LEADERSHIP AND CUSTOMER FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY OF SMALL HOLDER DAIRY FARMING PROJECTS IN KAJIADO COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The increased level of competition resulting from globalization has forced project managers to put in place strategies of remaining sustainable. All projects including the small holder dairy farming one's have not been left behind in pursuit of remaining sustainable with this increased level of competition. Despite the significant role of Total Quality Management (TQM) in sustainability of projects, little efforts have been made to apply TQM principles among small scale dairy farming projects. This has resulted into low quality of dairy products offered to customers that adversely affects their health. The main objective of the study was to establish the effect of TQM on sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects in Kajiado District. The specific objectives of the study were determining effect of leadership, people management, process management, customer focus and information and communication on the sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects in Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the TQM Theory, Resource-Based View Theory and the Theory of Constraints. The study adopted a descriptive design and a total of 125 senior and middle level managers were targeted. The study used a census and thus the sample size was 125 respondents. The study collected primary data with the help on questionnaires. The collected data was analyzed using means, standard deviations and regression analysis. Presentation of findings was achieved via utilization of Figures and Tables. The study established that leadership and customer focus have significant effect on sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects. Likewise, managing people and processes have insignificant effect on small holder dairy farming projects. The study concludes that leadership and customer focus are significant TQM components influencing sustainability of

small holder dairy projects.
The study recommends that dairy farmers in Kenya should periodically analyze sustainability using computer systems for the sectional heads to make decision. All stakeholders in the dairy farming activity should highly observe ethics and integrity is observed when dealing with each other. Customer complaints should be used as an approach of improving current processes in the producer dairy group. Dairies should visit customers after offering the financial services. The dairy unit quality strategy should be communicated to all farmers quickly due to the use of ICT.

Key words; **Total Quality Management, Leadership, Customer Focus, Sustainability**.

INTRODUCTION

Total quality management (TQM) is a management practices that has gained momentum in small scale dairy farming projects. Thus far, adequate literature has been documented on TQM and its value in increasing sustainability of small-scale dairy farming projects (Larson, Gray, Danlin, Honig & Bacarini, 2014). Total quality is part of lean management practices that is being adopted by many project managers in all sectors to enhance their project sustainability through customer focus and reducing costs. In addition, lean operational tools and techniques like total quality are turning out to be the new style for many small-scale dairy farming projects to enhance their sustainability and huge benefits of many project managers (Mosadeghrad, 2014). According to Hietschold, Reinhardt and Gurtner (2014), TQM is seen as a resource that project managers strategically leverage on so as to enhance sustainability of their projects. Total quality management also enables small scale dairy farmers to beat competitors in the current environment faced with intensive competitions. Customers today are looking for dairy products that meet proper standard of quality in all dimensions of life like health. Today, quality supersedes the cost of dairy products in that customers will prefer to pay for more and get quality product as opposed to paying less and get goods that do not meet the standards of quality.

Project sustainability according to International Institute for Sustainable Development (2010) involves activity and strategy adoption to cater for the project needs and stakeholders. While ensuring preservation, sustenance and improvement of human and natural resources for the future. To achieve sustainability, small holder dairy farmers should ensure that their operations processes are modified. This modification indicates the ability to build systems of operation that do not affect the environment negatively while at the same time offering services and products that are environmental conducive. According to Leal Filho, Shiel and Paco (2016), project managers nowadays have moved towards sustainability reporting. Project managers use sustainability reports to strategically integrate typically isolated functions of an organization for example research and development, finance and marketing among other functions of an organization. Sustainability however demands combined views from the entire world, with interrelated measures that depicts how the variables (society, economy and environment) are related to each other. This is a form of evaluating sustainability of projects that is recognized internationally with emphasis on shareholders and it is commonly referred to as the Global Reporting Initiative (Iyer, 2018)

Statement of the Problem

The increased level of competition has required that all projects establish strategies of sustainability. An increase in globalization and demands for products that meet standard of quality among customers has an implication that small holder dairy projects now have to produce quality dairy products for meeting these needs of consumers in order to remain sustainable. Hence, TQM has been seen as means of sustaining small holder dairy farming projects on a global, regional and local scale. TQM is widely seen as a significant determinant of project sustainability irrespective of the sector or industry. TQM helps small scale dairy farming projects to withstand the competitive forces resulting into sustainability (Mohammad-Mosadeghrad, 2013). Despite the significant role of TQM in sustainability of projects, little efforts have been made to apply TQM principles among small scale dairy farming projects. This has resulted into low quality of dairy products offered to customers that adversely affects their health.

