

**DETERMINANTS OF MARKET ACCESS BY SMALLHOLDER CEREAL  
FARMERS IN BUURI SUB-COUNTY, MERU COUNTY**

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## ABSTRACT

Access to markets by smallholder farmers is key to improvement of the livelihoods of Kenyans and also a great pillar to the realization of Vision 2030. Access to markets is a vital requirement for the smallholder farmers if they are to reap any benefits associated with farming. Access to markets could be beneficially looked into three perspectives that are from the market structure, physical access and the farmers need for information how organized they are as well as their skills or lack off. Remoteness from markets and inaccessibility of roads is a major concern for communities in the rural areas in the developing countries. It weakens the capability of the farmers to sell their produce as well as buy inputs which may lead to increased cost of transportation. Therefore this study sought to determine the factors that affect market access by smallholder cereal farmers. In order to achieve this, the study focussed on market access as the dependent variable and market information, legal policies, product characteristics and infrastructure as the independent variables. The study was underpinned by consumer theory, transaction cost theory, infrastructure development-led theory, institutional theory, characteristics demand theory and structure-conduct-performance framework. Descriptive research design was adopted for this study on determinants of cereal market access by smallholder cereal farmers. The study targeted smallholder cereal farmers in Buuri Sub-County which has 36,830 smallholder farmers of which 380 formed the sample size. The study used data collected from 380 smallholder cereal farmers across Buuri. Data was analyzed with SPSS while an analysis on logistic regression was performed at 5% confidence level to explain the determinants of market access by smallholder cereal farmers. The analysis revealed the market information and policies were not significant in affecting access for markets while product characteristics and infrastructure were significant. Poor transportation infrastructure and long distances to market places were a limiting factor to market access which led farmers to sell their farm produce to middlemen who were also the main source of market information. The study recommends sensitization on the use of formal agricultural information as well as awareness of the policies that affect marketing of cereals and improvement of infrastructure within the Sub-county.