

STATUS, CONSTRAINTS AND MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANNING NAVY BEAN IN KENYA

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Abstract

Navy (small white) bean is one of the most important grain type predominantly grown by the smallholder farmers in eastern Africa. It is a pro-poor commodity that not only supports food security, but also offers new options for smallholder farmers to enter higher value markets in Europe and North America. However, the navy bean subsector in Kenya has not been characterized. A study was conducted to determine the status, challenges and marketing opportunities for canning navy bean in Kenya. Primary data were obtained by interviewing navy bean producers, processors, resource experts, regulators and consumers using semi-structured questionnaires. Secondary data were collected from published work and available statistics. The survey showed that production of navy beans is very low and is mainly centered in Rongai and Nakuru districts of Nakuru County. The average farm size under navy beans is 0.2 acres. Production drastically declined in the 1990s due to the collapse of contractual arrangements between producers and processors. Processors procured navy beans from large-scale traders who sourced them through Moyale. Njoro canners, Kabazi canners and Premier foods were the main navy bean processors during the survey period. Farmers in the study area rarely used fertilizers to produce navy bean. The main challenges included low producer prices, lack of good quality seed, poor agronomic and post harvest management, and lack of market information. The major export markets for navy bean are in Europe and United States of America. The major suppliers of navy bean to Kenya are China, Argentina and Ethiopia where an industrial company ACOS has significant investment. The demand for canned navy bean among the middle class in Kenyan cities is growing. There is need for high quality seed, improved agronomic management, stakeholder linkages along the value chain and establishment of incentives to spur the navy bean subsector.

Key words: Navy bean, Nakuru, production, constraints, Kenya