

Gender Dynamics in the Retailing Behavior of Agro-dealers and the Purchasing Behavior of Farmers in Kenya: A summary brief

Introduction

Agro-dealers in Kenya play an integral role in the formal distribution of improved maize seed to men and women farmers. In Kenya, maize seed is the most important crop input stocked in agro-dealerships and is widely purchased (Bayesian Consulting Group Limited, 2016). Assessing and understanding the factors that influence agro-dealers in deciding to stock new maize seed varieties, and the factors influencing farmers who purchase maize seed, has the potential to accelerate the adoption of improved maize seed by farmers.

Methodology

This summary brief is based on two sets of data from i) an agro-dealer study and ii) a farmer intercept study. A total of 10 counties in Kenya that were representative of the different agro-ecological zones were randomly selected for the agro-dealer survey, which was conducted at the onset of the maize retailing season. We use the responses of 80 agro-dealers (45 men and 35 women), who were the owners, co-owners, managers, and sales staff of the selected agro-dealerships.

Three counties were randomly selected for the farmer intercept study; these represented different agro-ecological areas and maize-producing areas in Kenya. Farmers were interviewed at the onset of the maize-planting season, during the long rainy season (March to June 2019). A total of 466 farmers (309 men and 157 women) were intercepted at the point of their maize seed purchase at agro-dealerships operating in both urban and rural areas.

The research objectives were as follows:



To understand the seed purchasing behavior of men and women farmers;



To determine the factors influencing agro-dealers' retail behavior;



To reveal the behavior of agro-dealers and farmers in searching for information about maize seed;



To examine decision-making about purchasing seed within maize farming households.

Findings

Theme 1: Seed-purchasing behavior of men and women farmers



1.1 Agro-dealer's perception about the purchasing behavior of men and women maize seed customers:

According to the agro-dealers, women farmers are often more risk-averse than men, and are therefore less likely to purchase or try out new maize varieties. Women are also more likely than men to ask questions about maize seed when making purchases (Figure 1).

The agro-dealers believed that men farmers had more knowledge than women farmers about new maize varieties and were therefore more likely to purchase and try out new maize varieties, (Figure 1).

The agro-dealers observed that buying small quantities of maize seed was more common among women customers, and that women farmers also purchased maize seed on credit more frequently than men farmers (Figure 1).

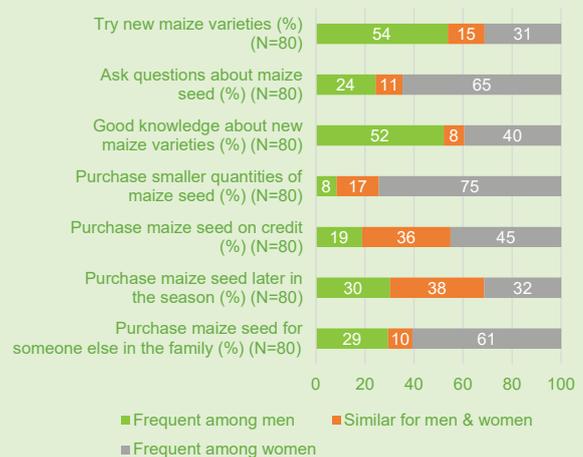


Figure 1. Purchasing behavior of men and women maize seed customers according to agro-dealers

The majority of the men and women farmers bought the same variety (5 and 7 years respectively) that they had used in the previous seasons.

1.2 In-store behavior of men and women farmers:

Men and women farmers exhibited similar in-store behavior when searching for maize varieties in agro-dealerships. Hardly any men or women farmers sought to evaluate or ask about maize seed once they entered the store to make a purchase; this showed that they had planned their purchase prior to visiting the store.

1.3 Differences and similarities between men and women farmers in their purchasing behavior:

Women farmers made repeat purchases from the same agro-dealership for longer (more years) than men farmers (Figure 2). Men farmers stated that the most important reason for purchasing maize seed from the same store was reliability of the products, while for women farmers the main reason was good customer service. The majority of the men and women farmers bought the same variety (5 and 7 years respectively) that they had used in the previous seasons, with significant differences (Figure 2). The greater the satisfaction derived from a variety, the more likely it is that farmers will purchase it (FAO, 2018). The mean volume of maize seed that men purchased and planned to purchase to cultivate for that maize season was higher than that bought by women (Figure 2). Although a small percentage of farmers (24%) purchased new maize varieties, more women farmers purchased new maize varieties than men (Figure 2).

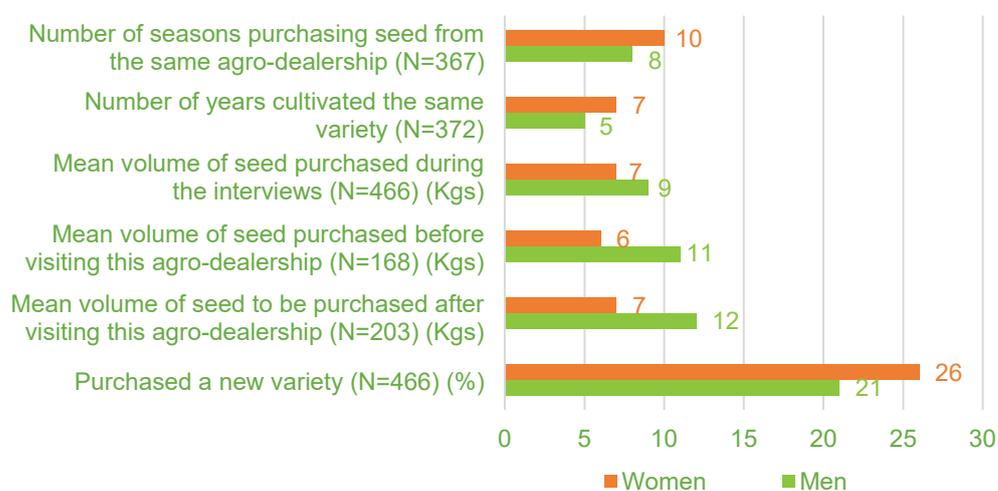


Figure 2. Purchase behavior of men and women maize seed buyers

Theme 2: Agro-dealers retail behavior, or their decision to stock and sell new maize varieties



73% of men and 83% of women agro-dealers indicated that if they were to consider stocking and selling a new variety, the seed company should provide posters and information leaflets.

