment. There is need to empower women so that they own property such as coffee plants and cattle. Women do most of the agricultural jobs yet they neither own the land they till nor the cattle they look after. Women continue to be discriminated in property ownership in the region. Gender roles are dynamic, they (can) change with time since culture which is socially constructed is dynamic not static (culture is not sacrosanct/sacred or natural – so it can

change). There is need for social transformation or social change which is going to be central to development.

Engendering agricultural research. There is need for gender equity in agricultural research and development system. It is important to pay attention to gender issues in agriculture in this region of the country. Men should recognize the role of women in production of food crops and in cash cropping. Research must therefore focus on women's needs. Women researchers should be active in agricultural research institutions. There is also need to integrate gender into setting agricultural priorities; conducting research; in design, implementation and adoption of extension services in the country.

Conclusions

The potential that central Kenya has for coffee and dairy farming has not been fully exploited. The two sectors are very vital in the rural economic life because they complement each other. The development of the two sectors is very important for rural development and can go a long way to alleviate rural poverty in the region. To ensure that farmers benefit from the sectors, it is important for the government to support the cooperatives in the area to ensure proper marketing of agricultural produce. The efficacy of the cooperatives must be tampered by realization that some form of government intervention is unavoidable (Crawford *et al* 1981:226). The government has a responsibility to guide rural communities and to provide an environment that is conducive to development. The new economic and social policy must be centered mainly on the development of the rural areas. The starting point for a policy to develop the rural areas seems to lie in the peasants and the rural areas as a whole having the possibility of organizing themselves freely and independently. These organizations which would be created in the rural areas must be able to enjoy full decision making powers (Gakou, 1987:85). With regard to the development of rural areas, participation includes people's involvement in decision making processes, in implementing programmes, their sharing in the benefits of development programmes, and in their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Bergdall, 1993:2). The Problems facing agriculture in central Kenya are numerous. The Kenya government, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders should look for ways of solving the problems bedeviling agricultural activities in central Kenya. Coffee and dairy farming are two important agricultural sectors in central Kenya. The two sectors are vital in the rural economic life and they complement each other. Development of the two can help to abject alleviate poverty in the rural parts of central Kenya.

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