PARTICIPATION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CONSUMPTION OF AVOCADO TO ENHANCE FOOD SECURITY IN EVURORE DIVISION MBEERE NORTH SUB-COUNTY, EMBU COUNTY

BY

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C50/CE/11126/06

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER, 2017
DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree award in any other university.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, Joshua and mother Justa for their tireless effort to pay my school fee and in showing me the importance of education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this study is as a result of concerted effort by many people. It is not possible to fully acknowledge all the individuals and organizations that contributed to making this study a reality. I thank the Almighty God who has given me life and strength to write this work. I humbly register my sincere appreciation to a few people without whom this work would not have come this far. I wish to express my profound gratitude and sincere appreciation to my supervisors; Dr. Josephine Gitome and Dr. Margaret Gecaga who have come a long way with me reading and guiding every draft of this work right from the proposal stage. They provided me with ideas and materials among others.

I am greatly indebted to Prof. Ruth Wanjau of Chemistry Department for guiding me on the value and uses of avocado. I thank Dr. Stephen Nyaga and Dr. Zacharia Samita for their valuable encouragement throughout the writing of this thesis. Special thanks go to Dr. Cyprian Kavivya for guiding me in the final stage of this thesis. I appreciate the Catholic Diocese of Embu Development Office for allowing me to access their Libraries and for providing me with information on the programmes carried out by the Church. To all my respondents without whom this work would not have been possible, feel appreciated. I cannot forget to thank my school Principal Mrs. Nancy Kimathi of St. Christopher Secondary School, Embu, for giving me ample time while writing this thesis. Last but not least, I am greatly thankful to all the members of my immediate family for appreciating my effort and coping with my absence during the long period I have taken to write this thesis.
### ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community Based Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Central Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<td>IRDP</td>
<td>Integrated Rural Development Program</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agricultural Organization</td>
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<td>FGDS</td>
<td>Focused Group Discussions</td>
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<td>OI</td>
<td>Oral Informant</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environmental Program.</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNPFA</td>
<td>United Nation Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFC</td>
<td>World Food Confederation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (German International Corporation)</td>
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<td>VAT</td>
<td>Value Added Tax</td>
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GLOSSARY OF EMBU AND MBEERE WORDS USED IN THE TEXT

Kiere: Millet

Kiviri: Food made from green arrow root leaves

Kimere: A raw dough made from ground millet

Maguna Ngui: Avocado.

Gitwero: Dish prepared from bananas mashed with potatoes

Yura ria kilo: The 1970-71 infamous famine

Kembo (Mwene Ndega): The first ancestor of Embu

Muembo: The native of Embu (singular)

Aembo: The natives of Embu (plural)

Nuunaleile nsuu: To die

Nthara: (Cianthia): The wife of Mwene Ndega or Kembo

Ningua ngwete: The notorious famine of 1981-82

Mumbeere: Said to be the father of Cianthia
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .............................................................................................................. ii  
DEDICATION .............................................................................................................. iii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................. iv  
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS ..................................................................... v  
GLOSSARY OF EMBU AND MBEERE WORDS USED IN THE TEXT .......... vi  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................. vii  
LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................... x  
LIST OF FIGURES ......................................................................................................... xi  
ABSTRACT ..................................................................................................................... xii  
CHAPTER ONE .......................................................................................................... 1  
1.0 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1  
1.1 Background to the Study ................................................................................... 1  
1.2 Historical Background of the Ambeere Community ................................... 4  
1.3 The Advent of the Avocado among the Ambeere ........................................ 12  
1.4 Statement of the Problem ............................................................................... 13  
1.5 Objectives of the Study ............................................................................... 14  
1.6 Research Questions ....................................................................................... 14  
1.7 Research Premises ......................................................................................... 15  
1.8 Justification and Significance to the Study ................................................ 15  
1.9 Scope and Limitation of Study .................................................................. 17  
CHAPTER TWO ...................................................................................................... 18  
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ............ 18  
2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 18  
2.2 Causes of Food Insecurity .......................................................................... 18  
2.3 Religio-Cultural Factors that Affect Food Production ................................ 26  
2.4 Theology of Food ....................................................................................... 28  
2.5 The Church’s Participation in the Enhancement of Food Security ........ 38  
2.6 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................. 42  
CHAPTER THREE .................................................................................................. 48  

CHAPTER FIVE .................................................................94
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..................94
5.1 Introduction ...........................................................................94
5.2 Summary ..............................................................................94
5.3 Recommendations .................................................................99
5.4 Suggestions for further studies ..............................................100
REFERENCES ...........................................................................101
APPENDICES ............................................................................107
A1: Location of Embu County in the Kenya County Map ..................107
A2: A Map of Mbeere showing the administrative .........................108
A3. Images on avocado ...............................................................109
    Uses of avocado .....................................................................110
    Image 3: Ripe avocado fruit .....................................................110
    Image 4: Avocado sandwich .....................................................111
    Image 5: Avocado spread ........................................................112
    Image 6: Avocado shakes .......................................................113
    Image 7: Avocado soap ...........................................................113
    Image 8: Avocado Lotion ........................................................114
A4: Image 1: showing a dry section of Ishiara location ..................115
A5: List of respondents ...............................................................116
Data collection instruments .........................................................117
A6: An interview guide for farmers focused group discussion in Evurore division .117
A7: A questionnaire for catholic priests in Evurore division ............119
A8: Questionnaire for Embu catholic diocese development coordinators ....122
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Areas Prone to Drought in Kenya.......................................................22
Table 3.4 The main categories of respondents..................................................51
Table 3.4.3 Summary of distribution of the categories of respondents/ participants...53
Table 4.1.1 Response on drought as a cause of food insecurity in Evurore division...59
Table 4.1.2 Response on lack of knowledge and poor farming practices as causes of
food insecurity in Evurore Division.................................................................63
Table 4.1.3 Response on Poverty and laxity as a cause of food insecurity .............67
Table 4.1.4 Response on Inadequate policies as a cause of food insecurity.........71
Table 4.2.3 Response on Religion-cultural influence in food production..............81
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model........................................................................................................45
ABSTRACT

Availability of enough nutritious food is very essential at all times. Food security can be enhanced when all people participate in food production, preservation and consumption. This will be possible if people have adequate knowledge on various kinds of foods which would influence them to participate effectively in the production and consumption of such foods. This study was based on enhancement of food security in a famine prone region of Evurore Division of Mbeere-north Sub-county of Embu County, Kenya. The researcher identified avocado as one source of food that could be used to enhance food security in the region. Literature was reviewed under several themes such as, the causes of food insecurity, the religio-cultural beliefs and practices that influence avocado production and consumption and the Catholic Church’s participation in food security. The researcher based his field work on these themes focusing Evurore division. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Field data was collected specifically in Evurore division from the farmers, Catholic priests and Catholic Diocese of Embu development coordinators. This was done by conducting interviews, Focus Group Discussions and administering questionnaires. Secondary data was obtained from text books, journals, magazines and also from the internet. The researcher employed mainly the purposive and stratified random sampling techniques to sample the respondents. There were 96 respondents sampled. The data was reviewed in the light of Robert Chambers’ development model in creating a responsible well-being. A person who is able to produce sustain his or own food is a responsible well –being. Data was analysed using qualitative technique and presented thematically according to the objectives of the study. The study established that there are various causes of food insecurity in Evurore division. The researcher also established that avocado has not been effectively used to enhance food security in Evurore. The Catholic Church has participated in many fields that promote food security but has not effectively sensitized the community to consume avocado fruit and the need to abandon their religion-cultural beliefs and practices which do not help in promoting food security.
CHAPTER ONE
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Food production and consumption is an essential aspect of our physical and spiritual growth. It is also part and parcel of social development in any given country. This is indispensable because food availability ensures that people are healthy, strong and able to contribute to the social, economic, spiritual, political and physical development of a country. According to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of need, food is rated as a basic human need among others (Kotler, 2000).

Every human being requires food regardless of age, economic or social status. Food is not only necessary for survival in life but it is also one of the greatest pleasures, and the focal point around which many of the social occasions, leisure and religious events are organized. For example, during a Christian marriage ceremony, the couple cut and shares a cake to express their togetherness and love. They also share it with the guests as a sign of their hospitality to other people.

Food is used as a sign of appreciation to visitors. People eat to appreciate their hosts. For example, someone who is not hungry may eat a piece of cake that has been baked in his or her honour to appreciate the host’s effort and invitation. Traditionally, it is an abomination among the Ambeere for a young person to refuse food given by an elderly woman or the mother. The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life (Clay and Hans, 2006). Food security
therefore is attained when people have both physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs as well as their preferences. Food security is realized through food production, storage and imports. The National Food and Nutrition Policy identify food security as a basic human right (Republic of Kenya, 2008). Food security will assist in boosting other spheres of the country’s economy and thus contributing to the general development of the country. This is so because it is only a food and nutrition secure citizenry that can effectively participate in socio-economic activities.

Nonetheless, food insecurity sometimes varies depending on the livelihood of the people, or the internal and external conditions affecting that particular household. For example, to some people, insufficiency of staple food is termed as food shortage, despite the availability of other foods. This is also witnessed in national perspectives. For instance, in Kenya the strategic food reserve managed by the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB), deals mainly with maize grain. Maize is considered as the main food crop in Kenya. Unfortunately, maize is not the only source food for those communities that always face hunger and famine. For example the Ambeere grow other crops such as millet, sorghum and peas which they also regard as important food crops.

There have been many global conferences on food security. For instance, in 1974, the World Food Conference (WFC) held in Rome focused its attention on the problem of food losses in the world. About 30-40 per cent of the food loss is through post-harvest practices. The assembly resolved that all countries and international agencies should
co-operate so as to achieve 50 per cent reduction on food losses by 1985. As a matter of concern and the seriousness of having food on a daily basis especially for children, the Conference declared that no child should go to bed hungry (Mkandawire and Bourenane, 1987). However, this pledge was not fully achieved. By 1985, countries such as Ethiopia, Chad, Mali and Sudan were suffering from extreme food crisis (Mkandawire and Bourenane, 2007).