Several studies have been done on to determine how TQM influence sustainability of projects in different contexts. In Pakistan, Masood *et al.* (2012) revealed that when firms successfully adopt and implement TQM, it results into improved performance. This study however links TQM with organizational performance and failed to address how TQM can result into project sustainability. In Ghana, Appiah, Pesi and Owusu (2013) noted reported a positive link among TQM and organisational performance. This research linked TQM with organizational performance and not sustainability. Ondiek et al. (2013) did a study on lean operation tools and techniques used in the sugar industries in Kenya and the conclusion was that sugar processing firms in Kenya and did not completely appreciate lean concepts of operations and have thus not realized the advantages of lean implementation. A study was conducted by Wamweya (2013) on TQM was applied in the lift industry. Specifically, the study examined determinants of adopting practices of TQM and how it affected lift companies' performance in Kenya. None of the above reviewed study linked TQM with sustainability of dairy farming projects. Most the reviewed studies linked TQM with organizational performance. This resulted into gaps that the current sought to fill. The study therefore sought to examine the effect of total quality management on sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects in Kajiado District.

Specific Objective

i. To establish the effect of leadership on sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects in Kajiado county, Kenya
ii. To determine how customer focus affects sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects in Kajiado county, Kenya

Theoretical Literature Review

This is a concept of an abstract that defines a term the field of academics. It focuses on books review, empirical studies among other important sources on the subject under investigation. As a result, a description is provided and a summary, as well as deep analysis of prior studies associated to the research problem under investigation.

Total Quality Management Theory

TQM theory as advanced by Wilkinson (1998) holds that the quality of a product or service can best be explained by the consumers of those services or products as well as stakeholders. Staffs of public organizations should be engaged in identification of external and internal stakeholders of the organization. Staff should also be engaged in determination of criteria that indicates successful and unsuccessful organizations. When an organization satisfies the needs of its customers, more ambassadors are created who ensure that more clients and customers are recruited and hence growing the sales revenue thus sustainability as a concept (Wilkinson & Wither 1992). This research concentrated on determining the interaction between total quality management and sustainability. The TQM theory was therefore well suited in supporting the main theme of TQM which the study sought to bring out.

Resource-Based Theory

This there is of the view that organizational capabilities significantly contribute towards performance of an organization (Tippins & Sohi, 2003). Capabilities of an organization are the assembling, integration and deployment of resources to gain competitive advantage. In line with RBVT, capabilities of firms significantly contribute towards performance of an organization (Bhardwaj, 2000; Tippins & Sohi, 2003). Capabilities in this context refer to the assembling, integration and deployments of valuable resources by an organization (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). TQM is composed of different practices for example empowerment of staffs, developing and cultivating good relationship with customers and developing of proper channels of communication between staff in an organization. Implementation of TQM practices in an organization requires resources which are well explained by this RBV theory. The theory links the use of resource and implementation of TQM practices in the organization.

Theory of Constraints

The theory was formulated by Goldratt in 1984. According to this theory, the optimal performance of any system is largely affected by one or more factors called constraints. The theory views a constraint as any factor that inhibits and slows down the system and thus making it unable to realize its goals and objectives. Constraints can either be within the system or it can also act from outside the system. The theory offers the rationale to incorporating change in systems so as to improve on performance. Some of the internal constraints which might impact on the performance of the system include inadequate skilled staff and equipment required to effectively run the operations of the firm. The issues of safety of employees including protective gears to staff are also important considerations of the constraints that limit effectiveness of the system.

Empirical Review

Leadership and Sustainability of Small holder Dairy Projects

Zheng, Wu, Xie and Xu (2017) analyzed the exiting link between leadership and sustainability of projects. The study focused on Chinese construction projects and the adopted methodologies included the use of regression analysis. The study also involved the use of structured equation modeling methodologies. The sample comprised of 219 managers of these construction projects. It was shown that leadership positively impacts on sustainability of the projects but this is mediated by the prevailing culture in the organization.

