

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the natural and socio economic factors that affect indigenous chicken production and the level of their impact in Katangi and Ikombe divisions of Yatta sub-county, Machakos County. Data were collected using the questionnaires as the main research instruments. The questionnaires were subjected to 150 respondents composed of farmers, extension officers and animal Health Officers. The study sought to identify the main predators, diseases and pests and their impact on indigenous chicken production, to establish the level of gender influence on indigenous chicken production, determine the effects of household incomes on indigenous chicken production, and to determine the market and marketing challenges in Katangi and Ikombe divisions of Yatta Sub-county. Data for this study was analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics. Under descriptive analysis, frequency distribution tables were constructed showing the categories, responses and percentages which were used in analyzing the data. Under inferential statistics, several hypothesis were formulated which were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficients to test the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, Chi-square test was used to test whether there was statistical independence between gender and poultry keeping. Chi-square test was also used to test the relationship between poultry keeping and household income. All the analyses were done using statistical package for social scientists (SPSS). The study established that the main challenges to poultry keeping were disease and predators. It was also revealed that 20% of the respondents use the conventional way of disease control while 80% use indigenous technical knowledge (ITK). There was a strong negative relationship between diseases /predators and poultry keeping. It was also established that majority of poultry farmers in the rural areas were female. They also market the poultry. There is significant relationship between gender and poultry keeping and also between poultry keeping and household income. That means poultry keeping is a significant economic activity in enhancing livelihood for the communities and food security. The study also revealed that the majority (50%) of the respondents keep poultry for selling, while only 12.5% and 7.5% were keeping poultry for eggs and meat respectively. This is the main economic activity for majority of the respondents. Majority (60%) of poultry farmers were selling their poultry at the farm gate while 40% were selling at the local market. If these poultry were sold in the major markets and hotels they would earn more.