

## Abstract

Food insecurity continues to plague Kenya's rural arid and semi-arid lands, which are vulnerable to market and climatic shocks. The majority of Kenya's population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture for survival. However, the performance of the agricultural sector has been declining, leading to intermittent acute food shortages necessitating workable sustainable food security interventions. Drawing on open systems theory and on the capability approach to food security, this paper reports on a study that sought to investigate the contribution of community-based organisations (CBOs) and how such institutions can be leveraged by the public sector to achieve sustainable food security in Kenya's rural areas. A sample of 202 respondents was drawn from 40 CBOs in Kenya's Kakuku sub-location, Thika District. The data was collected through household interviews using a structured questionnaire and was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study established that although 70% of CBOs were undertaking food-security related activities, poor marketing channels and storage facilities were identified as a major hindrance to expanding sustainable food security in the area. The study recommended that capacity building and provision of public services infrastructure was of paramount importance in improving the producer's performance, and in increasing their competitiveness and ability to access agricultural markets in their value-chain. The study further noted that CBOs were an instrument of social transformation and an effective channel for community participation and empowerment. Properly leveraged, CBOs are an important component of the institutional set-up for sustainable food security in developing countries such as Kenya.