The first of the eight Millennium Development Goals set in 2000 in Geneva, pointed out the need to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty by 2015 (Republic of Kenya, 2007). All United Nations (UN) member states (Kenya included) pledged to reduce by half the proportion of those suffering from extreme hunger (ibid, 2007). However, food insecurity in the 21st century is still a global challenge. For example, in Kenya there are many people suffering from food insecurity who go to bed hungry or cannot afford three meals a day.

Africa is essentially an agricultural continent, but its performance on food production has been poor as manifested by a series of famines (Chole, 1990). More than eleven million people are in dire need of food in the Horn of Africa. In most countries this food shortage is as a result of prolonged droughts that cause massive crop failure and death of livestock. This is experienced in countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. It is estimated that 51 per cent of Kenya’s population is undernourished. Food insecurity is a common phenomenon among many communities in Kenya. This is experienced mostly in the rural areas where about 80 percent of the country’s population live (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).
The Sessional Paper No. 10, of 1965, on Economic Development was to address the problem of poverty, ignorance and disease. However, the Sessional Paper No.4, of 1981, on National Food Security Policy, was basically to ensure adequate supply of food in all parts of Kenya, at all times. The policy recommended the growing of drought resistant crops, especially in the arid and semi-arid areas. The paper also recommended food processing, as an ideal measure for providing all regions of Kenya with food required at the lowest levels.

However, many parts of Kenya have continued to suffer food shortage, despite many government policies put forward. Basing on the recurrent food shortage in many parts of Kenya, it is clear that the policies laid down in the papers have not effectively improved food situation in the country. Communities are yet to be sensitized on ways of increasing production, utility and preservation of their food crops. This brings us to a review of food security issue in Mbeere. This study hopes to bring some sustainable way of enhancing food security in Mbeere sub-County, Embu County.

**1.2 Historical Background of the Ambeere Community**

The area of study is occupied by the Ambeere community. Like most other Bantus in Kenya, the Ambeere ethnic group is believed to have initially come from Central Africa during the 15th Century. They travelled South-Eastwards and settled at Shungwaya, a place in the present day Somalia. From there, they settled in the regions around Nyambene hills, north of Mt. Kenya. Their descendants moved from the Nyambene hills area, travelled in the South West direction and settled south of the slopes of Mt. Kenya, at Runyenjes area of what is today Embu East Sub-county.
The Aembu and the Ambeere are believed to have been once one group as indicated by oral traditions (Kabeca, 1975). A legend states that Mwene-Ndega, the first Aembu ancestor lived with his wife Nthara in a grove near the present day Runyenjes town. From here, his descendants spread out and occupied other parts of what is Embu today. The Ambeere split from the Embu after an inter-clan war at a place called Mariguri. This war was won by the Embu clan. After this victory, the Embu pushed the Mbeere to the drier and less fertile Kiangombe hills south of the Embu region. The Ambeere later increased in population and spread to other regions of Mbeere Sub-county.

However, the two communities co-exist peacefully despite this split. The Embu community often assists Mbeere in times of drought. The Mbeere often relied on their Embu cousins for food supplies especially in times of drought (Kabeca, 1975). The Ambeere are good in making artifacts such as pots, bows and arrows. The Aembu buy the artifacts from the Ambeere. According to Ciarunji (1997), the Ambeere were traditionally hunters and gatherers. They also harvested honey. Later, they developed pastoral culture from their interaction with the Maasai. Livestock keeping has remained a major occupation of the community. Today they keep livestock and grow food crops. These include maize, beans, peas, cassava and millet. They also grow fruits such as mangoes, pawpaw, avocado and melons among others. However, fruits are not popular foods among the old people in Mbeere. They are commonly for children and young people.
What is seriously regarded as food, among the Ambeere is normally what is cooked at home. These include cereals, peas, cassava and bananas. In the traditional Ambeere community food production used to be a collective responsibility in the family and as such each member had a role to play. Germor and Wilhams (1999) noted that in some cases people may starve not because they have no food but due to some religio-cultural convictions or personal attitudes. These prohibit them from eating certain foods. Among the Aembu and Ambeere for instance, fruits are regarded as children’s food.

Embu Diocese has about 379,000 Catholic Christians. This represents about 60 percent of the total population of the Christian’s community in the region (www.Catholic-hierarchy.org 2013). Mbiti (1975) remarked that it is not easy to separate religion from societal culture. Likewise, food is an integral part of life that cannot be left out in our development agendas. Food security is thus a religious issue since it touches the livelihood of persons. The Catholic Church has a big role to play in community development including promoting food security. She has shown great concern for the needy especially those suffering from food shortage. The church can enhance food production through teaching the community the right methods of farming and also denouncing the cultural beliefs and practices which do not promote food security.

In the Garden of Eden, God provided the first family; Adam and Eve with enough food for their survival (Genesis 2: 8-15). Today people have to toil for their own food. God has provided us with natural foods which grow under different ecological
conditions so as to meet the need of people living in different natural environments. Besides, God has given humanity the ability to differentiate edible and inedible foods. Given that human beings have God given knowledge, they can utilize the available resources and produce enough food and overcome hunger.

In 2002, as part of the Great Jubilee, Pope John Paul II while addressing people on agriculture noted that the famous works of Genesis entrust human beings to subdue the earth positively but not to abuse it. Human beings are expressing their God given ability to subdue the earth by cultivating and doing research on various food crops and other areas related to food production thus becoming co-workers with the Creator.

Many people have suffered from continuous food shortage which has caused them not only physical harm but also affected their spiritual aspect. This is because a hungry person thinks only of how to get food regardless of the means. For example, some people steal or cheat so as to get food, thus going against the Decalogue that prohibits stealing (Exodus.20:1-17). They feel deprived of their basic human right although their lack of food could directly be attributed to themselves. Having enough food always in the house is a sign of responsibility and livelihood security in the family (Myers, 1999). On the other hand, lack of food in the house could mean irresponsibility among the family members. As Christians, it is therefore imperative to ensure that there is food security in the community.

Jesus Christ showed a lot of concern to human life by healing the sick (Luke.5:17-26, 7:1-10), raising the dead (Luke 7:11-17, Matthew.8:18-26, John.11:1-44), restoring
sight to the blind (John.9:1-12, Luke18:35-43), exorcising the demons (Mark.1:21-28, Luke.8:26-39, 9:37-43), feeding the hungry multitude (Matthew.14:13-21), among other things. By feeding the hungry, Jesus demonstrated his concern for the physical and spiritual well-being of humanity. He was concerned with integral development of the person (Byrne, 1983). It is therefore the responsibility of Christians to continue with this noble work of Jesus of giving life in all its fullness. The church should imitate Christ in feeding the hungry. Otherwise as Boff and Pixley (1989) asserted, the Catholic Church cannot achieve its catholicity if the poor who are greatest in number and aspirations find no solace in it. They asserted that without the poor the church is lost.

Throughout history, the Catholic Church has had deep concern for the poor and oppressed. The issue of the poor and the hungry is so central in the Catholic Church. Otherwise, how can the church be the church of the apostles if it does not follow their way of life; being mindful of the poor? During the opening of the Second Vatican Council, on 11th Sept. 1962, Pope John XXIII pointed out that the church is and desires to be the church of the poor. That is, a church where the poor are privileged or occupy the first rank. The option for the poor is a reality of faith or theological truth. The poor are the sacrament of God (Boff and Pixley, 1989).

Right from the creation with Adam and Eve in the garden to the Israelites enslavement in Egypt, God had shown great concern to the poor and those suffering in various ways. The commitment of the church is based on her faith in Christ and the biblical understanding of the poor and the oppressed. The church believes that the
God of the Old Testament, who delivered the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt and sustained them in exodus, is the God of the poor and the oppressed (Dorr, 1992). The Church has always participated in the struggle for human right as well as meeting the physical needs of the poor. Santa Ana (1979) observes that the church cannot maintain her faith in Jesus Christ if she fails to assist the poor and the oppressed. He further asserts that the church should be open to the poor and support them.

The deepest foundation of the option for the poor is not anthropological in character but theological and specifically christological. Without being rooted in the mystery of God, the option for the poor becomes a mere blueprint for action. Vatican II (1965) taught that people are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and do so not merely out of their surplus but from their heart. The Council urged all, both the individual and the government to feed those who are dying of hunger (Dorr, 1992).

In the New Testament Jesus is depicted as the “bread of life”. Bread was a major diet in Palestine during the time of Jesus. Bread signified everlasting life. It was even in sharing of food with the disciples that the divine nature of Jesus was manifested by those who were with him (Luke, 24:13-32). It was during the wedding at Cana that Jesus’ power over nature was acknowledged (John, 2:1-11). Food provision plays a major role in Christian life.

Sharing of food has a theological connotation in Christian life. Christians thank God for the providence of food as well as developing their unity. Jesus demonstrated the importance of food by sharing a meal with his disciples and by feeding the multitude.
The divine nature of Jesus was also illustrated in the multiplication of bread and fish that fed the big crowd to satisfaction. In the same way that the crowd witnessed the power of Jesus through the multiplication of food, the spiritual abundance is expressed in the eating of the Eucharist. Self-denial of food on the other hand is considered to be ‘praying with the body by overcoming the sensations of the physical world and focusing on prayer and spiritual growth (Piper, 2014).

The Catholic Church, in her Strategic Plan of 2007, insisted on educating members on the importance of ensuring that they have food to use and even supply to those in need. Those who have adequate food should share with the poor as Christ did in Matthew 14:13-21. Pope Paul VI (1967), as quoted in Benedict (2009), reminds Christians that they should feed the hungry. Pope Benedict XVI, further advised the Church to implement the 2007 Long-Term Strategies towards alleviating hunger. The strategies include teaching members how to improve the farming methods and researching on high breed crops for increased food production.

