

## Abstract

Coffee is an important crop globally but many farmers get relatively low earnings from this enterprise. This has contributed to many farmers opting out of coffee production for other enterprises which has further weakened the coffee industry. This study was aimed at assessing the factors that affected the earnings of smallholder coffee farmers in Runyenjes Sub-county, Embu County, Kenya and was carried out between February and September, 2020. Data on agronomic practices, production cost and management of coffee cooperative societies was collected using questionnaires from a sample of 384 smallholder farmers and 30 cooperative management officials from the 10 coffee cooperative societies. Data collected on cooperative management and production cost was analyzed using ordinal logistic regression model. Chi-square statistics were used for hypothesis testing for data on agronomic practices in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The results revealed that agronomic practices affected the earnings of smallholder coffee farmers. Fertilizer application, spraying and manure application, weeding and pruning had a strong effect on earnings with Cramer's V coefficients of 0.67, 0.61 and 0.31, respectively. Pruning and weeding had a small effect on earnings with Cramer's V coefficients of 0.06 and 0.07, respectively. Resource management and strategic planning were significant positive predictors ( $p=0.001$  and  $p=0.001$ , respectively). Transport cost and cost of improved cultivars were also significant positive predictors of earnings ( $p=0.003$  and  $p=0.002$ , respectively). The study concluded that agronomic practices, production cost and cooperative management affected smallholder farmers' coffee earnings. The study recommended that cooperative societies should develop a follow-up procedure on the farm level to ensure adherence to the husbandry practices and that the government should formulate policies that enable smallholder farmers to access farm inputs at subsidized prices for increased earnings and reliance on coffee production. The study also recommended that cooperatives should help put up factory managed nurseries that will establish high quality cultivars for farmers at lower costs.