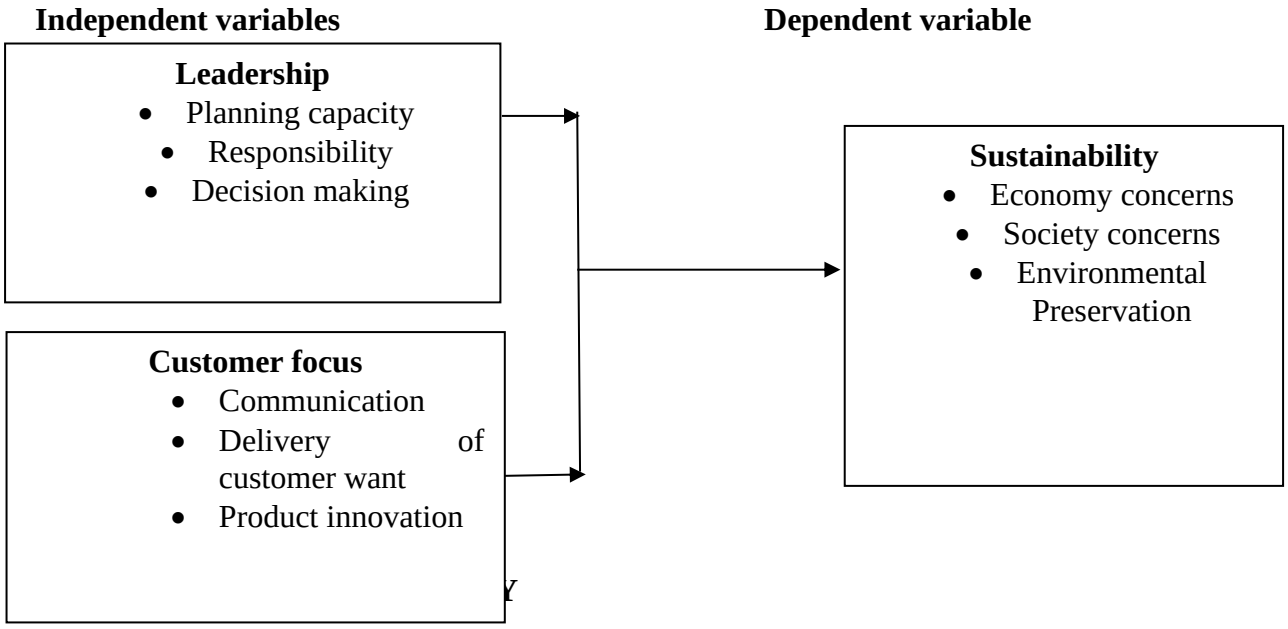
However, this study was conducted in China among construction projects and not in Kenya and this leads to a contextual gap that the present study sought to fill. In United Kingdom, Opoku, Cruickshank and Ahmed (2015) looked at the role played by prevailing leadership in an organization on sustainability of projects. More specifically, the research restricted itself to construction projects in UK. The study used a mixed study approach where data in qualitative forms were gathered with aid of questionnaires on 15 respondents. It was established that sound leadership ensures that effective policies have been formulated that would guide and promote the overall sustainability of the projects. This study was however done in UK and not in Kenya and this brings about a contextual gap to be filled by the present study. The study was further limited to the construction projects away from the dairy farming projects that the current study focused on.

Customer Focus and Sustainability of Small holder Dairy Projects

Yaacob et al. (2014) looked at the direct as well as indirect link between customer focus and the ability of public sector entities to perform. The study gathered information from a total of 205 respondents who were the project managers of the respective projects that were covered. It was shown that customer focus significantly predicts the ability of customers to remain satisfied. A direct link was noted between customer focus and the ability of clients to be satisfied with the product offerings in the firm. Mekonnin (2015) did a study to determine the interaction between customer orientation and the ability of financial entities to perform. The study was done in the context of Ethiopia. The study gathered information from primary sources and the analysis showed that through customer orientation, entities are better positioned to effectively cater to the demands of the customers. However, this study was done in the financial sector and not among the dairy farming projects and thus a contextual gap.

Conceptual Framework

Figure1illustrates the conceptual framework. The independent variables are leadership and customer focus while the dependent variable is sustainability.



