

Abstract

This paper discusses the effects of labour, land, migration and off-farm employment on crop production in Siaya and Kakamega districts, western Kenya. The paper seeks to identify the level of agricultural productivity within the context of the farmers' circumstances, their current level of technical knowledge, growing population pressures and a changing economy influenced by market conditions. Smallholder agricultural production in western Kenya is primarily organized through family labour, and the household's capacity to mobilize its labour resources is limited by competing demands such as migration and off-farm employment, and school enrolment of children. These factors reflect the extent to which the small farm households have been incorporated into the larger market economy. As a result there is no agricultural surplus labour despite large family sizes. The study findings suggest that although small farmers in western Kenya operate under limited resource conditions in terms of land and labour, crop production is, in the final analysis, a function of multiple factors many of which the farmers have little or no control over or access to.