

**SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING FARMERS'
ADOPTION OF ORGANIC FARMING AND AGRO-FORESTRY IN
MAU EAST CATCHMENT AREA IN NAKURU, KENYA**

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MURENGA HADIJA MATULI

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine sources of information and socio-cultural issues influencing farmers' adoption of organic farming (OF) and agro-forestry (AF) in the Mau East Catchment area. The study was motivated by the need for new approaches to help curb the persistent destruction of Mau Catchment area. Organic farming and AF are alternative farming technologies that are intended to minimize both global food shortage and environmental degradation following long-term effects of conventional farming. Despite the importance of OF and AF, farmers do not seem to be eager to adopt these technologies. The study objectives were: to investigate the relationship between farmers' perceptions of OF and AF; assess the relationship between sources of information on OF and AF; to examine the relationship between socio-cultural factors and their influence on farmers' adoption of OF and AF. It was hypothesized that sources of information and socio-cultural factors such as gender, ethnicity, beliefs in trees and perceptions influence farmers' adoption of OF and AF. Socialization and innovation-diffusion theories were used to explain the association between sources of information, socio-cultural factors and farmers' adoption of OF and AF in the Mau East Catchment area. A cross-sectional survey was conducted. A total of three zones distinguished on the basis of distribution of farmer groups were selected for study to allow for representation of groups and ethnic variation and comparison in the data collected. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. A total of 220 farmers were selected for study. Data collection tools used included household survey interviews, observation, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in depth interviews with 20 key informants. Data analysis included both descriptive and inferential statistics (Cramer's V and Chi-square). Sources of information such as agricultural extension officers, other farmers' experience and NGOs were found to have significant association with farmers' adoption of OF and /or AF. Farmers' perceptions on OF and AF were also found to influence their adoption of these farming practices. Farmer's gender, ethnic affiliation, religion and decision making on farm matters did not have statistical significant association with farmers' adoption of OF and/or AF. It was concluded that adoption studies should pay great attention to sources of information such as agricultural extension officers, NGOs and other farmers' experiences since they influence farmers' adoption of OF or AF. The study recommended that the government of Kenya through the Ministry of Agriculture should start re-training its extension staff on OF and AF and incorporate especially OF in the Ministry policy.

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