The Catholic Church’s Social Teaching as echoed by Theodor (1991) urges her members to engage in work which enables them to have enough food in their homes. In his encyclical, Populorum Progressio (Development of the peoples) (1967), Pope Paul VI asserted that through work, human beings become the images of God through the restoration of their dignity. Further the church discourages its members from begging for food; rather, they should work to produce enough to feed themselves and give to those in need. To this end, the Catholic Church has engaged her members in
many economic activities aimed at enhancing food security and poverty reduction in many parts of Kenya.

The Catholic Diocese of Embu Development office in collaboration with its Department of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is involved in many projects aimed at improving the lives of the rural community. This includes; crop and livestock farming. Apart from agricultural production, they have a micro financing initiative, which empowers farmers through loans. This has assisted members to boost their business. The Diocese has initiated a project that deals with upgrading livestock for better milk production. They do this through the Artificial Insemination (A.I) program. This has improved cattle breed thus increasing milk production in the region. There is also a goat project that deals with up-grading the local goats by cross-breeding them with pure dairy bucks imported from Germany. Each new generation produces more milk than the previous one. The top grade one, Alpine goat can produce as much as 5 liters of milk per day when it is well fed.

Avocado also known as *aguacate* butter or alligator pear is a native tree of Mexico, Central and South America. It is classified in the flowering plant family Lauraceae. The name avocado also refers to the fruit. The edible portion of the avocado is its yellow-green flesh, which has a luscious, buttery consistency and a subtle nutty flavor. The skin and pit are inedible. The avocado tree requires a well distributed annual rainfall of between 1000 to 1200 millimetres with deep and well drained soils. They grow in altitudes ranging from 0-2100 m above sea level. Avocado tree takes roughly 4 to 6 years to bear the first fruit. Avocado fruit matures on the tree but ripens
off the tree. An average mature tree can bear around 2,000 fruits annually (Morton 1987).

Avocado is grown in various regions in Kenya, especially where temperatures rise above 25 degrees centigrade. Main varieties suitable for growing in Kenya include: Tonnage and Simmonds which perform well in lowland with altitude raging between 90 - 800 meters above sea level. Hass and Nabal varieties are for 800-2100 meters while Fuerte and Puebla do best at 1500-2100 meters above sea level. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of the fruit goes to waste. Avocado is a nutritious fruit that can be eaten as a fruit, soup, salad, shake and spread on bread just to mention a few. Apart from consumption, avocado has uses such as making soap, shampoo and cosmetics (https://www.avocadocentral.com.2015).

1.3 The Advent of the Avocado among the Ambeere

Avocado was introduced in Evurore region in Embu Kenya in the 1970s. Many Ambeere and especially in Kanyuambora location have avocado trees. Nevertheless, they regard it just like they do with any other fruit. Culturally, fruits are for children among the Ambeere. The fruit is mostly eaten by children. Avocado is not popular among the Ambeere people especially the old. Farmers who have avocado sell it at a throw away price. Some rest rots in the farm once they fall from the tree. They are mostly picked up and eaten by dogs. Some people even call it “maguna ngui” (savior of roaming dogs). This makes some people to perceive avocado as dog’s food. This perception has negatively affected the production and consumption of avocado in
Evurore division. This study introduces a new idea of considering avocado as a major food source.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The Catholic Church in Kenya is credited for its diligent concern with the holistic development of people. Catholic Diocese of Embu has initiated several projects in the diocese aimed at increasing food production in the region. These include crop farming and livestock keeping. Avocado fruit is one of the most valuable crops grown in the region and also propagated by the diocese. Avocado do well in low rainfall and its uses are quite diverse. However, Food insecurity has remained a common phenomenon in the division despite the Catholic initiating several Projects and avocado being grown in the region.

There are many farmers who have planted avocado in the region but are not benefiting from them. The church is urged to be the church of the poor especially the hungry. Ambeere community has experience food insecurity for a long time. What is the Catholic Church doing to assist the community to benefit from the avocado? Has the Church sensitized the community on the value and uses of avocado? In view of the above, this study examines the uses of avocado and participation of the Catholic Church in avocado production for the enhancement of food security in Evurore division.
1.5 Objectives of the Study

1.5.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to determine the role of the Catholic Church in enhancing food security in Evurore Division, Mbeere north sub-County Embu County through enhancing avocado consumption.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

i) To investigate the causes of food insecurity in Evurore Division in Mbeere North sub – county.

ii) Find out the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices that affect the production and consumption of avocado in the enhancement of food security in Evurore division.

iii) Evaluate the role of the Catholic Church in the production and consumption of the avocado fruit.

1.6 Research Questions

i) What are the causes of food insecurity in Evurore division?

ii) What are the Ambeere Religio-cultural beliefs and practices that affect the production and consumption of avocado?

iii) How does the Catholic Church participate in the production and consumption of the avocado fruit?
1.7 Research Premises

i) Food insecurity in Evurore Division is caused by under usage of the available resources in the region.

ii) The Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices have negatively affected the consumption of avocado in Evurore division.

iii) The Catholic Church has not effectively participated in the production and consumption of avocado in Evurore division.

1.8 Justification and Significance to the Study

The issue of food insecurity is major concern in Africa with many countries having many people who go to bed hungry. In Kenya over 10 million people suffer food insecurity. There has been series of famines in Kenya almost at an interval of every ten years. Evurore division, Mbeere sub-county has experienced severe famine for many years. For example, in recent years this was witnessed in 1981, 1984, and 1997 and also in 2000.

This study was conducted in Evurore Division because it is the poorest economically and also the area most affected by food insecurity compared to other divisions in Mbeere Sub-county. Majority of the families in this region depend on relief food from the Church and well-wishers. The researcher identified avocado fruit as a means of boosting food security in the region. There are many types of food crops grown in Evurore but the researcher chose avocado due to its nutritive value and varied uses besides eating. Apart from the uses, avocado can produce even with minimal amount of rainfall which cannot support other food crops. Many farmers in the region have
planted avocado but they have not benefited from it. Researchers working on food security in Mbeere have researched on other crops like millet and cassava but none has done a study on avocado. This study is anticipated to help the Ambeere community to change their religio-cultural beliefs and practices on fruits and develop positive attitude towards the use of fruits especially avocado.

By virtue of her mission and nature, the Catholic Church is not bound to any particular human culture or any political or social system. The Catholic Church in Evurore assists all persons regardless of their faith. The researcher chose the Catholic Church due to its credible work and objectivity in matters of human development including food security. It is also the dominant church in the region.

It is hoped that the study will provide useful knowledge about the usefulness of avocado to the Evurore community which will make them to acknowledge it as an important source of food security and desire to consume it. At the same time, the community could use avocado to make some products that would earn them some income and promote their well–being. The study will provide useful knowledge to the public, academia and researchers working on food security in the Mbeere sub-county. It will also be an eye opener to the Catholic Church to beef up her activities on food security in the region. Lastly, the study will provide insight to the Government of Kenya, and the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to formulate some food policies in Evurore Division and other areas in Kenya with similar climatic conditions.
1.9 Scope and Limitation of Study

The study focused on the participation of the Catholic Church in production and consumption of avocado for the enhancement of food security in Evurore Division. The researcher was concerned with the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices that affect the consumption of the avocado fruit. The study did not consider the variety of the avocado or analyze its scientific value. Any variety of avocados was considered as being equal to the other in terms of usage and for study purposes. The researcher sought information from some 20 Catholic Diocese of Embu development coordinators, 6 priests from three parishes in Evurore and 70 farmers from Evurore division. The study also interviewed farmers without considering their religious faith or church affiliation or whether one is an avocado farmer or not.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Literature review was done thematically guided by the objectives of the study. These are: causes of food insecurity, religio-cultural factors that influence food production and consumption, uses of avocado and the participation of the Catholic Church in promoting food security.

2.2 Causes of Food Insecurity

Causes of food insecurity in Africa are enormous and complex which cannot be attributed to a single factor. Some are human based while others are blamed on natural causes. Food insecurity could be caused by losses occurring when crops are growing in the farm while others are post-harvest factors.

Jammel and Ernest (1981) pointed out that food insecurity is to some extent caused by poor post-harvest practices. About 30 per cent of the food crop harvested is lost through poor storage. Mohamed (1994) asserts that, food insecurity in the continent of Africa, is largely induced by misconceived food policies and the difficulties within which these policies have been developed. For example, farmers are advised to increase their crop production by increasing their arable land. Arable land in Evurore is large but many farmers are not able to buy certified seeds and other farm inputs.

Mkandawire and Bourenane (1987) stated that in Tanzania, the government puts more emphasis on export crops and tends to ignore food crops. This is because research
stations are mostly based on cash crops, such as coffee and sisal, rather than food crops. Many farmers are more oriented to cash crop farming than food crops. This prioritizing of cash crop over food crop has also resulted in food shortage in many parts of Kenya. For example, in the high altitude areas such as slopes of Mt. Kenya where rainfall is plenty, farmers concentrate on tea farming and give very little attention to food crop farming. Mkandawire and Bourenane further argue that food insecurity is caused by the country’s drought and disaster unpreparedness. Evurore division is in a drought prone region. There are no drought mitigation measures put in place to compact the menace. The researcher identifies avocado consumption as one means of counteracting drought effect in the region.

Food insecurity is sometimes caused by the ecological factors which are beyond human control. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2000) describes drought as the naturally occurring phenomenon that exists when precipitation has been significantly below normal recorded levels causing a serious hydrological imbalance that adversely affects land resource production systems. Evurore division receives an average annual rainfall of about 750 mm which is not enough to sustain the growth of many crops especially maize.

United Nations Development Programme (2002) observed that almost 70 per cent of Kenya’s land mass is affected by drought. This covers most parts of the Northern Rift Valley, North Eastern, Eastern and Coastal regions. They are classified as arid and semi-arid land. The country covers a total area of 582, 644 square kilometers of which
less than 3 per cent of the total is forested. 75 per cent of Kenya’s population earns its living from agriculture which in turn depends on rainfall.