The study adopted descriptive research design. According to the Kajiado County Cooperatives Office (2019), there are five (5) smallholder dairy projects in the County. The county was purposively selected from among all the counties in which the five had facilitated formation of small holder rural producer organizations. The study targeted 25 project managers from each of these five small holder dairy projects in Kajiado district. Thus, the target population was 125 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires which were administered to project managers. The analysis of the collected data involved processing of the raw data to draw relevant inferences from the results. The regression model is as summarized below and its essence was to bring out the interaction between TQM practices and project sustainability:

$$\mathbf{Y= \beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\beta_2X_2 + \varepsilon}$$

Where: Y is sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects; β_i (i = 0 –2) is the coefficient of regression; X_1 to X_2 is leadership and customer focus respectively and α depicts unaccounted parameters, whose explanation is not captured by the model.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation of Research Findings

Response Rate

A total of 125 questionnaires were distributed with 90 being successfully filled and collected. This represented a reaction rate of 72% and was considered to be sufficient for data analysis. This response rate matches to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) condition that a response charge of 70% and over is considered plenty for analysis. In addition, considering the geographical area that the target respondents and persistent follow up, the chances of more questionnaires being received declined with time and therefore, this was considered adequate for the analysis.

Demographic Information

The results revealed that majority of the dairy farmers in the district that had embraced dairy farming were less than 50 years and this shows that the youth had embraced dairy farming as an occupation. With regards to education, many respondents (53%) had attained secondary education followed by those that had attained primary education level (36%) while the rest had attained tertiary and university education. This meant that dairy farming activity was undertaken by farmers with different educational level and hence their variation in the application and adoption of TQM. Regarding the duration of operation, of small holder dairy producer, it was established that majority (70%) of the smallholder dairy groups had been in operation for less than 10 years while only 30% of the dairy group had operated for over 10 years. This implied that most the dairy groups were fairly new considering that most of them were under the age of 40 years. About the size of land, the study disclosed that most of the farmers were under 50 years and had been allocated minimal acreage by their parents. Annual income from land usage annually revealed that many respondents (45%) generated more than Kshs. 200,000 from dairy farming while around 18.9% earned less than Kshs. 100,000 and another 35.6% got Kshs. 100,000-200,000 per year from the dairy farming.

Descriptive Statistics

Leadership and Sustainability of Small holder Diary Farming Projects

Table 4.1: Leadership

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Quality management is incorporated in the dairy group vision	90	3.52	1.03
The top management of the dairy group has sufficient knowledge of the spirits together with principles of quality management	90	2.95	1.34
The sectional heads of the dairy group accept responsibility for quality of the dairy products	90	3.90	.703
The dairy group plan always includes external customers, suppliers and other stakeholders	90	3.67	1.33
Periodic data is analyzed through the use of computers for the sectional heads to make decision	90	3.64	1.13
Overall mean	**90**	**3.53**	**1.10**

Source: Research data (2021)

From the results above, towards the operationalization of the top management support of TQM practices in the dairy projects, the study found that the top management had incorporated the importance of quality products in their vision (M=3.52), the sectional heads of the dairy group accept responsibility for quality of the dairy products (M=3.90), the dairy group plan always incorporated external customers, suppliers and other stakeholders (M=3.67) and periodic data was analyzed using computer for the sectional heads to make decision (M=3.35). The low standard deviation on this result means that there was high agreement among the respondents.

The findings show that the leadership of the dairy projects have tended towards maintaining high quality of products and this could be due to the perishability of the products as well as meeting customer's level of satisfaction considering that their products are consumable. The top management responsibility is widely predictable as a branch of quality management perform since it plays an imperative function in quality culture and therefore everybody in the organization is responsible for quality improvement incorporated liability in their dimension scales of quality management practices.

Responsibility also plays an essential role in value culture and hence for a business, a quality culture is one characterized by a situation where everyone is in charge for improving quality (Dahlgaard *et al*., 2008). On the other hand, the study established to a low extent that the top management of the dairy group clearly understand the essential spirits and principles of quality management in their dairy products (M=2.95). It was concluded that the dairy project sectional heads had taken responsibilities for quality of goods and essentially understand the spirit and principal of quality management.

