Abstract

Ensuring adequate food security is a significant challenge despite global struggles to increase agricultural production and productivity, improve food distribution and identify appropriate policy interventions. All over the world, food crisis and on-going chronic and acute food insecurity problems have clearly demonstrated that numerous people are becoming dangerously susceptible to political, climatic and economic shocks that threaten food and nutritional availability, access, utilization and stability. The recent recurrent incidences of food deficit in Kenya has placed the nation among the 20 most food insecure countries in the world. Approximately 84% of the country's landmass is arid and semi-arid land, with the sub-county of Mwala located within the semiarid marginal agricultural zone of the south-eastern and coastal lowlands. Mwala region is typically characterized by unevenly distributed rainfall of between 800-1100mm per year. The frequency of drought in the zone has often exposed the household to both occasional chronic and acute food insecurity. The prevalent food security issues in Kenya are attributed to a number factors and achieving sustainable food security in the semi-arid regions of the country is a major challenge. This challenge is extremely intricate, requiring consideration of not just food availability and access but also the ability to be utilized and its stability. To alleviate food insecurity in Mwala Sub-county, an urgent need for thorough assessment of the level of awareness of food security among the small scale farmers in Mwala Sub-county that hinder achievement, sustainability and adaptation is crucial. This study examined the level of awareness of food security in Mwala sub-country to adequately address the food security issue in Mwala sub-county. A research approach involving exploratory, descriptive and participatory research designs were used. To select four locations and four farmers groups from each location, a simple and purposive sampling methods were employed. A sample size of 84 farmers groups was used and the data subjected to descriptive analysis using SPPS Version 21. The relationship between variables was determined using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. To address the above identified knowledge gap, a binomial logit model was used to assess factors affecting the awareness of food security. The key findings from the study showed that income of the household, gender and education greatly determined the level of awareness of food security. About 98% of the respondents evaluated food security status in their households as insecure while only 2% reported to be food secure. This implies that the status of food security amongst residents of Mwala sub-county is very low, although the residents are unaware of their status, with most of them being food insecure. These findings provide policy insights to focus on knowledge

and awareness as key areas of intervention with respect to upholding food security in the Sub County, County and ultimately the country at large.