CONSTRANTS THAT AFFECT THE PRODUCTIVITY OF INDIGENOUS CHICKEN IN KIKUMINI/MUVAU AND KITHUNGO/KITUNDU WARDS OF MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.

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Abstract

The study sought to assess the Constraints that affect the productivity of indigenous chicken in Kikumini/Muvau and Kithungo/Kitundu wards of Makueni County Kenya. The study location is 87% Arid and Semi-arid and very marginal to successful crop production. Poultry production is the most widespread subsistence agricultural activity where about 75-80% of all farm families practice this enterprise. Extensive (scavenging) system of production which subjects chicken to risk of disease outbreaks and high infestation by parasites dominates indigenous chicken production in the county. A total of 158 households (72 in Kikumini/Muvau ward and 86 in Kithungo/Kitundu ward) were randomly sampled for collection of primary data using semi structured questionnaires. Results revealed that indigenous chicken productivity is negatively affected mainly by diseases and parasites, and high cost of feeds, low adoption of biosecurity measures and inadequate extension services. The study recommends that; the county government and private service providers ought to improve on service delivery to the chicken producers in terms of quality and coverage, disseminating seasonal messages when due and targeting the major decision makers in the chicken enterprise at household level.It further recommends financial empowerment to farmers in order to deal with many challenges facing indigenous chicken production in Makueni County.

Introduction:

Agriculture plays a significant role in Kenya’s economy. The sector directly contributes 24% of the GDP and another 26% indirectly (ASDSP 2013).Agriculture is the second largest industry after the service sector, accounting for approximately $58 billion earnings annually. The sector accounts for 65% of Kenya’s total exports, 18% and 60% of formal and total employment respectively (KIPPRA 2013). Small-scale farmers dominate Kenya’s agriculture, accounting for 75% of the total agricultural output. This sector supplies the manufacturing industries with raw materials and generates tax revenue and foreign exchange that support the rest of the economy. The sector employs over 40% of the total population (ASDSP 2013) and is the main source of livelihood to almost 80% of Kenyan population living in the rural areas (KIPPRA 2013). The Kenya’s Vision 2030 development plan has
identified agriculture as one of the key sectors to deliver the 10% annual economic growth rate envisaged under the economic pillar (ASDSP 2013).

Livestock plays important economic and socio-cultural roles among many Kenyan communities. It is used as a measure of wealth and insurance against drought in pastoral communities, payment of penalties, dowry and settling of disputes amongst families in many regions of Kenya. The livestock sub-sector contributes to the food and cash needs of the farmers, and provides employment to about 10 million people, contributes 7 per cent to the GDP and 17 per cent to the Agricultural GDP. It also provides 50% of the agricultural labour (GoK 2010). Kenya had an estimated 11,479,414 tropical livestock units (TLU) comprising cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, camels, pigs, poultry (including ostrich) and rabbits valued at Ksh. 264.8 billion (equivalent to US$4.4 billion) in 2006 (Omiti and Okuthe 2010). The sub-sector accounts for about 30 per cent of total agricultural products, which earn the country foreign exchange through the export of live animals, dairy products, hides and skins. Livestock has poverty-reducing potential (KIPRA, 2013).

Most rural families in Kenya (an estimated 75%) keep chicken. Indigenous chickens contribute 71% of the total egg and poultry meat produced in Kenya and therefore impact greatly on the rural trade, welfare and food security of smallholder farmers (Nyaga P 2007). Annually Kenya produces about 20 million tons of poultry meat worth KES 3.5 billion and 1.3 billion eggs worth KES 9.7 billion (Nyaga P 2007). Poultry meat is the fastest growing component of global meat production, consumption, and trade, with developing and transition economies contributing a leading role in the expansion. In addition to providing opportunities to increase poultry exports, rising poultry production spurs growth in global import demand for feeds and other inputs which give rise to investment opportunities in these sectors. The livestock sector, poultry included, is expected to continue to meet rising world demand for animal products cheaply, quickly and safely (Aila et al 2012). Despite increasing demand for IC products by local consumers, their low productivity, attributed to high disease incidences, inadequate nutrition, low genetic ability and poor marketing channels, reduce their contribution to rural development (Mwobobia 2015). Indigenous chicken have not attained their full production potential due to exposure to risks that mitigate against their survival and productivity. Challenges to production include diseases, predators and poor nutrition. Indigenous chicken can be profitable if managed well. Control of common diseases in the free-range system could improve survival rate of chicks by at least 30% while improved feeding, housing and disease control could increase survival rate to 80% (Odwaysy et al 2006).