The finding is dependable with that of Terziovski and Samson (1999) who observed that there is increased tendency of managers to maintain with an internal focus for TQM rather than adopting a client focus, and this could clarify why there is a shift in reputation from TQM to ISO9000, which is possibly suggestive of managers' pre-occupation with achieving short-term outcome. TQM necessitate absolute support of top management, who realize that it is not a temporary cost decrease project but rather a long-term venture and as Ogbari and Borishade (2015) pointed out, top management obligation should be shown by adopting the lead role in accomplishment of the same in all projects.

Customer Focus and Sustainability of Small holder Dairy Farming Projects

Table 4.2: Customer focus

	N	Mean	Std. Dev
The dairy units respond efficiently to complaints by customers	90	3.72	1.19
The dairy has effective process for addressing customer complaints	90	4.27	.779
The dairy engages in customer orientation to the changing market demands	90	2.12	.818
The dairy visits its customers after offering the financial services	90	4.55	.704
Overall Mean	**90**	**3.66**	**0.872**

Source: Research data (2021)

Towards addressing the customer concern, the study found that to a large extent, dairy visits its customers after offering the financial services (M=4.55), the dairy has effective process for resolving customer complaints (M=4.27) and the dairy units responded quickly to customers complaints (M=3.72). Respondents on the other hand disagreed that the dairy undertook customer orientation to the changing market demands (M=2.12) Customer fulfillment has been found to be in constructive connection with TQM plan and in sensible relationship with presentation (Juran, 1995). These results support the findings made by Brah and Lim (2012) who opine that a firm's set performance has a helpful association with generally organizational performance. One possible justification could be due to the victory of TQM achievement as measured by speed of delivery, high flexibility and high productivity would lead to success in the secondary actions such as fiscal and non-financial performance. Consumers are attractive ever more aware of rising principles in product/service quality, provoked by viable trends, which have urbanized superior opportunity. Therefore, it becomes essential for the management to effectively use internal resources and focus towards meeting customer needs.

Sustainability of Small holder Dairy Farming Projects

Table 4.3: Sustainability of Small holder Diary Farming Projects

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Since the adoption of TQM, we have been able to improve our dairy products market, technical skills and market information	90	4.47	0.502
The producer groups have been able to access a low-cost information within the groups which has stimulated technology adoption and contract enhancement	90	3.67	0.909
TQM practices has enabled dairy farmers in the district to have improved access to the market at a fairer price	90	4.14	1.13
By sharing information on bad players in a decentralized manner, a dairy producer organization has helped the members to lower screening costs.	90	3.84	0.692
Cooperation in negotiating prices with traders increases their bargaining power and gain greater control over the setting of prices and also reduces the time and the cost of marketing.	90	3.64	0.997
There has been increased loan repayment by the dairy members as a result of the dairy projects implementing the TQM principles	90	3.44	0.900
The dairy producer groups have witnessed improved support from the community since the introduction of TQM in the project.	90	2.92	0.690
Overall Mean	**90**	**3.73**	**0.831**

Source: Research data (2021)

The results on the effect of total quality management on the sustainability of small holder dairy projects show that the organizations have been able to improve their dairy products market, technical skills and market information (M=4.47). TQM practices had enabled dairy farmers in the district to improve access to the market at a fairer price (M=4.14). By sharing information on bad players in a decentralized manner, a dairy producer organization had helped the

members to lower screening costs (M=3.84). Producer groups had been able to access a low-cost information within the groups which has stimulated technology adoption and contract enhancement (M=3.67). Cooperation in negotiating prices with traders increases their bargaining power and gain greater control over the setting of prices and also reduces the time and the cost of marketing (M=3.64). To a low extent however, the dairy producer groups had witnessed improved support from the community since the introduction of TQM in the project (M=2.92).

This implies that when the local community perceives an organization to employ to adopt modern or scientific methods in their project management, then they will give support to such initiatives. In addition, the effective communication among the members had facilitated easier admission to goods markets, industrial skills and promotes information as well as sharing information on bad players in a decentralized manner. Salaheldin (2009) further originate that TQM has an optimistic and important effect on operational and organizational performance. This result will be different with of Powell (2009) whose result proves that only elastic aspect of TQM surrenders an optimistic correlation by means of concert.

Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests were carried out prior regressing data to determine the suitability of the data set for inferential analysis. The findings are indicated below:

Table 4.4: Multicollinearity Test

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	**VIF**
Leadership	.857	1.179
Customer Focus	.720	1.430

The results depict that leadership had VIF of 1.179 and customer focus had 1.430, this meant that none of the VIF values of these variables was more than 5, which was an indication that multicollinearity was not a problem when conducting regression.