2.1 Agro-dealers response to new varieties introduced in the market:

58% of men agro-dealers indicated that their decision to stock and sell new maize varieties introduced in the market was mainly influenced by farmers, compared to 37% of women agro-dealers.

2.2 Considerations with regard to stocking and selling in the store a new variety proposed and recommended by a seed company:

73% of men and 83% of women agro-dealers indicated that if they were to consider stocking and selling a new variety, the seed company should provide posters and information leaflets; these are considered as an important point of reference that agro-dealers could use to provide information about maize varieties to seed buyers (Odame and Muange, 2011). The distribution of free seed samples was considered important to men and women agro-dealers, because these provided farmers with opportunities to try and test new varieties on their farms. Both men (58%) and women (66%) agro-dealers also noted that seed companies should set up demonstration plots, so that the agro-dealers could see the performance of a new maize variety before they considered stocking and selling it in their store.

Theme 3: Behavior of agro-dealers and farmers in searching for information about maize seed



Agro-dealers and farmers relied on different information sources to access information about maize seed varieties. Farmers were the most common source of information for women agro-dealers (77%), followed by the radio (69%) and seed companies (60%). For men agro-dealers, the radio (84%) was the most important source of information, followed by farmers (76%) and then seed companies (62%). Men and women farmers also obtained information about maize seed varieties in different ways. Women farmers relied on agro-dealers to access information on maize seed varieties and men farmers mainly relied on the radio. Family and friends were considered as the second most important source of information by both men and women farmers.

Theme 4: Making decisions about seed purchases within maize farming households

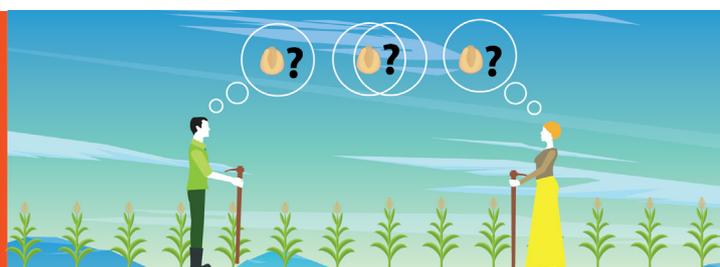


Table 1: Men's and women's decision-making about maize seed purchases

Type of decision (%)	You decide alone		Your spouse makes the decision		Both spouses make the decision jointly		You decide for your plot and your husband/wife decides for his/her plot		Someone else decides	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Decision-making on the choice of maize to purchase	49.1	65.6	6.1	5.1	43	27.4	0.6	1.9	1	0
Decision-making on the quantity of maize to purchase	47.2	65	6.8	4.5	44.3	28	0.6	1.9	1	0.6

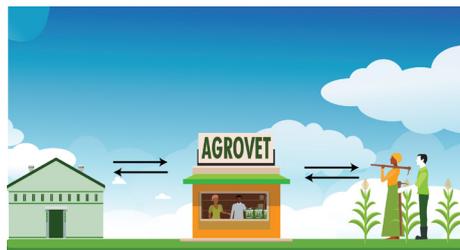
The majority of the farmers in the study were married, indicating that most of them belonged to male-headed households (85%). There were significant differences between men and women farmers in who made the decision about the variety of maize to purchase and the quantity of maize seed to purchase. Forty-three percent of men farmers (43%), as opposed to 27% of women farmers, stated that the decision about what variety to buy was made jointly by the husband and wife (Table 1). Gender differences were also revealed regarding the discussions held by men and women on what maize seed to purchase. Women farmers (61%) stated they had no discussion with their spouse about maize seed purchases, compared to 41% of men farmers.

Conclusion



Recommendation 1:

According to agro-dealers, women farmers have low purchasing power, are not as informed as men about new maize varieties and are less likely to try new varieties. Yet some women farmers in the farmer intercept study purchased new maize varieties, hence more studies are needed to reveal agro-dealers perceptions of men and women seed buyers purchasing behavior, versus their actual purchasing behavior.



Recommendation 2:

Understanding agro-dealers retail behavior provides other actors in the seed sector, e.g., seed companies and development agencies, with an opportunity to learn, and to engage with agro-dealers and leverage them to stock new, improved maize varieties. Furthermore, social networks play an important role in the exchange of information between agro-dealers and farmers. Because agro-dealers play an important role as suppliers of maize seed, they should have the training and ability to influence farmers so that they switch to new, improved alternatives.



Recommendation 3:

Given the gender differences in men's and women's decision-making regarding purchases of maize seed, further studies are needed to understand the intra-household discussions held, and the decisions taken by one spouse or jointly, regarding purchases of maize varieties by farm households.

References

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3. Odame, H. and Muange, E. (2011). Agro-dealers and the Political Economy of Agricultural Biotechnology Policy in Kenya. Future Agriculture Consortium, Working Paper.

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