

KYAMPAIRE AGNES (2008-M092-20066)

Improved Agro-inputs and Agricultural Productivity Enhancement in Mubende District: A Case Study of Improved Maize Varieties in Baggeza Sub-County

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of improved agro-inputs on agricultural productivity enhancement in Mubende district. One of the pillars of the Uganda government policy of modernising agriculture as stipulated in the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) is to increase productivity so as to increase farmers' incomes and reduce poverty. There is, therefore, a deliberate campaign by government and other organisations urging farmers to use improved inputs as the best way to increase productivity given the current unpredictable weather condition and population growth in the country. However, agricultural production has progressively reduced over the years (Sasakawa, 2006) thus the ensuing debate on productivity enhancement by improved agro-inputs. The specific objectives of the study were to assess farmers' perception on improved maize varieties, to establish the level of adoption of improved maize variety, to assess the knowledge and its application in growing improved maize varieties and to examine how the use of improved maize varieties affects productivity. The research was based on a case study design. Various sampling techniques such as zoning, simple random and purposive sampling were used and the key methods of data collection included interviewing, meetings and focus group discussions with selected maize farmers of both improved and local varieties. Analysis of qualitative data was done thematically guided by the study objectives while simple statistics were derived using a computer package, excel. According to the key findings of the study, most of the farmers interviewed (82.1%) were aware of the existence of improved inputs; however, the adoption of improved maize growing was still very low. This was attributed to the high price of the improved inputs. For instance, a kilogramme of Longe4 and Kenya hybrid which are the commonly grown varieties costs UGX 2500 and UGX 6000 respectively. This is far higher compared to the cost of the local variety which is UGX 500. Additionally, the recommended agronomic practices associated with these inputs were also reported to be too costly for the farmers to implement as well as not being aligned to their traditional farming practices. As a result, almost all farmers interviewed attested to not fully applying the practices and acquired knowledge despite growing these improved varieties. This may partly explain the low agricultural productivity. Some of the key recommendations include: government should subsidise improved inputs so as to increase their access and use by farmers. Government should also focus and develop both the organic and inorganic agriculture to increase farmers' options. It should develop market channels for agricultural products so that farmers benefit from their investments. Government should invest more in research to inform better use and thus benefit of improved inputs. There is also need to enhance supervision of agro-input dealers or stockists to ensure supply of good quality seed on the market. It should also enact a law that will govern the development and use of improved inputs in the country so that interests of all the stakeholders are cared for.

Keywords: Agro-inputs, Agricultural productivity, Maize varieties, Mubende district