Abstract

Some product information asymmetry is always present in food value chains; when the asymmetry is high, it increases food safety markets imperfection, reduces trust among stakeholders and could compromise food safety and quality. This study assessed information asymmetry through evaluation of the network structure and traceability strategies in the organic kales value chains around Nairobi. A survey of organic farmers and marketing outlets in Nairobi was conducted. Purposive sampling technique, based on organic food certification, was used and the data collected using semi-structured questionnaires during the interviews. The network data was analysed using Ucinet Version 6 while traceability data was analysed using SPSS version 17. From the analysis, there is a moderately high network centralization of approximately 61 percent although betweenness centrality is very low at approximately 6 percent. The stakeholders had functional traceability systems with most stakeholders using production, purchases and sales records to trace. Approximately 62 percent of all stakeholders had chain traceability; collective action and group activities existed that also enhanced traceability among stakeholders. The stakeholders in the certified organic products sector had internal monitoring and verification of the members' activities and relied on trust for information flow. Based on the findings, the study recommends reorganization of stakeholders to strengthen the networking structures to increase information flow. In addition, factors which influence traceability such as monitoring, training, documentation and certification and the subjective measures such as personnel perception on traceability should be improved to boost safety and quality of organic products.