In terms of biosecurity, the backyard poultry producers use little or minimum external inputs, which include poor quality feed; mixed cereals; local breeds sometimes combined with improved breeds obtained from extension service providers or neighbouring farmers; minimal veterinary services; local labour and traditional housing systems (Aila et al 2012). Indigenous chicken are predominantly produced in village backyards with little or no biosecurity measures. This production system is characterized by unconfined birds that scavenge around the homestead and often interact with wild bird species in the process contract diseases (Aila et al 2012).

Materials And Methods:-
Study Location:-

The study was conducted in Makueni County, located in South Eastern Kenya covering an area of 8,034.7 Km² and is one of the forty seven (47) counties in Kenya. It lies between Latitude 1º 35´ and 3º 00´ South and Longitude 37º10´ and 38º 30´ East. By 2015 the population in the county had grown to 961,738, (468,298 males and 493,440 females) and is projected to rise to 1,116,136 by 2025 (Makueni County Agriculture Profile 2015). The County lies in agro-ecological zone UM3 (Marginal coffee zone) to LM5 (Livestock-millet zone) (Jaetzold et al 2006). The County terrain is generally low-lying from 600m above sea level in Tsavo at the Southern end of the county to about 1980m in Mbooni hills to the North West.

The Kikumini/Muvau ward is mainly arid and experiences prolonged droughts from time to time characterized by extreme rainfall variability in amount and distribution. Crops grown in Kikumini/Muvau ward include drought tolerant crops like sorghum,cow peas, green grams and pigeon peas. Livestock kept includes Zebu cattle, dairy crosses, meat goats, local sheep and indigenous chicken.Kithungo/Kitundu ward is situtaed in UM 3 and is slightly wetter than Kikumini/Muvau ward. Crops grown in Kithungo/Kitundu include maize, beans for subsistence, while in some pockets coffee is grown as cash crop. Cattle including dairy crosses and meat and dairy goats, indigenous, improved and commercial chicken are reared in Kithungo/kitundu ward.Dairy farming is slowly taking root in this ward.
Study design:—
The study sampled 158 households using the formulae: \( n = Z^2 \sigma^2 \frac{p(1-p)}{L^2} \), Where; \( Z_{0.05} = 1.96 \); \( L \) the precision of the estimate (allowable error or margin of error =5%). Out of 158 households, Kithungo/Kitundu ward was allocated 86 while the 72 went to Kikumini/Muvau ward. Simple random sampling was used to select farmers from each ward. Primary data was collected using semi structures questionnaires administred to chicken farmers at the household level.

Collection of data:—
Primary data was collected at the grassroot (community) level through focussed group discussions (FGDs) and household survey using questionnaires. The semi-structured questionnaire which was developed and pretested, was administered to collected data on; i) general information of the respondent and the household status, ii) constraints that affect the productivity of indigenous chicken in the study area, iii) biosecurity measures practised in the study area and iv) the socio-economic and ecological factors that hinder the adoption of biosecurity measures in the study area. The questionnaire was administered to the household head or his/her representative of sound mind. Two focussed group discussions were conducted within the proximity of the selected households in both Kikumini/Muvau and Kithungo/Kitundu wards. Participants in the FGDs were farmers from the households that fall under the category of small holder, and had not been interviewed during househols surveys. In Kikumini/Muvau 17 farmers (9 males and 8 females) participated in FGD while, in Kithungo/Kitundu FGD 16 farmers (11 males and 5 females) participated. The FGDs were to check the possible socio-economic and ecological factors that could be hindering adoption of biosecurity measures that have been disseminated to the IC producers and their suggested solution.

Statistical analysis:—
Primary data collected was cleaned, coded and analysed using both MS Excel 2010 and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 data analysis software. The analysis focused on the specific variables that touched on constraints that affect the productivity of indigenous chicken in Kikumini/Muvau and Kithungo/Kitundu wards.

Descriptive statistics for frequencies, percentages, means, dispersion, distribution and cross tabulation were used during analysis. Correlation analysis and linear regression analysis was also conducted to test statistical difference of means of age of respondents, household size and land size. The data findings were interpreted with support of other documented research reports available in hard and soft documents. A composite score was computed to aid in discussing the analyses. The composite score was derived by adding strongly agree and agree to form one score (Has affected) while strongly disagree and disagree formed another score (Has not affected) this is in response to questions seeking committal answers from respondents. The non-committal responses were not factored in the composite score and hence were ignore.

Results:—
From the study findings, the major challenges facing chicken rearing in the two study wards were diseases, parasites, predators, and inadequate feeds (Table 1). Other constraints noted were lack of proper chicken housing, conflict with neighbours, low chicken husbandry skills, small returns from chickens, theft and rat menace.

