



**EFFECTS OF FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY STANDARDS ON
SMALLHOLDER VEGETABLE FARMING IN MERU CENTRAL
DISTRICT, KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Award of Master of Science
Degree in Agricultural and Rural Development of Kenya Methodist University**

June 2007

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Abstract

Household interviews were conducted during the months of May to September 2006 covering eighty-five smallholder farmers operating in major vegetable growing areas of Meru Central District. The study was conducted to find out the current status of smallholder farming in relation to compliance with food safety and quality standards. Contract farming, membership in a marketing group and level of incomes from export crop influenced compliance to food safety and quality standards. However, households tended to diversify in and outside the farm as a way of spreading risks and consolidating incomes. There were alternative crop enterprises in cases of non-conformity but this was dependent on the agro ecological zone. Enforcement of food safety and quality standards has caused some positive changes in the sector. Despite uncertainty caused by implementation of "EUREPGAP", there has been a spill over of benefits in the production of other crops. The stringent requirements have moved some players out of the business but the effect was nullified by new entries leading to an increase in production.

It was concluded that the future of smallholder export vegetable farming is dependent on the influence of smallholder organization arrangement such as contract farming and marketing groups and earnings from the export vegetables.

Enforcement of food safety and quality standards has positively influenced the sector towards a more streamlined production and marketing arrangements. It is therefore, necessary for appropriate measures to be put in place to consolidate the realized and envisaged positive effects.