Kenya experiences drought on a cyclic basis. The major ones come after every ten years and the minor ones happen almost every three to four years. The 2004 drought is a replica of the previous cycle of severe droughts that affect the country every decade as experienced in 1974, 1984, and 1994. United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Government of Kenya (GoK, 2000) observe that severe reduction of water and moisture in the soil leads to dryness that cannot support crop growth leading to food shortage and consequent famine. People have to walk long distances to look for water and in some cases wait for relief supplies. The water shortage may go on for several months.

There are three types of drought:
First is the Meteorological drought which is cause by reduction in rainfall over a specific period of time such as a month, season or year. There is no specific time agreed that warrant the area to be considered as having Meteorological drought. Usually it is determined from what is experienced from a particular region. Meteorological drought leads to depletion of soil moisture resulting in negative impact on crop production.

The second type is the Hydrological drought which occurs when there is critically low ground water tables and reduced river and stream flow. Along period of no rainfall accompanied by high daily temperatures can result in this type of drought.
Hydrological droughts are distinguished by a reduction in water resources in reservoirs, lakes, rivers, underground aquifers and streams.

The last type of drought is Agricultural drought. This is the impact of meteorological and hydrological droughts on crop yields. This kind of drought is associated with extreme heat. It occurs when extended dry periods and a general lack of rainfall result in no or very little moisture in the root zone of the soil. This severely damages the plants that grow in the area. Agricultural droughts are related to the availability of water for crops although some crops can withstand the reduced soil moisture conditions for long periods. For example, sesame, cassavas and potatoes can withstand reduced soil moisture while other crops dry up immediately. Many farmers in Evurore division and most of Mbeere sub-County have turned to maize farming ignoring the fact that amount of rainfall required by maize to grow is higher than the amount of rainfall in the region. The low amount of rainfall in the area is not enough to sustain the growth of maize and so, these results in poor crop yield leading to recurrent food shortages.

Republic of Kenya (2007) states that drought affects mostly Eastern, Coastal, North Eastern and parts of the Rift Valley regions of Kenya. Most areas in these regions experience dry weather conditions causing pressure on the existing pastures and water resources on which the communities depend for survival. The growing of tree crop such as avocado could be one ways of boosting food security in these regions. This study introduces avocado consumption as one ideal means of enhancing food security among the Ambeere community of Evurore division. Avocado can produce even with
low rainfall which cannot support many other food crops. The Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) in Kenya are categorized as follows: 11 sub-counties are classified as arid, 19 as semi-arid and 6 as those with high annual rainfall but with “pockets” of arid and semi-arid conditions. This gives a total of 36 Sub-counties as shown on Table 2.1

**Table 2.1 Areas Prone to Drought in Kenya**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-Counties</th>
<th>% Total ASAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 100% ASAL</td>
<td>Turkana, Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo, Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, Ijara</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 85-100% ASAL</td>
<td>Kitui, Makueni, Tana-River, Taita Taveta, Samburu</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 50-85% ASAL</td>
<td>Machakos, Mbeere, Tharaka, Laikipia, West Pokot, Kwale, Kilifi, Baringo, Meru North</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 30-50% ASAL</td>
<td>Lamu, Narok, Malindi, Keiyo, Marakwet</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. 10-25% ASAL</td>
<td>Nyeri (Kyeni), Rachuonyo, Suba, Kuria, Thika, Koibatek</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows areas prone to drought in Kenya. The arid sub-Counties are hot and dry with an evapo-transpiration rate higher than twice the annual rainfall. Rainfall here is low and highly variable in space and time. These sub-Counties are largely occupied by pastoralists and agro pastoralists. Large areas of the land are suitable only for livestock grazing.
Drought is a serious disaster especially in pastoral areas because when it strikes, it results in death of large number of livestock (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Drought causes massive crop failure in many parts of Eastern and Northern Frontier regions, resulting in severe famine. The North Eastern Kenya Drought Assessment Report (2011) showed that drought is one of the hurdles that may prevent Kenya from achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially those related to poverty eradication, attainment of food security and promotion of environmental sustainability.

However, Cohen (2005) argued that drought is not the main cause of food insecurity because it is a natural phenomenon that can be predicted and managed. Cohen’s argument could be correct if the government create food banks that have enough food to supply to all affected people. Drought may also not be a major problem if there are some sustainable intervention measures that counteract the drought. In any case, most farmers in Kenya rely on rain fed agriculture which means its failure results in food crisis. This study would assist the farmers in Evurore to come up with a sustainable means of coping with food insecurity in the area.

According to Chola (1990) food crisis is a result of decline in food production per capita; which is caused by natural calamities such as drought and floods. Oniang’o (1988) asserted that about 15 per cent of Kenya’s land is arable, but harsh weather conditions jeopardize food production. Farmers are confronted with relatively short and risky cropping seasons. This means that seasoned food production, coupled with possible failure of crops pose a potential hazard for adequate food supply (Ibid, 1988).
Food insecurity occurs mostly when food supply is not able to cope with the growing human population. According to Waugh (1995), quoting Malthusian theory, food shortage is due to increased human population against the available food supply. Waugh posits that increase in human population if unchecked grows at an exponential rate while food supplies at best increase arithmetically. Thus food production cannot cope with the growing human population. According to Malthus, food insecurity is a direct consequence of irrational propensity to reproduce. Malthus proposed that the population should reduce growth rate or have some natural check that would cut the population. Nelson (1982) and Kliest (1985) concur with Waugh that food production per capita has declined due to high population growth rate which leads to the consume of all that is produced and a resultant deficit. However, Malthusian theory ignored the fact that large population could cultivate large farm and produce enough food for their consumption. The theory also ignored other means of food sourcing such as importation or simply buying from other places. It is common knowledge that people who suffer famine mostly are the farmers but not those who live on buying food from the shops.

Margaret (1985) argued that food security cannot be based on the size of the family but rather on how much the family can eat and produce its food or their level of technology in food production. In the traditional African society, a large family was regarded as a source of wealth and prestige. This is because they provided large labour force and produced enough food. They were able to take care of large herd of cattle. Those that had many daughters were assured of getting many herds of cattle as dowry (Mbiti, 1975). The community therefore did not consider large population as a
threat to food security. There is a saying among the Ambeere that a child is born with his or her food. This means that there is abundant food for children. This was a way of encouraging people to reproduce.

However, Akins and Bowler (2001:17-19), observe that although adequate food production is important, food security largely depends on who earns and controls the family income. For example, Oniang’o (1988) pointed out that in Mumias sugar area, it is men who receive the pay from the sale of sugarcane. However, instead of buying food for the family they spend the money on alcohol. In many families in the rural areas, finance is controlled by the men. If the man in the house becomes reckless, the family starves. Among the Ambeere (and in many African families), family land is owned by men. Ironically it is women who are involved in farming. The wife has to get instructions regarding farm managements from her husband. This culture may lead to food shortage especially when the man is not available or is subjective in his ideas about the farm operations.

Food insecurity is also as a result of poverty. For example, a farmer in Karigu-ini Village in Murang’a, Kenya points out that his over-reliance on casual jobs keeps him away from tending to his farm; thus resulting in poor or no harvest (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). Sikolia (2000) points out that food insecurity in Sabatia sub-county is as a result of low income among the farmers who are not able to buy certified seeds, fertilizers and other farm inputs. Political conflicts can also cause food insecurity. For example, the political instability that followed the 2007 disputed General Elections also contributed enormously to food insecurity. Most
farmers in the Rift Valley abandoned their crops in the field trying to flee from protesting youth. The angry youth burnt the crops both in the field and grains in the stores. This was a heavy blow to food security in Kenya; bearing in mind that Rift Valley is termed as the granary of Kenya. This study established how the knowledge on the utilization of avocado could contribute to the enhancement of food security.

2.3 Religio-Cultural Factors that Affect Food Production

Religious prescriptions regarding foods may either be lenient or restrictive. This affects a believer’s food choices and behaviour. For example, in some religions, there are specific foods that are prohibited. For instance, pork is prohibited among the Jewish and Muslim adherents while within Christianity; the Seventh-day Adventists discourage "stimulating" beverages such as alcohol, tea and coffee. Some communities experience hunger because of their religious conviction, customs, habit, tastes and taboo. For example, India is estimated to have more than 150 million cattle apart from buffaloes which could relieve starvation, but beef is forbidden. This is because for the Indians, cows are totems. Cows are sacred symbols of motherhood to millions of Hindus.

Some communities from Iceland forbid their women from fishing. Some fish are forbidden as food, whilst certain Eskimo tribes do not eat caribou meat in the Igloo for fear of offending Sadna, the goddess of seals and walruses (Lowry, 1976). On cultural perception, for example, among the Basoga of Uganda, female children, over six years, are forbidden from eating eggs, poultry and pork. It is believed that these would affect them during child bearing (Burgess, 1962). Among the Akamba of
Kenya, pregnant women are prohibited from eating fatty meats and eggs (Mbiti, 1975). While among the Aembu and Ambeere, women are prohibited from eating birds and wild fruits and some parts of domestic animals (Kabeca, 1973). The above scholars discussed religio-cultural practices concerning food on selected communities. This study investigated the Ambeere religio-cultural practices concerning the utilization of avocado to enhance food security.

Among the Christians, for example, the Bible prohibits people from taking blood of any animal or bird. It also prohibits eating products from animals that do not chew their cud, or those that are clove footed (Leviticus: 7: 22-27, 11: 1-6). These teachings or laws control food varieties that people can produce and consume. Alnwick (1988) observes that among the Aembu and Ambeere, the first solid food for the babies was bananas. These were peeled and roasted in hot ashes. They were then chewed by the mother to make them soft for the baby. This kind of food is nutritious and readily available. However, Christian Missionaries dismissed this as unhealthy and a barbaric act. Today, many mothers go for the processed or fast foods from the shops regardless of their nutritional value. Unfortunately few mothers especially in the rural areas can afford these artificial foods.

