

Abstract

Most of the tobacco production in Kenya is taking place in the Southern Nyanza Region, western Kenya. The land under tobacco has continued to grow rapidly at the expense of traditional food crops and livestock activities, with high demands on wood-fuel, serious health issues, and demanding in terms of the farmer's time. All these tobacco issues have led to increased poverty levels in the region. This kind of scenario calls for research that can solve a multiple of problems, i.e. economic and political problems, socio-cultural and gender issues, food insecurity concerns, occupational and environmental health hazards, and environmental concerns. This paper outlines the vision of the on-going 3-year research project on how tobacco production can be controlled through the diversification of household livelihood strategies among tobacco small-holder farmers. The study in particular is investigating on the existing potential of introducing Bamboo as an alternative and viable crop in the region. The other major task being undertaken is the analysis and ranking of the local household livelihood strategies used by tobacco and non-tobacco farmers in the study area. The study will also involve a detailed assessment of marketing dynamics on bamboo products as a feedback to investment in the tobacco industry. The research methodology being adopted involves the review of relevant literatures, field experimentations/demonstrations, local community household surveys and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRAs) with stakeholder identification and analysis, and focused group discussions for meeting the data requirements of the research project. The vision of the project is to turn-around the dependence of local livelihoods on tobacco to bamboo cultivation in the long term through implementation of an action plan to be developed.