

ABSTRACT

Land ownership gives an individual the confidence and dignity required to be active in society. Indeed, land ownership and rights are important for effective utilization of farmland for food production to alleviate food insecurity and revitalize household welfare and national development. While the foregoing is the ideal situation, the reality is that culture and gender dictates who owns land especially when customary laws seem to override any legal and policy provisions regarding land ownership, access and control. In particular, women are largely land caretakers, with men owning most of the land, titled or otherwise. Based on the foregoing, this paper sought to identify gender and land ownership structures in the context of dryland farming and their implications on household food security in the Mbeere drylands of Embu County. It utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of social investigation and concluded that while many factors combine to determine food production and food security, inadequate access to and control of land and related resources by women in the Mbeere drylands is significant. Consequently, and given the environmental and cultural milieu on which land is utilized, measures have been proposed to augment dryland farming and alleviate food insecurity in the Mbeere drylands.