The staple food of Ambeere is maize with beans or cow peas or pigeon peas. They also grow millet and cassava. Millet is a common food among the Ambeere. Foods that are not cooked like fruits are not considered as food and so they are given a low profile in production. This study has reviewed avocado as a means of enhancing food
security in Evurore division, Mbeere north sub-county. Avocado is a nutritious fruit that can be obtained easily in many parts of the region.

Burns (1983) observes that people should also eat other foods not necessarily plant products. When religion and culture dictate what should be consumed and it is strictly followed there is likely to be a problem. This is because people will ignore the available food and source for other foods which are not readily available. Eventually, this results in food insecurity because people spend what they have on buying food stuffs and yet alternatives are locally available. As already mentioned elsewhere avocado is a fruit that grows widely in Evurore Division but people do not perceive it as food. The aforementioned authors such as Lowry (1974) and Mbiti (1969) show how the religio-cultural attitudes affect production of certain foods. This study has shown how the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practice have affected food production and specifically the utilization of avocado in Evurore division.

2.4 Theology of Food

‘No one makes a mole to eat alone’. A mole also called mole pablano is a Mexican dish comprising of 33 ingredients, each of which must be prepared individually before being ground into a paste and finally combined with still more ingredients to make a sauce. One bite of mole contains the “entire world”. And mole should always be eaten in communion with others preferably in ceremonies (Montaya, 2009). Montaya likened this act of preparing mole with the act of doing theology.
The laborious gathering of numerous ingredients, their skilfully intermingling in the act of cooking and finally the hospitality of the table where the food is shared, is all means to envision the correct theological practices. The Christian celebration of Eucharist brings one to the wholeness of God. There is a common saying among the Ambeere and Aembu that “Food tastes sweeter when shared”. Theology should be a process of nourishment that takes a complex ingredient, material and spiritual, individual and culture, body and the senses, desire and combine them into a whole. Like mole, theology should brighten and awaken us, leaving us more nourished and more ready to do God’s work in the world. When we taste the Eucharist, we taste God. Eucharist is a material and spiritual dynamic of desire where God desire to share divinity with humanity and humanity desires for God. Eucharist trains us in sharing a complete act of feeding. In the complete act, God becomes food, and we humans become God; God becomes us and all gathered at the table becomes one with one another.

Food is a sign of our dependence upon the whole of creation which is God’s gift. Food is a material object and correspondingly is consumed through a range of embodied per formative practices. It also acts as a medium of creating deep love in human nature. In most communities in the world, love is shown to a friend or a visitor by offering the best meal possible. Through the skilful cooking and offering the aromatic meal to a friend, food creates a great passion that plunges one into deep love for the person who is offering the meal. A friend who is offered a delicious food compares the good taste of food with the love that there is in the host hence increasing the passion for love. On the other hand, the reverse is true. Failure to serve a friend
with food or unpleasing way of serving food may be an indication of dislike or telling one to keep off. People have even used food to eliminate others through food poisoning.

Just the way the aromatic meal is a starting point between the host and the guest; Christians come to love God through the taste of love that God offers to them in sacraments. Christians’ Eucharist brings one closer to the realization of the passion of Christ. Piper (2014) uses the passages in the scripture as a kind primer on food theology to show that the bible instruct what is right and wrong ways to think about food. “Everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanks giving because it is made holy by the word of God and prayer” (1Timothy.4:4-5). Ambeere community should readily accept the avocado as God’s gift. Food is God’s idea both nutritional and taste.

Saint Paul teaches that anything that comes from God is good because God Himself is good. The goodness of the Lord is compared with the good taste of delicious food. “Taste and see the Lord is good” (Psalm. 34:8). If I say taste and see the Lord is good, then I have tasted bread and I know what it means that he is the bread of life. It is not possible to describe the taste of food that you have never tasted till you taste it with your own tongue (Piper, 2014). Just in the same way we enjoy the taste of good food, we should find enjoyment in God. Piper (2014) says that one has to taste food to be able to explain it. Religions such as Christianity and even African religion prohibits their members from eating certain foods without giving clear reasons. The researcher
hopes that this study will sensitise the Ambeere community to change from their religio-cultural beliefs and practices that impact negatively on food production.

Wizba (2011) observes that the fact that food and eating are central to all life is easily taken for granted. People even overlook the fact that food and eating is intimately tied to Christian faith. For Wizba (2011), life and food, and eating and life are all gracious gifts proceeding from the God of creation. Saying the Grace before a meal provides us with an excellent reflection on the important act of thanksgiving to the earth as a gift that cannot be mastered or taken for granted. Food should be taken with a thanksgiving. Eating remains a mark of our humanness, a sign of our communion with God and one another. Eating with thanksgiving brings together the whole stream of life where the unborn, the living and the departed ones are brought to one union. For instance, when an expectant mother eats, the baby in the womb also eats through the umbilical cord. Likewise the departed are incorporated in the feast through pouring some food on the floor (Mbiti, 1975).

Food has always been central to worship. All sanctuaries in the Bible are dominated by food. In Luke’s Gospel, meals are expressed as having distinct evangelistic thrust. Meals express the nature of Jesus’ mission, which He explains as preaching good news to the poor and announcing the favourable year of the Lord. In Jesus’ meal, the poor and the hungry are being restored to the fertility of the land. This study aims at educating the Ambeere community to utilize the available food resources so as to curb the traditional food shortage in the region. Once this is achieved, everybody in the community will appreciate the God given resources of their land.
“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food. And God will destroy both” (1Cor.6.12-13). Both food and stomach are not ultimate. They are going to be destroyed one day. They should therefore not be treated as idols. When the devil asked Jesus to command the stones to become bread if He were the son of God, Jesus replied, “It is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:3-4). Material food is vital for our life. However, our final nourishment is not material but spiritual food. Food is good for the stomach but God or spiritual food is greater than physical food. We need the Word of God vastly than we need physical food. The word that radiates the love of God is more important than sustaining food (Piper, 2013). By giving food to the needy, Christians express God’s love to humanity.

However, little is done to sensitize the community to adapt new food products. What Evurore community needs is sensitisation on how to enhance food production basing on the available resources. This study hopes to provide a sustainable way of enhancing food security through increasing production and consumption of avocado. Theology includes bringing together complex ingredients that includes reason, faith, doctrine, senses, and the spirit among others. Our manner of eating and selection of food demonstrate our belief.

However, what we eat and the habit of eating may be self-centered, consumerist and environmentally motivated. The kind of people that one interacts with may also influence or determines ones behaviour or beliefs in eating. For example, someone eating in a group may appear to be greedy or not interested in eating, yet when eating
alone one eats differently. The manner of eating also expresses one's level of enlightenment or exposure in life (Leithart, 2004). The Ambeere community may not eat avocado partly due to lack of knowledge about its value. Food is intrinsically linked to issues of sharing, mutuality, hospitality, and reciprocity. Hence, food ways are enmeshed in question of ethics and justice. So by providing food to the needy and the entire community enhances justice among its members. This study tries to bring people together through the use of avocado which is accessible to all members of Evurore despite their social-economic diversity.

In a Christian belief, God is central to food and eating. God created humans out of sheer pleasure and put them in the Garden of Eden. In the garden, they were to have food in abundance. Food is also at the centre of our sacrificial service. The Eucharistic meal is the most salient reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice, as well as a foretaste of the heavenly wedding banquet to come. As Merritt (2013) noted, sharing our food with others and not just our friends is another aspect of sacrificial living. Food offers an opportunity and time to enact reconciliation, not just to satisfy our appetite. It is a medium of life and love. Most communities and individuals use food as a sign of unreserved love to a friend. It is used as an expression of equality and humility where the master and servant come together as one. In this case, food becomes a medium of equalizer.

Food has always been an important part of Christian hospitality. Early Christian hospitality was pretty revolutionary in that it broke down major barriers; Gentiles ate with Jews; people ate together across economic lines, and so on (ibid, 2013). However,
meals could also be a centre of confrontation and controversy. For example, the enemies of Jesus claimed that he ate with sinners (Luke.7:34, 36-50). The fact that food and eating are central to all life is easily taken for granted. People even overlook the fact that food and eating is intimately tied to Christian faith. Wizba (2011) observes that life and food are all gracious gifts proceeding from the God of creation. Saying the Grace before a meal provides us with an excellent reflection on the important act of thanksgiving to the earth as a gift that cannot be mastered or taken for granted Eating remains a mark of our humanness, a sign of our communion with God and one another. Eating brings together the whole stream of life where the unborn, the living and the departed ones are brought to one union. When an expectant mother eats, the baby in the womb also eats through the umbilical cord. Likewise the departed are incorporated in the feast through pouring libation (Mbiti, 1975).

Eating and feeding are vital to our senses of self while going hungry can make us feel that we have failed at the task of living. Hunger without hope of respite saps not only our physical vitality but also our dignity as human beings, our mental resources and psychological well-being (Motaya, 2009). To be hungry is to be empty and emptied. People who are dying no longer need to eat. For example, among the Akamba community of Kenya, someone who has died is expressed as having refused food. According to Mbiti (1969), they say “Nuunaleile nsuu” (so and so has refused food). This is not what God desires for human beings. God wants human beings to have abundant, as it was with the first humans in the Garden of Eden. Jesus invites us to a communal feast that will keep nourished (Luke.14:15-24). A famine stricken person may end up in death or weakened such that it becomes difficult to perform daily
duties. A hungry person may also end up in stealing so as to get something to eat, thus breaking God’s commandment (Exodus, 20:15). The earlier scholars studied provision of food to the hungry and its availability but did not consider the ethical aspect in a starving person. For example, Malthus suggested cutting down of population size to cope with the amount food production but did not consider the ethical obligation of procreation and value of human life.

Wizba (2011) noted that countries that are at war use food to silence the rebel citizens. In the same way, the church can use food as a tool for evangelizations. For example, as the church distributes food donations it can sensitize the community to adapt culture that promotes food security while at the same time abandon those which do not enhance food security. This study outlines the Church’s response to the utilization of avocado fruit in Evurore division. This study considers food production alongside human spirituality.

