Challenges Facing Women in The Zero - Grazing Livestock Production System In Kenya: A Case Of Karuri Location, Kiambu County

Smallholder dairy production provides self-employment for most of the rural population in the Kenyan highlands. Zero-grazing dairy livestock production has continued to grow over the years as the preferred dairy production system due to such factors as land size. Women participation in dairy production is significant given their role in agricultural production. The study sought to examine the challenges facing women participation in zero-grazing livestock production in Karuri sub-location. The study objectives were to identify factors affecting women participation in the zero - grazing dairy production system in Karuri location, and to establish the level of empowerment of women practicing zero - grazing dairy production system in Karuri location. The study conducted a literature review which included the challenges facing women in zero-grazing dairy livestock production, factors constraining their participation in zero-grazing dairy livestock production and initiatives promoting women participation in zero-grazing dairy livestock production. This also included the theoretical framework on which the study was premised which was the women empowerment framework. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study adopted the convenience and purposive sampling techniques to identify the respondents of the study. The respondents were 51 women and women leaders and livestock production officers as key informants of the study. The primary tools for data collection were the survey technique, key informant interviews and the Focus Group Discussion. The study found that women are overburdened by productive roles of zero-grazing dairy production and this may have a negative impact on their health status and on their effective participation in reproductive and community roles. Access to credit was the major constraining factor among the respondents. Women's lack of control over resources such as land and dairy cattle, cultural attitude towards dairy farming perception that dairy farming is for those who are not well-educated and that it is a lay man's activity due to its intensive nature are all challenges. In regard to measures to improve women participation in zero-grazing dairy farming, majority of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of initiatives to support women participation in zero-grazing dairy production system. The government and the Kiambaa Dairy Cooperative Society were the most prominent supporters of women efforts in zero-grazing. These included services such as marketing services for the milk produced, value addition processes and education and training in effective dairy production. The study recommends that women should be supported to have enough dairy animals so as to participate in zero-grazing dairy as a full time employment with sufficient income generated on a regular basis. Men should be encouraged to incorporate their spouses on empowerment matters e.g. registration at the cooperatives, allow them to make decisions, etc. There should be efforts to strengthen small business organizations that are farmer (women) owned and managed, facilitate and coordinate investments in livestock and dairy sectors and there should be concerted efforts towards value addition in dairy production.