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THEME: Strengthening Research and Innovations for Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Development

An Evaluation of Dynamism in Compliance with Global Gap Standards among Horticultural Smallholder Farmers in Kenya

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Abstract

Efforts to overcome the challenges of implementing Global Gap standards for export horticulture have been hampered by the dynamism in compliance among key stakeholders viz. smallholder farmers and exporting companies. Limited knowledge exists on the dynamism of compliance and factors driving the changes. Yet, such knowledge would provide lessons to stakeholders implementing similar sets of farm standards. This research study sought to fill this information gap. The main objective was to examine how different compliance mechanisms emerged since the enforcement of Global Gap standards and how they have been changing over time. The study was carried out in four districts in Eastern and Central Provinces of Kenya in 2010. Data was gathered through key informant interviews, case studies, focus group discussions, participant observation and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools. It is evident that after the initial trainings and enforcement, exporters have remained the most influential in maintaining compliance with the standards. The findings also show that farmer groups have been crucial in smallholder compliance. However, the groups were found to very dynamic in terms of group dynamics, choice of contractor (exporter), compliance levels between farmers within a group and across groups, linkages with other stakeholders, farmer innovativeness to either achieve or remain Global Gap compliant and also had varying impact on member's welfare. These changes were mainly as a result of the need to cut costs, spreading of risks, leniency in contract enforcement, group mismanagement, and breaching of contracts. The findings of this study are important to stakeholders in devising implementation strategies to achieve sustainability, improve levels of compliance and access to export markets. The findings inform policy makers and other development partners on how to position new food safety standards within the ever dynamic smallholder horticulture business in developing countries.

Key words: Contracts, global gap, group dynamics, smallholder horticulture, Kenya