In Genesis (41:54-57), Joseph interpreting Pharaoh’s dream warned him about the need for good stewardship of resources against times of famine. From this interpretation, the country was able to preserve enough food that was able to sustain them the whole of three years of famine. Food bank is a necessary resource for preventing famine as well as catering for the hungry. The problem of food security prompts us to consider the radical demands of our Christian discipleship with Isaiah’s prophetic vision (Isaiah 65:19-25). Isaiah gives a vision that builds the physical health and spiritual abundance of a person by providing the basic human needs. The needs of
The act of eating is itself fraught with significance. Eating establishes us firmly within the world of living and every time we take a bite, we proclaim that we are full participants in creation. We must also acknowledge with every meal and with every bite that life is a gift that is continually given by God. For each sustaining bite, we receive life as well as taste of death. For example, for every bite of delicious meat, a life has been lost. The very food given by God for our nourishment required death of another participant in creation; whether plant or animal, yeast, microbe or fungus and those lives in turn have required the death of others.

Our eating should be humble and grateful as recognition of the gift of food. Wizba (2013) observes that the first human drama took place in a garden, a place that God Himself delight in and has sought Sabbath rest in. Besides being just a source of gift of food, gardens can themselves be a place where people interact with God. The first sin occurred in a garden, and separation from that garden also meant separation from God. Eating is one of the most intimate acts a human can participate in. Merritt (2013) argues that God intended us to delight in our food. He wants us to receive food as a gift, to share it with others, to care about stewarding the land and more. Food is a basic need that we all need for our existence. Many people are not connected to the food they eat. That is, it is not them who prepare that food. Sometimes, people struggle to look for the best hotels with good food. Meals that are just are also mindful of the systems that produce them. People also take into consideration how
and who prepares the meals. Merritt (2013) suggest that if the way we struggle looking for good food, we would spend the same effort to look for justice in our society, we could become great advocates for justice and protect God’s creation.

When the Israelites cried to their leaders in the wilderness for food, God miraculously fed them with manna (Exodus, 16:1-36). This feeding was tied to understanding the will of God, trusting in Him and obeying His instructions. Those who went against the instruction by gathering more than they could eat did not benefit because it all resulted in rotting all the foods leading to waste of resources. God provides but it is the duty of human beings to distribute and utilize the resources equitably.

In Christian tradition, glutton is a sin. Gluttony does physical damage to the body as well as spirit. This is because it inspires selfishness and individualized desires which shut out the needs of others. However, food has no intrinsic worth for humans unless it is utilized or consumed. Otherwise, if food resource is not utilized, it remains valueless. Merritt (2013) and other scholars have shown the value of eating together and the place of food in the society but have not considered how each individual in the community can easily acquire sufficient food all the time. This study introduces avocado as a way of enhancing food security through its diverse uses. The researcher explored the utilization of avocado fruit with an essence of enhancing food security in a famine prone region of Embu County.
2.5 The Church’s Participation in the Enhancement of Food Security

This section illustrates the Catholic Church’s concern with feeding the hungry.

In the book of Genesis 1:1-2, God created human beings to be embodied persons. We are living things just like animals and plants that require food for survival and growth. Food is a necessary part of sustaining life on earth. God said, “I have given you every plant yielding seeds that is upon the face of the earth and every tree with seed in its fruits, you shall have them for food” (Genesis, 1:29-30). God delighted in providing Adam and Eve plenty in the Garden of Eden which would enable them to flourish.

The Gospel’s call to love our ‘neighbour’ is imperative. This entails not only that we should help those in need by providing them with what they lack but also address the cause of destitution and poverty. Our Christian faith is realised through our action. Christian community have a duty to take care of those members amidst them who are suffering from lack of food and other basic needs. Christian discipleship involves seeking God in this world, as well as preparing to meet Him in the heaven. Jesus showed a lot of concern to the humanity by providing spiritual and physical needs.

By helping the needy, especially the hungry, we are seeking God on earth. To call ourselves Christians and to follow Jesus Christ means not just helping but also trying to understand and indeed do something about the processes in our society that force people to cry out for that help. Unless we do that we put our own Christian flourishing at risk. This study examined the concern of the Catholic Church in Evurore in alleviating the problem of food in Evurore Division through the consumption of avocado.
Christians’ action should be guided by the Biblical teaching in Matthew (25:33-36), that we must seek God in the world by caring for the needy. “For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in, I was naked and you clothed me....” Flourishing human futures are linked to Christian discipleship. The calling of the first disciple (Luke5:1-11), Jesus started by giving the poor fishermen a miraculous draft of fish, a lottery of possibility. To win someone’s spiritual aspect, start by satisfying his or her physical need. A person whose physical needs are satisfied is patient and kind while on the other hand, a person who is physically hungry is stubborn and impatient. It is from this background that the Catholic Diocese of Embu seeks to help those who are afflicted by food insecurity in the Diocese.

The central focus of modern theology is that “Our mission is God’s mission”. Isaiah (65:19-25) gives us an example of a prophetic mission in which there is good health long productive lives, shelter and food. The prophecy invites us to look at our family and those who are in need. The success of a family starts with the health of its members. The concern of this study is to meet the health of the people through the establishment of food security in Evuore Division, Mbeere north sub-County Embu County.

The fact that food insecurity has persisted in our community shows that the vision of Isaiah is far off and we must enhance our effort in mission to offer loving service to those in needs. Sharing and caring for others lights up Isaiah’s vision and creates a context for God’s abundance to be witnessed. Feeding permits spiritual nourishment
as body, mind and spirit are fed together. By feeding the hungry, Christians are engaged in Eucharistic act. As Mbiti (1969) observes, it is not easy to separate religion and secular life. By helping people who are suffering from famine we are responding to our social obligation as well as an act of religion thus doing the will of God.

Charles and Maclarem (1982) noted that the Catholic Church’s involvement in social activities is a religious duty. Pope Paul II (1990), said that if the church has to follow the example of Christ she must sacrifice herself for the service of man. Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression, so the church is called to follow the same (Boff and Pixley, 1989). The Catholic Church has for many years, been involved in the enhancement of food security and poverty reduction.

For example, in Tanzania the Community Habitat Environmental Management (CHEMA), a development arm of the Catholic Diocese of Rulenge has improved the livelihood of the local farmers by training them on proper methods of farming. The Diocese operates in three districts of Karagwe, Ngara and Biharamulo in the Kagera region of northern Tanzania. CHEMA has promoted the proper use of natural resources and locally available materials through: community participatory planning and action, training on watershed management, low external input sustainable agriculture and through a forestation and bee keeping. From the training, the farmers are now producing high quality pineapples that fetch them more money. They are also able to produce more beans than before (GTZ, 2006:112).
The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, Kenya, through the Agricultural and Environmental Program changed the life of farmers in Kuna Village. The program introduced a new variety of groundnuts in the village. The variety matures in two and a half to three months; unlike the indigenous ones that took five months. The new variety is also able to produce between six to ten bags per hectare compared to the four bags per hectare produced by the local variety (GTZ, 2006:118). In addition, the 1998 victims of tribal clashes in Molo, Rift Valley in Kenya, arrived in Lare in Nakuru without anything. The Catholic Diocese of Nakuru in collaboration with Baraka Agricultural College trained them on various land management practices that helped them to increase food production. Subsequently they were able to produce enough food for their use and for sale (GTZ, 2006:118).

Kavivya (1992), observed that due to the hot climatic condition experienced in Makueni, cereals go bad very fast after harvesting unless if treated with pesticides and stored well. Noting this problem, the Catholic Church under the diocese of Machakos assisted farmers in village groups to open food stores where they could store their yield safely. The church also buys food from farmers at a good price when they harvest and sell it later to them during famine at lower price compared to other cereal traders in the region. The church has done a lot in the region to uplift the living standards of people of Makueni. This includes drilling boreholes and building water harvesting tanks that provide water to homes for consumption. The church has also assisted in soil conservation measures.
The foregoing discussion reveals the Church’s general participation in the enhancement of food security among various communities. This study examined specifically the Catholic Church’s participation in the production and consumption of avocado in Evurore Division.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Robert Chambers’ theoretical model of transformation as responsible well-being (Chambers 1997). Chambers considers development having shifted from things and infrastructure to people and capacities. According to Byrne (1983), development in religious perspective means the development of people rather than material development. Pope Paul VI (1967) stressed on the development of the peoples describing it as the promotion of the good of people. This is what Byrne, calls integral development (Byrne, 1983). Development should therefore entail developing a holistic person, physically, economically, spiritually and mentally. The person should have sustainable livelihood comprising of the capability to produce own food, have some assets and engage in activities required for a living.

Chambers describes the current development consensus as responsible well-being livelihood security, capability, equity and sustainability. For him, the objective of integral development is responsible well-being for all. Chambers (1997) describes well-being as quality of life as opposed to ill-being. He describes the quality of responsible well-being as being beyond the limiting category of wealth and poverty. It is beyond the achievement of material wealth. A well-being life is open to the whole range of human experience that is, social, mental, spiritual, physical as well as
material. He also observes that while poverty and ill-being may be associated closely, material wealth and well-being are not. Chambers claims that a responsible well-being life is based on two elements. These are livelihood security and capability.

Chambers define livelihood security as adequate stocks and flow of food and cash to meet basic needs and to support well-being. Access to enough and nutritional food is a basic human need whose achievement guarantees livelihood security. Security refers to secure right and reliable access to resources, food, income and basic services. It includes tangible and nontangible assets that facilitate responsible well-being. Capabilities category is broad and rich. Chambers includes what people are capable of being as well as what they are capable of doing and thus values formation becomes part of the conversation. He noted that People’s capabilities are enlarged through learning, practice, training and education with the outcome being better living and well-being. (Chamber, 1997).