Table 1:— Challenges faced when rearing indigenous chicken in both study wards

| Challenges                  | Kikumini/Muvau | Kithungo/Kitundu |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| N                           | %              | N               | %     |
| Predators attacks           | 124            | 28.3             | 93    | 21.6 |
| Diseases                    | 112            | 25.6             | 120   | 27.9 |
| High cost of feeds          | 60             | 13.7             | 79    | 18.4 |
| Parasites                   | 35             | 8.0              | 39    | 9.1  |
| Lack of proper chicken housing | 30            | 6.8              | 24    | 5.6  |
| Lack of chicken husbandry skills | 30            | 6.8              | 20    | 4.6  |
| Small returns               | 18             | 4.1              | 7     | 1.6  |
| Theft                       | 17             | 3.9              | 21    | 4.9  |
| Conflict with neighbours    | 9              | 2.1              | 25    | 5.8  |
| Rats menace                 | 3              | 0.7              | 2     | 0.5  |
New castle disease (NCD) was identified as the main disease condition that affect chicken productivity, closely followed by Infectious Bursal Disease (Gumboro), fowl pox, Coccidiosis and respiratory diseases (Fig 1). The other disease conditions were leg paralysis (Mareks) and a host of undefined disease conditions.

![Figure 1: Chicken diseases experienced](image)

On disease management, farmers interviewed in the two wards used numerous methods such as treatment using ethno-veterinary and conventional veterinary drugs, vaccination and selling the flocks to evade disease outbreaks (Table 2). Treatment was the most preferred method of responding to disease outbreaks followed by vaccination. Some respondents did self treatments, while others called veterinary professionals. Other methods of responding to disease outbreaks included slaughtering the birds for home consumption.

| Disease management practice          | Kikumini/Muvau % x/n | Kithungo/Kitundu %x/n |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
|                                     | N  | Per cent | N  | Percent |
| Treatment using herbs               | 65 | 43.3     | 42 | 28.4     |
| Self-treatment using veterinary drugs| 29 | 19.3     | 54 | 36.5     |
| Vaccination                         | 27 | 19       | 30 | 20.2     |
| Call veterinary officer             | 20 | 13.3     | 17 | 11.5     |
| Selling affected chicken            | 4  | 2.7      | 2  | 1.4      |
| Slaughtering affected chicken       | 4  | 2.7      | 1  | 0.7      |
| Do nothing                          | 1  | 0.7      | 2  | 1.3      |
| **Total**                           | 150| 100.0    | 148| 100.0    |

**Discussions:**
Indigenous chicken farmers in the study wards are faced with wide range of challenges. These challenges included diseases and parasites, and high cost of feeds and inadequate extension services as the major ones. Since the freeze of mass employment by government of Kenya over the past two decades, farmers receive limited extension services from the few workers available per ward. However non-governmental staff, faith based organizations and private professionals do supplement government services. Other challenges faced were inadequate skills in chicken management, chicken theft and conflict with neighbours especially where chicken are kept on free range system of...
production. Predator attack was indicated as a constraint of lesser impact. This echoes the findings of Ondwasy, Wesonga and Okitoi 2006, who reported that Indigenous chicken have not attained their full production potential due to exposure to risks that militate against their survival and productivity, with major constraints being diseases, predators and poor nutrition.

New castle disease still remain a menace in both study wards (at 77.9%), followed by Gumboro (Infectious Bursal disease), Fowl pox, Cocciidiosis and respiratory diseases. These diseases have remained a threat to the chicken farmers. However the farmers have not embraced vaccination as the recommended approach to control diseases before outbreaks. Poor chicken housing with less frequency of cleaning and limited disinfection can also be singled out as the reason why Cocciidiosis is experienced in the two wards. These findings are in agreement with findings of King’ori, Wachira and Tuitoek (2010) in their study on indigenous chicken production in Kenya. Study by Okwor and Eze (2011) found Newcastle disease being the most significant diseases for poultry producers around the world. This poultry disease is influenced directly or indirectly by weather and climate. The limited use of modern methods of managing indigenous chicken diseases was found to be another constraints facing chicken production in the study area.

