

RICE FARMING IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF TANZANIA: MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLES AND PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in two districts of Mbarali and Kyela famous for paddy production in Mbeya Region, in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania (SHT). The study aimed at evaluating management practices, socioeconomic roles and production constraints of rice crop. A cross-sectional design was employed whereby data were collected at a single point in time. The two districts were purposively selected based on the fact that they are the most important for rice production in the SHT. In each district, four wards were randomly chosen and thereafter four (4) villages per ward were selected making a total of eight study villages. In Kyela District the villages were Ipande (Ipande ward), Muungano (Ikolo ward), Kisale (Ipinda ward) and Katele (Makwale ward) whereas in Mbarali; Mahango (Madibira ward), Kapunga (Itamboleo ward), Mbuyuni (Mapogoro ward) and Ukwama (Mapogoro ward) were studied. Thirty (30) farmers were randomly selected from each village for interviews, making a total of 240 farmers (120 farmers per district). In both districts data were also collected from both primary and secondary sources. Results showed that very few (<40%) farmers did apply integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) technologies for increased crop production, levels of awareness on the application of farmyard manure (FYM) and Minjingu Rock Phosphate (MRP) fertilisers in farms was very low. This study has shown that rice was the leading revenue source in both study districts. The mean annual incomes per household were Tsh 1.8 million and Tsh 133, 333 from rice and livestock, respectively. However, the key drivers for increased rice productivity in the farming system were found to be the availability of improved seeds, fertilizer use, and best farming methods related to water management, availability of insecticides and herbicides, mechanization and reliable market. The study concludes that the rice market is the main constraint and therefore reliable marketing channels needs to establish.

Keywords: Rice; management, socioeconomic, constraints.