This study identifies Evurore community as being capable of achieving food security by producing their own food. They can attain this if they are trained and educated on issues that contribute to livelihood security (in this case food security) and then practice them to achieve a well-being life. If the causes of food insecurity are addressed properly and the community develops a positive attitude towards consumption of avocado they can use it as sustainable source of livelihood security.

The final and the basic categories in this approach to well-being are the principles of equity and sustainability. These two guides the process of increasing capability and
livelihood. In his book, Chambers (1983) believes that the poor, weak, vulnerable and exploited should be given the first priority in development. Sustainability includes all the basics that people need and at the same time control factors that limits them to achieve their well-being. A sustainable livelihood is one that can cope with the stress and shock and provide opportunity for future generation. Pope Paul VI (1967) said the church should be for poor. The church should address the problem of the needy especially those suffering from hunger. According to Chambers the conditions and factors that facilitates or limits the achievement of livelihood security must be addressed and sustained to facilitate the realization of a responsible well-being.

A sustainable livelihood requires all parties involved to participate. The poor should be empowered to create wealth and have some assets that can run them in the present and future. The community should also maintain their beliefs for sustainable life. However, the ultimate source of sustainability is God through Jesus Christ who sustains our lives (Psalms, 104). Otherwise, well-being or livelihood that is not sustainable is not well being. People should appreciate God given abilities and utilize them to sustain their livelihood. Those who have should heed to the teaching of the church fathers that if you don’t assist a starving person you have killed him or her.
This study compared Chambers interactive well–being model with the participation of the Catholic Church in enhancing food security in Evore division. A livelihood security that leads to a responsible well-being is compared to food security where the farmer has achieved the basic human needs consequently becoming a responsible well-being. How much does the church interact with the community to promote the consumption of avocado in order to promote a well-being life? The researcher investigated the participation of the Catholic Church in promoting avocado
consumption to enhance food security in Evurore. The church acts as a sponsor and caretaker in promoting responsible well-being. The study found out that food insecurity in Evurore is caused by several factors. The farmer is entangled by many conditions that limit him or her from achieving food security.

As Chambers (1983) observes that the poor should be considered first in matters of development. The church should consider first those farmers who cannot afford farm inputs and assists them to realize a sustainable food security. The researcher identified avocado as a sustainable means of enhancing food security but the study has shown that the community is largely influenced by some religio-cultural beliefs that limit its production and consumption. The community should thus be sensitized to change its attitude towards production and consumption of avocado and embrace it as a source of food for all. The church should also be true to its teaching and consider the poor first to create a responsible well-being person who does not rely on food donations from the church and well-wishers.

Pope Paul VI (1967) described the church as the agent of development. He further observes that the church should maintain close attention to its members particularly those striving to escape hunger, misery, poverty, diseases and ignorance. The Pope adds that development of the people is part and parcel of evangelization because Jesus was concerned with the whole person. In this study the main concern is creating a responsible well-being with a livelihood security based on adequate stock and flow of food. Evurore community has the capability to create a better livelihood security by
growing avocado and using it to enhance their food security and at the same time boost their economy.

However, for the church to achieve her objective of developing a well-being person there must be some interactive formation between the church (sponsor) and the community. Evurore community should be educated to develop a positive attitude towards the available food sources. Where possible the church should provide the material inputs. The community must also get fully involved in their projects in order to achieve food security. Jesus in the wedding at Cana involved the community; those who had attended the ceremony were asked to fill the jars with water. Jesus then prayed God and the water became wine (John 2:1-10). The people enjoyed the wine and were happy because they were part of the process of making the wine. Any project sponsored on behalf of the people by any organization should involve the targeted people themselves in planning and implementation to achieve their objective and sustainability. Byrne (1983) warned that the church should not treat the community as children by just giving donations or sponsor development projects without involving them. Otherwise paternalism would be a big obstacle to development.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This section describes the process by which this study was conducted, namely, the research design, and the area of study, sampling technique, study population, data collection techniques and analysis. The research involved collecting data from both secondary and primary sources. The secondary data was collected from written work in the library, journals, and also through internets. The primary data was collected from Evurore Division through interviews, Focus Group Discussions and administration of questionnaires.

3.2 Research Design
The study used qualitative research design. This type of research design is concerned with qualitative phenomenon that is, phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind. For instance, in investigating the reasons why people do certain things (Kothari 2004). In this case the researcher was investigating the perception of Evurore community on consumption of avocado and what the Catholic Church has done to that effect.

The qualitative research design was used to obtain data from the respondents concerning their perception about consumption of avocado. It also sought the views on response of the Catholic Church in promoting avocado consumption for the enhancement of food security in Evurore Division. The information was generated from the respondents through Focused Group Discussions, individual interviews and
filling of questionnaires. The researcher used an interview guide to lead the respondents into the objectives of the study (See appendix A6). These responses obtained through Focus Group Discussion and interviews were in form of narratives. The questionnaires were mostly open-ended based on the objectives of the study. The respondents gave their own views freely without any form of coercion or manipulations.

The primary data was collected from farmers through conducting interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) using an interview guide. An interview guide helped in interviewing the farmers. Some questionnaires were administered to some elite farmers to fill them independently. This category comprised of local teachers from schools in Kanyuambora. Apart from Evurore farmers, the researcher also engaged the Catholic priests in the division and project coordinators from the Catholic Diocese of Embu. These two categories were given questionnaires to fill.

3.3 The Study Area

The locale of the study was Evurore Division, Mbeere North sub-county, Embu County, Kenya. The area covers about 410 square kilometers. The division has a population of approximately 45,582 persons with about 10,317 households (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2010). It is located along the Embu-Ishiara road. The choice of this area was based on the fact that it has better soils for farming than other divisions of Mbeere Sub-county yet it is affected by food insecurity. The area has also the highest production of avocado. There are four locations in the division; Ishiara, Kanyuambora, Kiang’ombe and Ndurumori. The study was carried out in
Kanyuambora and Ishiara Locations which have the highest production of avocado yet, they experience severe food shortage.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The study employed a mixed sampling method that is use of two or more methods of sampling. First the study used purposive sampling method to sample 12 priests so as to get a sample size of 6 and also sampled 50 coordinators to get a sample size of 20. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will generate relevant information and also save time and money.

The second method was simple random sampling where farmers were individually chosen at randomly and entirely by chance, such that each individual farmer had the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process. Since the target population of farmers was large the researcher used 14% of the target population of famers to get a sample size of 70. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) state that a representative sample is one which is at least 10% to 30% of the population thus the choice of 14% is considered as a representative of the population. In this study the total sample size of the respondents was 96. The following are the main categories of respondents:
Table 3.4
The main categories of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories/Respondents</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinators</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: field data)

3.4.1 Catholic Church Project Coordinators

Purposive sampling method was used to select the Catholic Church Development Coordinators in Kanyuambora and Ishiara locations. A total number of 20 Coordinators were selected. Using questionnaire the researcher got views from these about food security in Evurore and how they have educated people on the utilization of Avocado.

3.4.2 Catholic Priests

Stratified Purposive sampling method was used to get Catholic Priests from Evurore Division. There are three Catholic parishes in both Kanyuambora and Ishiara locations. Kanyuambora location has one parish namely Gwakaithi while Ishiara location has two. These are Ishiara and Kirie parish. A total of 6 priests were selected, two from each parish (see Table 3.4). The priests were interviewed and also filled a questionnaire. Using these questionnaires, the priests provided information on the strategies used by the Catholic Church to enhance food security in Evurore Division. They also gave their views on how they have participated in educating the community on the utilization of the avocado. All the priests are Diocesan priests from Embu
Diocese. They are also from Embu County and so they are well conversant with the physiological status and religio-cultural beliefs of Ambeere community.

3.4.3 Evurore Farmers

Purposive sampling method was used in selecting farmers. The sampling targeted those farmers from Kanyuambora and Ishiara who have avocado trees among other crops. The sampling did not consider the number or the type of avocado so long one has at least a tree. The researcher also sampled farmers with no consideration of their religious affiliation. This is because the study was based on enhancing food security to Evurore community but not to Catholic faithful. The Catholic Church also assists the members of the community regardless of their faith. These farmers provided information about the people’s belief about avocado growing and consumption. A total of 70 farmers were contacted (see Table 3.4). 40 farmers were interviewed in Kanyuambora. There were two FGD comprising of 10 males and 30 females. One group had 17 members while the other had 23 members. The first group had few people because the members were not sure of what the discussion was about. There were 10 individual farmers who filled the questionnaires in Kanyuambora (4 males and 6 females). The researcher purposively selected local teachers from two primary schools around Kanyuambora to fill the questionnaires individually. It was a way of ascertaining the data from the Focus Group Discussion in which farmers may deliberately withhold some information or influence one another to give wrong information.
20 farmers were interviewed individually in Ishiara. There were 13 females and 7 males. There were more females than males. This is because women are the majority working at home in the farms and preparing food while most of the men are engaged in activities elsewhere. Some farmers from Ishiara did not have avocado trees in their farms but they provided important information about production and utilization of avocado in their region. They also gave their views on activities of the Catholic Church. There was no Focus Group Discussion in Ishiara because homes that grow avocado were very few and are more scattered than in Kanyuambora thus making it difficult to assemble them together. The table below is a summary of distribution of categories of respondents.

Table 3.4.3
Summary of distribution of the categories of respondents/ participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Respondents/Participants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Church Project Coordinators</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Priests</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: field data)

3.5 Research Instruments

Two instruments of data collection were used. These were questionnaires (structured and open ended) for the priests, development coordinators and some few farmers. Interview guide was used for farmers FGDs and some individual farmers from Ishiara (see appendix A6).
3.5.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were designed in relation to the objectives of the study. They systematically elicited information to answer the study questions. For example, the causes of food insecurity in Evurore Division, religio-cultural factors influencing the utilization of avocado and the response of the church to avocado utilization in Evurore Division. They were made easy to comprehend for all respondents (See appendix A6). These were administered to the Catholic development coordinators, Catholic priests and some ten farmers from Kanyuambora. The questionnaire was ideal for these respondents, since all of them were literate.

