

Abstract

Fisheries are a significant sector to the national and household economies in Kenya. The Kenya government initiated the Economic Stimulus Program (ESP) in 2010 to help aquaculture projects in order to jump start the economy by providing food and income to the rural inhabitants as a way of eradicating poverty and creating jobs to the poverty stricken areas. However, there is little information on the contribution of fish farming to the household wellbeing of the farmers adopting the fish farming in Kitui Central sub-county. Therefore, the researcher carried out this study to determine the contribution of fish farming to the household wellbeing of the fish farmers in the Kitui Central Sub- County, Kitui County. A sample of sixty (60) fish farmers were used from the targeted 200 fish farmers who benefitted from the government ESP support. Semi structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data that was analyzed using Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The study revealed that fish farming had a significant contribution to the household wellbeing (income) of households in Kitui Central Sub-county, Kitui County. This was by improving household income (38.9%) and putting idle land to use (24.1%). The harvested fish was sold to the market as indicated by 63% of the respondents as well as home consumption (37%). This ended up improving the livelihood of the fish farmers. Other benefits from fish farming included; more household assets (50.6%), fees payment (40.7%), better health care (38.9%) and 33.3% diet diversity. It was also established that there is a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.73$, $P < 0.05$) between fish farming and household wellbeing. This study presents lessons from farmers who are attempting to eke out a livelihood from small scale fish farming with or without government support. It illustrates some of the successes and challenges of the activity and offers insight to future fish farming success for farmers willing to attempt it. To the existing farmers it provides an eye opener on their weaknesses. This research will enable the government, other development partners to get information to help them make informed decisions in future and refocus on how best to support the fish farming industry for sustainability.