Normality tests were done to ascertain whether the data set is normally distributed and determine the possibility of a random variable underlying the data to a normal distribution curve. The outcome is illustrated as follows:

Table 4.5: Normality Tests

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sustainability	.231	90	.200*	.881	90	.314
Leadership	.315	90	.086	.655	90	.072
Customer Focus	.321	90	.100	.767	90	.065

The outcome show that the variables adopt a normal distribution curve because their levels of significance (p-values) is more than 5% (0.200, 0.086, 0.100, 0.314, 0.072 & 0.065, respectively).

Inferential Statistics

This entails the link between variables to find out whether there is any existing relationship. A regression model was employed to establish the nexus between leadership, customer focus and

Sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects:

Table 4.6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.475[a]	.237	.182	.730

From Table, the value of adjusted R square is 0.182; which was interpreted to imply that 18.2% variation in sustainability of dairy farming projects was explained by variation in leadership and customer focus practices.

Table 4.7: ANOVA

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.355	2	1.6775	3.8590	.000[b]
	Residual	37.824	87	0.4347		
	Total	41.179	89			

The output discovered that general regression was significant since its p-value was lower than 5% (0.000).

Table 4.8: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.567	1.322		3.380	.000
X_1	.412	.157	.402	2.176	.049
X_2	1.157	.191	.619	2.265	.035

Dependent variable –sustainability of small holder dairy projects; X_1 = leadership; X_2 = customer focus. The regression equation derived from the above output is as follows:

$Y = 4.567 + 0.412X_1 + 1.157X_2$

At 5% level of significance, leadership (p=0.049) had significant influence on sustainability of small holder dairy projects as well as customer focus (p=0.035) which attained a significant effect on project sustainability.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership and Sustainability of Small holder Dairy Farming Projects

The study found that leadership had significant effect on sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects. Top firm leadership determined the work and operational culture in the implementation of a project. The success of a project largely depended on its leadership particularly in incorporating the work ethics, such as integrity and transparency in the systems to boost the leadership reliability. Further findings show that the leadership of the dairy projects maintained high quality products due to products perishability and meeting customer demands. The study also found that there was need for the management of the project, not to only consider internal factors that affect a project but also external factors such has regulatory and government requirement as well as the changes in the overall operating environment when

coming up with strategies to successfully operationalize the project.

Customer Focus and Sustainability of Small holder Dairy Farming Projects

It was found that customer focus enhanced sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects to a large extent. The dairy groups were found to respond promptly to customers complaints and this was achieved through having effective procedure of resolving customer complaints and continuously reorienting their operations to the changing customer and market demands. The dairy visited its customers after offering the financial services. It had effective process for resolving customer complaints, and its units responded quickly to customers complaints. In addition, the dairy undertook customer orientation to the changing market demands.

Conclusion

The study established that leadership has significant effect on sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects. Further, good leadership and governance enabled the project to overcome various challenges through effective implementation of TQM practices that enhanced continuous improvement and performance levels. Proper management of people impacted positively on sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects. Management of different stakeholders was found to be a major booster for success of the functions of the dairy projects.

Customer focus was also found to significantly influence sustainability of small holder farming projects. The dairy units responded quickly to customers complaints. Immediate response to emergencies helped in identification of challenges in the system for solutions to be sought. Information and communication insignificantly affected sustainability of small holder dairy farming projects.TQM was viewed as an organisation-wide philosophy that influenced organisational operations, core processes, strategic choice and implementation.

Recommendations

On leadership, dairy farmers in Kenya should periodically analyze using computer systems for the sectional heads to make decisions. The dairy group plan should incorporate external customers, suppliers and other stakeholders and inspire their employees to work towards realizing set goals and targets.

Small holders dairy farming projects should undertake customer orientation to the changing market demands. Managers ought to be conscious about the intermediating contact of performance that TQM-related monetary and non-financial performance can only be improved through performance preparedness and use of clear-cut indicators that ensures effective monitoring of performance.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future researchers should explore the challenges facing small holder dairy farming projects in implementation of TQM practices and ways to deal with these challenges. This will boost the

overall performance of small holder dairy farming projects and their sustainability to the farmers and the entire community.

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