Abstract:

Urban poverty is increasing at an alarming rate in Kenya. Urban farming is one of the ways urbanites employ to cope with this problem. Urban agriculture plays a vital role in sustaining many urban dwellers. Many urbanites also depend on urban agriculture for income. 800 million people in the world depend on urban agriculture either directly or indirectly. Urban farming is practiced in many cities in the world like Germany, America, Kampala, Dar es Salaam and all Kenyan towns including the city of Nairobi. Two thirds of the Nakuru residents practice urban farming. However, urban farming is ignored, discouraged and to an extreme extent harassment meted on those who practice it. This study investigates the factors that influence urban farming. The problem addressed in this study is that, despite the high need for food security in urban areas, urban farming is not attaining its full potential due to lack of essential services and incentives for the urban farmers which has greatly resulted into decreased agricultural production. Such services include marketing services, security and agricultural extension services. The study aims at achieving the following four objectives: first, to establish the influence of availability of market for agricultural products on agricultural productivity; secondly, to assess whether the level of income of the households has any influence on the level of agricultural productivity, Thirdly, to examine the extent to which status of security in Nakuru Municipality affect agricultural productivity and finally, to investigate the role played by Extension Officers on agricultural productivity in Nakuru Municipality. The research used multistage cluster random sampling. The study was conducted on a sample of 300 households out of 56,161 households in Nakuru Municipality. The sample size was arrived at using Fisher's formula for a population of more than 10,000. The data was collected using semi-structured 'researcher administered' questionnaires. The data was collected over the month of June and July 2010. The research design method employed in this study was Descriptive research survey design. Qualitative and quantitative data were presented in form of tables. The findings of this study have fully responded to the research question and the research objectives. Concerning the first objective the research found out that 100% of the respondents felt that availability of the market for agricultural product influences the level of agricultural production. In the second objective, the study found out that the coefficient of correlation between the household income and the level agricultural productivity was -0.26 and therefore it shows that the level of households' income has a low negative correlation on the level of agricultural productivity in Nakuru Municipality. The third objective, which was to investigate the influence of the status of security on agricultural productivity in Nakuru Municipality, the research findings revealed that 86% of Nakuru Urban Dwellers felt that agricultural productivity in Nakuru Municipality is affected by the level of security in the Municipality. In the last objective which was on agricultural services, the study found out that 99% of the respondents felt that agricultural extension services have affected their urban agricultural productivity. The conclusion of the study was that urban agricultural productivity is highly constrained by marketing, urban security and lack of adequate agricultural extension services. The study recommended that, the government should provide market for the urban agricultural produce and protect the urban farmers from the low prices offered by the middlemen, secondly the study recommended that more security be employed in urban areas, and finally it was recommended that about 30 extension officers be employed in the Municipality. The areas suggested for further research are; to evaluate the influence of urban land use policy on urban farming and to investigate on influence of the level of education of the household head on level of urban farming. The result of
this study will be useful to the decision makers and town planners of the Municipality and the other towns so that they incorporate urban agriculture in the urban bylaws and Acts especially in physical planning, public health, water act and local government act.