High use of herbs by 43.3% of chicken farmers in Kikumini/Muvau and 28.4% in Kithungo/Kitundu is indicative of how conventional chicken drugs have not been embraced in the both study wards either due to their costs, inaccessibility or merely lack of awareness of their availability or/and perceived ineffectiveness due to previous misuse of the antibiotic. Most farmers in Kithungo/Kitundu buy drugs and vaccinate their birds as indicated by 36.5% and 20.2% respectively. On the contrary in Kikumini/Muvau vaccination is very low (18%). This is a low percentage bearing in mind that the area is normally affected by four killer diseases (New castle disease, Fowl typhoid and Gumboro) which annually combined claim over 70% of chicken in Makueni County. Low usage of veterinary officers in the study area (13.3% in Kikumini/Muvau and 11.5% in Kithungo/Kitundu) is attributed to the low number of public extension staff including veterinary officers in the county where extension staff : farmers ratio is 1:1800 (Makueni County Agriculture profile 2013).

Cleaning of chicken houses though practised by higher number of the farmers (86.8% in Kikumini/Muvau ward and 74.9% in Kithungo/Kitundu), on its own is not a very effective strategy in controlling of parasites. Use of vermin dust is better approach but practised by few farmers. The above two measures of controlling parasites is laudable but use of wood ash, splashing of water and detergents as indicated by over 33% of respondents are methods with unknown effectiveness pose a great constraints of ensuring indigenous chicken biosecurity is maintained. Related results were reported by Khandait et al 2011 and Mfaume (2008) in their studies in India and Tanzania respectively.

The study established that 74.1% of farmers use free range method of indigenous chicken production. This method coupled with poor housing and mixing with neighbours chicken pose great danger of spread of diseases and parasites across farms. The lack of appropriate shelter to house birds exposes them to vagaries of the weather which tends to affect productivity. These observations are supported by the findings by Onuekwusi (2001) in a survey on commercial poultry production in Nigeria which showed that more than half of the surveyed poultry farms did not provide adequate housing or shelter for their chickens. Majority (90.2%) of the farmers supplement their chicken. However the supplement feeds given are mostly from whole grains produced at their farms, leftovers, green vegetables which may not provide balanced diet. The lack of balance diet given indigenous chicken does not catalyse their growth or faster weight gain but contributes to low production of meat and eggs. This state of affair is supported by Ali 2012 who argues that in most cases farmers don’t offer balanced or standard feeds instead they provide supplements of grains and food residues. Best practices recommend commercial feeds with proper formulation (balanced diet) should be used to supplement free range indigenous chicken production. Use of low quality feeds materials to supplement indigenous chicken is attributed to high cost of commercial feeds. This fact is supported by King’ori, Wachira & Tuitoek (2010) who found out that the prices of feed have been constantly increasing. Due to recent global changes in the price structure of the cereal grains and other feed stuffs, the poultry industry at present is handicapped on account of high feed cost which has gone over to more than 60% of the total cost of production King’ori, Wachira & Tuitoek (2010).Obtaining quality poultry feed also presents a challenge to poultry famers.

Majority (85.3%) of the farmers agreed that constraints facing production of indigenous chicken have negatively affected productivity in both study wards these included; diseases, parasites, high cost of feeds, costly construction materials and predation. Similar studies (Mapiye et al 2008, Fisseha et al 2010, Magothe et al 2012, Oosthuyen
2013, Gwala 2014 and Butler 2016) also indicate these as production constraints faced by chicken farmers. Other researchers (Adebayo and Adeola, 2005, Mapiye et al 2008, Bongani and Masuku 2013, Ndathi et al 2012 and Kyule et al 2015) found socio-economic factors as crucial constraints in chicken production in their studies. Ownership of chicken at household level and land ownership are also other socio-cultural challenges facing indigenous chicken in the study area. Different studies (FAO, 2004, FAO 2008, Fisseha et al 2010 and Ndathi et al 2012) also found socio-cultural aspect in different communities as constraints that affect indigenous chicken productivity.

Conclusion:-

- Lack of adequate biosecurity measures to protect their chicken from diseases infections and parasites infestation have led to low productivity of indigenous chick
- Diseases and parasites, New castle disease, Gumboro (Infectious Bursal disease) and Fowl Pox also lower productivity of indigenous chick.
- Inadequate resources and inadequate knowledge on chicken management have led to low practices of vaccination and as a result farmers use herbs to treat chicken diseases as an alternative.
- High cost of feeds and feed ingredients are also a hindrance to productivity of indigenous chicken.
- Environmental variability (especially cold seasons when chicken diseases outbreaks mostly occur) has also negatively affect productivity of indigenous chicken

Recommendations:-
The study recommends that; the county government of Makueni and private service providers ought to improve on service delivery to the chicken producers in terms of quality and coverage, disseminating seasonal messages when due and targeting the major decision makers in the chicken enterprise at household level. It further recommends financial empowerment to farmers in order to deal with many challenges facing indigenous chicken production in Makueni County.

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