ABSTRACT

The researcher was to identify socio-economic benefits provided by farmer cooperatives to members and identify challenges faced by farmers in cooperatives. The study was conducted in Mukunguli Farmer cooperative “COPRORIZ” in Kamonyi District, Southern Province of Rwanda; a cooperative which specializes in rice growing. A sample size of 115 farmers was chosen from 23 groups composing COPRORIS using systematic sampling where 5 farmers were selected in each group. Questionnaire, field observations and review of documents were used for both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Data were analysed using SPSS software and results were presented using tables and charts showing frequencies and percentages. Findings revealed diverse social and economic benefits farmers get by being members of cooperatives. Results indicate that from cooperative, farmers have gained various benefits among others 100% of surveyed farmers declared having accessed quality agricultural inputs and increased agricultural production, 70.5% acquired shelters, 80% met food safety at home, 65% declare having accessed market, health insurance enrollment increased from 40.9% to 100%, 74.7% mentioned having benefited social and legal protection, 63% and 62.6% of respondents benefited children and adult education respectively. The study results also revealed change in standards of living of members before and after joining the cooperative. The study showed that the majority of surveyed farmers attribute this change to the benefit got from COPRORIZ members. Changes were identified in areas of health, finances and nutrition, housing and information and skills acquisition. However, some problems like bad weather, lack of sufficient modern agricultural skills and lack of funds to expand farmers in cooperative. In recommendation, COPRORIZ should prepare regular trainings in modern farming techniques and increase savings for future investments. Public authorities are recommended to review extension systems and sensitize all farmers to join in cooperatives and provide technical and financial support to farmer cooperatives.