

Abstract:

If the productivity of tea among the smallholders can only increase to about 2500 kg/ha/yr, the national projection of 300 thousand metric tones would be realized without the need to allocate more land to tea enterprise. The tea industry emphasizes efficient management of strategic inputs particularly fertilizers to enhance smallholder yields. The objective of this study was to determine the management efficiency among gender categories of smallholder tea farmers in Kenya. Data were collected on personal characteristics of the farm manager, agronomic practices, input use, output, prices and extension service involvement in tea enterprise. The profit function model was used to determine the relative efficiency of farm groups as differentiated by gender. Three categories of gender were analyzed: female-male, female-joint and male-joint cases. The results depicted that the coefficient of the management dummy variable was significant at 5 percent level for female-male, insignificant for female-joint and significant at 5 percent for male-joint cases. The results rejected the hypothesis of equal efficiency between the female-male and male-joint cases at 5 percent level. Female managed farms were found to be more profitable, and more economically efficient at all observed prices of the variable inputs, given the distribution of the fixed factors of production while jointly managed farms are more profitable than male managed farms. In general, female managed farms are more efficient and hence more profitable than male managed tea farms.