

Abstract

Between the year 2009 and 2013, the Kenyan government invested KES 22 billion in the aquaculture sector through the Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP). It was expected that more farmers all over the country would venture into the sector and therefore lead to an increase in aquaculture production. A study was therefore done in Makueni County one of the arid and semi arid countries in Kenya to investigate its fish farming status, the socio-economic aspects which affected its adoption and challenges facing the sector in that county. The study adopted a crosssectional survey research design and a descriptive research paradigm. The results indicate a substantial variability in fish farming within the six sub-counties in Makueni county with some having relatively higher production than others. Majority of the fish ponds (92.5%) were funded by the government under the ESP however the project did not perform as expected. About 73% of the ESP funded fish ponds have so far been completely abandoned, while 11.3% are partially abandoned, with only 15.3% being functional. The issue of gender balance affected the program's adoption as only 9.9% and 29.2% represented the youth and women respectively. Generally, 76.6% of farmers interviewed cited lack of pond liner as their greatest challenge facing fish farming activities. Other challenges mentioned include, lack of fingerlings (59.3%), lack of finance (57.2%), lack of fish feeds (54.7%) and inadequate water (43.9%). It was observed that these challenges are increasingly affecting the performance of fish farming with more farmers continuously abandoning their ponds.