

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 socio-economic factors of the farmers adopting the fish farming that may influence the adoption of fish farming in Kitui Central sub-county. Therefore, the researcher carried out this study to determine the status of the significant socioeconomic factors 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 70.4% of fish pond farmers abandoned their pond with only 29.6% functional. The chi-square (χ^2) test has showed a significant difference between the male and female adopters of the fish farming. Further, Chi-square (χ^2) test established a significant difference between the levels of education of these fish farmers. The majority (57.4%) of fish farmers had no access to quality fingerlings compared to farmers (42.6%) who had access to quality fingerlings for their fish farming. In addition, the Chi-Square (χ^2) test established that there was very significant difference between fish farmers with and without access to quality fingerlings. 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.