

“Utilization of Rice Husks in Mwea Irrigation Scheme”

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Abstract

Rice production in many regions of the world has resulted in a high influx of organic wastes (husks) to the environments due to dumping and burning. This is because most of the farmers cannot properly make use of these wastes. Rice farmers in Mwea irrigation scheme, in particular need to be informed of the best alternatives of utilizing rice husks. An innovation by a 28-year-old man in Mwea area of converting rice husks into cheap organic fertilizers as led to farmers wanting to know more ways of converting rice husks into other useful products. The major problem facing rice farmers is the access to cheap fertilizers that will support rice farming for the longest time possible. It's, therefore, important for the rice farmers to divert their energies and goodwill to utilize rice husks in a more economical way than just burning and dumping this useful resource. This can be achieved by farmers assessing the various ways of utilizing rice husks e.g. as organic fertilizer, pet food fiber, making building bricks and livestock feeds. This project aimed at assessing the percentage of rice farmers in Mwea irrigation scheme who were informed on rice husks utilization. This project worked on the hypothesis that most rice farmers in Mwea were not informed on the utilization of rice husks. In addition, most of them were not utilizing rice husks in the most economical way possible. The general objective of this paper was to evaluate the present uses of rice husks and the information farmers in Mwea irrigation scheme had on the utilization of rice husks. This information may be used to advise farmers and policymakers on the current status to facilitate future interventions. Data was collected using observation sheets and questionnaires. The methods of data collection included interviews, use of questionnaires, and observation. Data analysis was based on both qualitative and quantitative data analysis and SPSS software was used in analyzing data. It was found that most of the farmers and millers in Mwea irrigation scheme had various means and ways of utilizing rice husks. These include use of manure 10%, animal feeds 10%, animal beddings 10%, making bricks 13%, RHA used on farms to absorb salts 13%, charcoal briquettes 7% and use as mulch 10%. However, on average 22% of the farmers and 20% of millers burnt and dumped rice husks. None of the farmers converted rice husks into organic fertilizer while 7% of the millers were aware of the conversion of rice husks into organic fertilizer.