

**A SURVEY OF LEAN MANUFACTURING PRACTICES IN FOOD
PROCESSING FIRMS IN MOMBASA COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

For high performance, a company has to either increase its revenues or reduce costs. Whilst increasing revenues remains a challenge from uncontrollable factors such as local and global competitive forces, organizations must consider reducing costs. One major cost reduction activities is elimination of wastages. This has called for the necessity in adopting lean manufacturing practices. The research surveyed the adoption of lean practices in food processing firms in Mombasa county. The study was designed with aim of achieving three objectives: to determine the extent to which lean manufacturing practices have been adopted by food processing firms, to establish the benefits of lean manufacturing by food processing firms and to establish the challenges faced by food processing firms in Mombasa County in implementing lean manufacturing. The data analyzed was gathered using semi-structured questionnaire targeting production managers of manufacturing firms in Mombasa. The results were presented using tables, percentages, rank ordering, mean scores, frequencies and charts for ease of understanding. The findings indicated that most food processing firms belong to bakers & millers with more than 200 employees. It is also clear that the companies have implemented various tools and principles to support lean production and improved their operational performance. The results also show that most firms use unit cost of product relative to competitor to measure their performance. Companies are found to have a good understanding of lean production, and since its implementation, they have gained many benefits such as increase in revenues with no increase in costs, reduction in waste of excessive in-process inventories and increase visibility of both product and quality problems, improve system efficiency and on-time delivery. Even though most food processing firms have benefited from adopting lean production it was found that the most experienced challenge was resistance to change. Limit of creativity and innovations, customer dissatisfaction and wrong implementation sequence of lean concept were among the other challenges experienced. The study recommends more awareness of the role of lean practices not only in the food processing sector but also others such as the service sector. In addition, the study also recommends that top management commitment is crucial in the successful adoption of lean practices.