

Abstract

The poultry industry in Kenya is a key contributor to the economy of local communities as well as food security, incomes and improved nutrition. Over 90% of households in Kenya own a flock of poultry. A cross-sectional study was done to assess how the factors influencing production affect rural and peri urban chicken farmers in Katulani District, Kitui County. The main points of comparison were; house hold demographics, livelihood and income sources, opportunities and challenges, factors affecting adoption of chicken management technologies, flock structure and dynamics. There were 70 rural respondents and 40 peri urban respondents. In total, there were 110 respondents. Data was collected through questionnaires, personal observations, photography and interviews. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents, data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software to generate descriptive statistics.

All households kept indigenous chicken, with about 72.7% reared for both income and subsistence. Majority (96.4%, n=110) reared chicken under free range and mainly used family labour. Household size had influence on flock size, where larger households kept larger flocks. There were more female headed households (59.1%) rearing chicken in the study area, however male headed households reared larger flock sizes in both study sites. Education level determined the size of poultry flock, peri urban respondents with an average 10 years of study kept larger flock sizes compared to the rural households (average of 8 years studying). There were high levels of unemployment in both study sites. Employment had a significant positive correlation ($p<0.05$, $r=0.64$) on purchasing power, with funds available for initial poultry acquisition in both study sites, hence the employed had higher flock sizes. About 84.5% of respondents earned their livelihood from mixed farming as compared to crop farming or livestock keeping in isolation with the employed having higher monthly incomes than from any farm related activities. Chicken contributed about 4.18% and 26.9% of total Tropical Livestock Units in rural and peri urban sites respectively. Opportunities for poultry rearing were the small start-up and low capital investment whereas, the main challenges were diseases, predators, limited poultry production skills and high cost of drugs/vaccines. There were low adoption of all chicken rearing technologies in both rural and peri urban sites although periurban site had higher technology adoption rates. Therefore, more awareness creation and initial promotion of low cost technologies is recommended.