

Abstract

A survey was undertaken in Machakos , Kitui, Makueni, Mwingi and Baringo districts to identify the major systems currently being employed with a view to assessing their performance. In Machakos, Kitui, Makueni and Mwingi districts, the main sources of water were small earth dams (micro dams), with water harnessed from run off and nearby uncultivated or grazing lands. In Baringo district, the main source of water was a dam constructed across a seasonal river called Wesegess. All micro dams were excavated by their owners using mainly manual labour and skills acquired from neighbours, supplemented by owner's initiates. In the areas in Eastern province, only horticultural crops are irrigated. In Baringo district, grain and horticultural crops are irrigated, underscoring their higher water demand and importance in the household cash flow. The main irrigation system employed in the Eastern province was spot, whereas furrows were widely used in Baringo district. Availability of water within the farm freed labour from fetching water long distances and shortened walking distances for livestock. It also facilitated cultivation of high value crops to improve farmers' household cash economy.