

Problems, Constraints and Coping for small agro-food processing –A case for maize and cassava in Kenya.

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The European Commission funded study was designed to analyse and quantify problems and factors affecting small food enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa, using the Porter Diamond conceptual model for business development. The study was carried out in Mombasa and Coast Province of Kenya, a food deficit area in the country.

The methods used included stakeholders workshop, in-depth case studies and elaborate consumer and processors surveys, using structured questionnaires and interviews. 320 households were covered by the consumer survey, while 270 food enterprises sampled on the basis of a survey grid covered 120 maize, and 104 cassava processors, segregated according to their sizes, namely cottage, micro, small and medium. Parameters measured were both internal and external to enterprises, and covered the areas of inputs, processing and marketing.

Data obtained indicated demand increase of maize and cassava products by 42 and 37% of the businesses respectively, compared to demand decrease by 32 and 26%. 26 and 37% of maize and cassava businesses showed no change in products demand. Factors reported to influence demand for maize are products popularity, quality improvement, consumer incomes, population change in the enterprise locality and competition. In cassava, the factors involved were product popularity, quality improvement and competition. Other factors had only moderate impact on demand changes.

The important problems for maize enterprises, which had no coping strategies, were scarcity of inputs (quantity & quality), power interruption, transport services and lack of credit. For cassava, the same problems in a similar order of importance emerged, with the exception of power interruption-, which was not applicable in cassava processing operations.

Other myriad important problems had elements of coping strategies, although they still affected businesses negatively. The underlying causes of these problems as constraints for development and performance are discussed in the light of unfolding changes in the macroeconomic environment, and on-going reforms.