

Democratic Decision Making and Member Participation in Primary Agricultural Marketing Co-operatives in Tanzania

Evidence from Selected Primary Co-operatives of Bukoba and Moshi Districts

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Abstract

Co-operatives play an important role in facilitating the dual aspect of economic and social development. Members have the dual rights to practice and participate democratically in the decision making on cooperative society's governance. In Tanzania, the co-operative policy and legislation highlights democratic ownership and participative democracy in co-operatives; the elements have remained a blueprint and its practice has remained on the legislation. The study examined: membership and member fulfilment of participative obligations, participation on internal democracy in the primary Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOs), members engagement in co-operative business, member ownership and decision making in the primary AMCOs, and primary AMCOs member access to democratic rights. It was guided by the principal agent theory that explains the relationship between members and management. The study was based on the evidence from the primary AMCOs of Bukoba and Moshi districts. 400 members were involved in the household survey. Further, key informant interviews and focus group discussion were employed. The findings show that members were not following the established procedures for acquiring memberships. Also, internal democracy was higher in Moshi District primary AMCOs compared to those in Bukoba. Further, the democratic practice in primary AMCOs was exercised more at joining the AMCOs and in electing board members. On the other hand, not all primary AMCOs members were selling their produce in the primary AMCOs. The Board and Managers should involve members in decision making as the co-operative members are the principal owners of the co-operative society thus requiring that they practice their democratic rights in order to own decisions made.

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