ABSTRACT

Subdivision of agricultural land is perceived to be a threat to food and livelihood security in Kenya. It has been related to the decline of the coffee sector in Kenya, which has provoked discussion surrounding possible causes and solutions for a turn-around of the sector. This study examined the relationship between coffee production and the continuous subdivision of agricultural land in the coffee growing zone of Kiganjo sub-location. The specific objectives of this study included examining four factors that include; inter-generational household land size change; current land uses and livelihood diversification strategies and their respective financial returns at household level, and; planning interventions that can ensure sustainable food and livelihood security in the coffee farming sector. Cross sectional research design method was used. The target population was coffee farmers in Kiganjo sub-location, and coffee sector key informants in the county. The existing ten villages in the sub-location were treated as geographical clusters. Ten coffee farmers were sampled randomly from each cluster and five key informants sampled purposively from the sector. Face to face interviews were conducted with 97 coffee farmers using a household questionnaire. Three focus group discussions with women, men and youth were also held in the sub-location, and five key informant interviews conducted using key informant interview schedules. The findings revealed that intergenerational household land size changed by 75% from 3.89 to 0.97 Ha from generation one to generation two. The same changed by 76% from 0.97 to 0.23 Ha from generation two to generation three. The change from generation one to three (grandfather to grandson) was 94% which is 3.89 Ha to 0.23 Ha. The current land uses were identified as coffee, dairy, avocado, macadamia nut, arrow root, banana, tree, poultry, maize and bean farming. Of these, coffee had the highest returns because of the relatively larger land size allocated to its production. The household livelihood diversification strategies included income from rental units, income from motorcycle taxi, employment, business enterprises, shop, pension funds, and financial remittances from relatives. Possible planning interventions from literature review and the field survey are as follows: i) formulating and enforcing a minimum household land size for coffee production of between 0.2 Ha and 0.5 Ha per household, ii) establishment of a land banking program where the government can lease or acquire idle land that can be used for coffee cultivation. Other measures include iii) adopting of long term (e.g. 25-50 years) land leasing for coffee cultivation as opposed to freehold land ownership, iv) promoting voluntary land pooling among brothers and neighbors guided by the minimum land size for coffee production, v) promoting mixed farming of cash crop, food crop and livestock for diversification. These measures can be complemented with vi) adoption of urban-based nucleated human settlement patterns instead of the current scattered rural settlements in order to release land for agriculture, and vii) encouraging co-operative based extension and marketing services to guarantee optimal productivity and reliable markets for farm produce. The study recommends further research to determine i) the economic viability of long-term leasing of land rather than freehold land ownership for coffee farmers, ii) the landsize implication of 2010 constitutional provision that give women and men equal rights to inheritance of family land; and finally iii) determination of (minimum) household land sizes for food,

cash incomes and secure livelihoods in Kiganjo sub-location in consultation with the people.