THE EFFECT OF MIRAA PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION ON SOCIAL ECONOMICAL DEVELOPMENT IN LAARE DIVISION

BY

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ABSTRACT

Production and consumption of Miraa (Khat) has been an ancient practice by Meru people among other places where the plant is grown including Ethiopia and Yemen. Nevertheless Miraa has been associated with drug instead of cash crop spinning a doubt on its social economic importance to the users. With this regards this study sought to investigate the effect of Miraa production and consumption on social economic development in Laare Division where it is marketed and sold. The study objectives were to find out the effects of Miraa Income on social economic development, Miraa farming, Miraa Health hazard and Culture related to Miraa. The study is expected to benefit the Miraa farmers and traders, the government, Miraa users and scholars who seek to carry a study on the same topic. The target population was comprised of 206 Miraa farmers, Miraa traders and agricultural officers in Meru County. Cross sectional design was used to understand the effect of Miraa on socio development of Laare Division. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling was used to come up with a sample size which was 30% of the target population. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis method was used to analyze the data. The study found from 88% of the respondents that Miraa income has got a big impact on social economic in Laare Division. It was found that income from Miraa sold in Laare Market leaves a lot of money to exchange hands in the region for development and other household use. Miraa farming according to 90% of the respondents was confirmed to be a key economic developer in Laare Economy. A majority of the respondents (78%) reported that Miraa is also a social cultural activity in the community. Nevertheless, it was found from 55% of the respondents, that there are numerous health hazards that relate to the chewing of Miraa which affect people. The study found that these health hazards include effect on teeth, mouth cancer, and stomach cancer among others. However, according to 78% of the respondents, Miraa is very important in the Meru culture. The study concluded that Miraa income should be used to develop the region and not only the Laare area, that there should be a set tradition to maintain Miraa as a unifying factor among the Meru people and avoid the dying culture that has been there for decades and that Miraa farmers, traders and the government should join hands to ensure Miraa plant is recognized as cash crop rather than drug and maintain its social economic importance. The study made some recommendations, that the stakeholders should take the center stage and talk straight concerning the importance and protection of Miraa, that more should be done by the county government in support of the Miraa, that more civic education on entrepreneurship should be carried out to help the youth and person working in Miraa farms and other center where they make income and that international business should be given more priority to enhance more income and socialization to the market bearers. Clinical studies should be conducted to analyze whether Miraa is a drug or not.

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