

AVOCADO PRODUCTION AND LOCAL TRADE IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF TANZANIA

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Avocado is an important commodity in Tanzania and is grown mostly by smallholder farmers in Njombe, Mbeya, Songwe, Arusha and Kilimanjaro regions. Local avocado landraces are sold in domestic markets while the commercial cultivars are sold in both domestic and international markets. Rungwe avocado company and Africado are large-scale avocado producers and exporters based in Mbeya and Kilimanjaro, respectively, where they link and support over 6000 smallholder avocado growers. Avocado crop in Tanzania is sparingly studied, thus the present study was undertaken to explore the current situation of avocado production and local trade in eight districts. A total of 275 avocado farmers, 231 avocado traders and 14 key informants were face-to-face interviewed with semi-structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics, chi-square test and one way ANOVA were used in describing the data. The average fruit yield among districts ranged from 51.59 ± 2.65 to 156.24 ± 2.91 kg/tree/year and was purchased from 408.71 ± 1.90 to $1,194.00 \pm 1.35$ TZS/kg. The price was unsatisfactory for 71.89% of all the farmers involved in this study due some reasons including high cost associated with establishment and management of avocado farms. The traders purchasing volume ranged from 42.49 ± 2.54 to 349.46 ± 2.65 kg at once with a reported loss of 9.42 to 33.28% among districts. However, 78.70% of all the traders interviewed were pleased with avocado business. The study findings show that there is significant production of avocado in the districts included in this research survey, though the growers and local traders do not maximally benefit from. Deprived access to agricultural inputs, impoverished transport infrastructure, uncompetitive local trade and high loss due to spoilage of local avocado landraces are among constraints of avocado value chains in Tanzania.