3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with some farmers from Ishiara who were randomly selected. These were randomly selected partly because of the vast terrestrial distance and also there are fewer farmers who grow avocado than in Kanyuambora. Random selection also enhanced the reliability of the data. There were two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a total of forty members held at Kanyuambora location. (See appendix A9). Prior arrangements were made for the Focus Group Discussion. This method assisted the researcher to gather information from a large group of respondents with similar characteristics, interacting freely. The researcher used a tape recorder to record the information. The researcher got information about the role played by the Catholic Church in enhancing food security in the region. The researcher was also interested on the people’s views about consumption of avocado.
3.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to while reliability relates to probability that repeating a research procedure or method would produce similar result (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The research instruments were first discussed with the supervisors for validity. The respondents were available to give reliable information relating to the study. From the findings, the researcher established that the respondents were able to give relevant information related to the research objectives. The interview guide had questions that were relating to the objectives of the study and easy for the respondents to comprehend. Respondents who filled the questionnaires were educated people who had gone beyond form four and so they could understand the questions well. They also filled the questionnaires independently without any influence from the researcher. The researcher used the local language (Kimbeere) to interview the farmers which made it easy to communicate. The responses received from all categories had significant similarities despite being administered to different persons and at different times. This assured the reliability and validity of the research instruments and the study in general.

3.7 Data Collection

Primary data was collected from the respondents in the field using questionnaires, interview guide and Focus Group Discussions (see appendix A6-A9). The field research was conducted in Evurore division. Information was gathered from farmers using Focus Group Discussion, individual interviews, and questionnaires. Information from the coordinators and priests was acquired through administering questionnaires which they filled freely.
3.8 Data Analysis
This study largely applied the qualitative method of data analysis. The data was organized according to the study objectives that were covered in the instruments. It was then summarized and organized into themes pertinent to the study. The data helped the researcher to develop the chapters and make relevant conclusions and recommendations.

3.9 Data Management
The cumulative data from primary and secondary sources was synthesized and the resultant data categorized according to the objectives of the study. Each objective was covered in the research instruments. The categorization formed the chapters of the study. Chapters one, two and three were basically from the secondary data while the other chapters comprised of the secondary and primary source. The recorded data was transcribed before compilation. Subsequently, the summary, conclusions and recommendations for the study were made from the findings. All the data got from the findings was used for writing of the thesis and not for other purpose.

3.10 Ethical Consideration
The researcher ensured that ethical procedures were followed while undertaking the study. The researcher first sought permission from the local assistant chief from Kanyuambora location. Before conducting any interview or administering the questionnaire, the researcher introduced himself and explained the purpose of the study to the potential respondents. Subsequently, the researcher sought their consent before engaging them. The respondents were assured that all the information provided
was purely for academic purposes and not for any other reason. They were also assured of ultimate confidentiality concerning the responses. Further, no respondent was coerced into providing the required information. They all responded freely and willingly.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapters have given the general introduction to the study, the literature review and the methodology applied. This chapter discusses the data analysis and presentation based on the stated research objectives. The chapter therefore discusses the causes of food insecurity in Evurore division Mbeere north sub- County, the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices that effects the production and consumption of avocado and lastly the participation of the Catholic Church in avocado consumption to enhance food security.

4.1 Causes of food insecurity in Evurore division

The first objective of this study was to investigate the causes of food insecurity in Evurore Division in Mbeere North sub–county. This is discussed below. The section illustrates the various factors that cause food insecurity in Evurore as noted by the respondents. It is guided by the first objective; that is: to investigate the causes of food insecurity in Evurore division. The research was based on the premise that food insecurity in Evurore is caused by underutilization of the available resources.

The Chambers theoretical model has helped to identify some factors that contribute to food insecurity in Evurore Division and strategies that could enhance food security if addressed and sustained. According to Chambers (1997) factors that limit the achievement of livelihood security should be considered to have a sustainable
responsible well-being. The researcher sorts out to find out factors that cause food insecurity in Evurore thus limiting the achievement of a responsible well-being.

The respondents were asked to give their views on what they thought could be the cause of food insecurity in the region. As Jammel and Ernest (1981) observed, causes of food insecurity in Africa are enormous and complex phenomena which cannot be attributed to a single factor. This study established five main factors that were identified to be the major contributors of food insecurity in Evurore Division. These are: drought, ignorance and poor farming practices, poverty and laxity among the community members, inadequate policies in the agricultural sector and religio-cultural beliefs and practices. The respondents who included, priests, project coordinators and farmers were asked to rate the causes as Very High, High, Average, Low or Very Low. The factors are discussed below.

4.1.1 Drought as a Cause of Food Insecurity in Evurore Division

Drought is a phenomenon that exists when precipitation has been significantly below normal recorded levels causing a serious hydrological imbalance that adversely affects land resource production systems. Kenya is among countries prone to climatic change, which makes it somehow challenging to predict the weather patterns. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2002) pointed out that almost 70 percent of Kenya’s land mass is affected by drought.
The Mbeere sub counties are dependent on the short rains as the main season for food crop production. In the month of December 2016, 10 per cent of the households in the mixed and marginal mixed livelihood zones had poor food consumption scores implying that household’s dietary diversity and frequency of food consumed was deteriorating. The coping strategy index is currently 10 and 3 in marginal mixed and mixed farming livelihood zones respectively. Currently, food availability is reduced with household and county maize stocks standing at 17 and 37 per cent of the long term average. This is due to two consecutive poor seasons (UNICEF, 2016).

Table 4.1.1
Response on drought as a cause of food insecurity in Evurore division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Very low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project coordinators</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own field work data)

The findings on Table 4.1.1 revealed that most priests, coordinators, and farmers, rated drought Very High and High as the cause of food insecurity. It should be noted that those who rated drought very high were above 50 percent. From these responses it is clear that most people in Evurore Division view drought as the main cause of food insecurity in the region. They argued that the area is very dry with scanty and unreliable rainfall most of the time. They added that in most cases the rains end before crops mature hence the farmers get very little or no yields at all. This eventually discourages the farmers hence some of them end up abandoning cultivation for alternative ways of survival.
Farmers who rated drought as High noted that some pockets of the region such as Kanyuambora location experience fair harvest while the lower zones of Ishiara get poor harvest. However, they maintained that most parts of the area experience poor rainfall patterns (FGD, O.I:26:12:2011). The farmer’s view support Oniang’o’s (1988) view that unfavorable climatic conditions have significant impact on crop production which eventually leads to food insecurity. Oniang’o added that about 15 per cent of Kenya’s land is arable, but harsh weather conditions jeopardize food production. Their responses also affirm the premise that drought is a major cause of food insecurity in Evurore.

The unpredictable weather pattern has made drought a major cause of food insecurity especially in semi-arid areas in Kenya. Mbeere north sub-district lies in a semi-arid region in Eastern Kenya. The region receives an average of 750mm. of rain per annum. For this reason, drought is a frequent phenomenon in the region. Prolonged drought dries food crops and water resources. Drought also leads to deaths of livestock (Republic of Kenya, 2007).

Fr. Muriuki, from Gwakaithi parish (O.I:26:04:2012) rated drought as average. He acknowledges that there is inadequate rainfall in the entire Mbeere region including Evurore division. However, he noted that even when there happens to be adequate rainfall, some people still have problems of food insecurity, which is therefore an indication that there are other causes of food insecurity apart from drought. Those rating drought Low felt that even when there is plenty of rainfall in the division, a good number of people still complain of lack of food. They suggested that food
insecurity should be looked at beyond drought. They thus support the argument by Cohen (2005) that drought is not the main cause of food insecurity since there are other ecological factors which are beyond human control. Furthermore, drought is a natural phenomenon that can be predicted and necessary precaution taken to avert its effects such as food insecurity.

Famine in Kenya devastates amidst warning systems. Partly, this could be true from the manner in which the information is disseminated to the farmers. For instance, the Meteorological Department issues press statements that do not reach the farmers. They do not get the right advice on when to plant and the appropriate crop variety for the season. The farmers thus plant at the wrong time and even plant inappropriate crop variety for the season. Munene (O.I, 15:12:2011) noted that Kenyans do not prepare for drought despite the warning. This information is never disseminated to the poor farmers in the rural area. The information is also given in the language only understood by the elite or the specialists in the agricultural sector. Worse still even some of the agricultural officers do not interpret the message correctly and even if they do, it is not passed to the farmers.

Many farmers (F.G.D, 26:12:2011) noted that they could not remember when they ever received adequate rain-fall. They observed that, due to the unreliable rainfall, they have been discouraged from tilling their land because they have to buy seeds, expend their labour but get low yields or none at all. Those who rated drought as high observed that large parts of the division do not receive adequate rainfall leading to massive crop failure. Those respondents who rated drought as average observed that
they had tried to put in place some measures to mitigate them from the effects of drought. Such measures included small scale irrigation, planting drought-resistant crops such as cassava, millet and sorghum.

4.1.2 Lack of knowledge and poor farming practices among farmers in Evurore Division

According to UNEP and GoK (2000), the level of literacy and understanding of hazards has been low in drought-prone areas as compared to other parts of the country. The harsh weather conditions compounded by traditions and beliefs form a major setback on educational achievement. According to Save the Children (UK) Nutrition Survey (2010) in Mandera sub-County, low literacy means limited skills, knowledge and innovativeness, a factor that has inhibited the pursuit of alternative livelihoods. The result is that most of the residents are trapped in the low productivity traditional pastoralist economy.

Lack of proper knowledge of farming practices has resulted in low crop yield and also crop loss after harvest leading to food shortage. For example, some farmers pointed out that application of fertilizers in their farms would destroy their soil. Hence they prefer planting without fertilizers. Table 4.1.2 presents the participants responses on ignorance and poor farming practices.
Table 4.1.2
Response on lack of knowledge and poor farming practices as causes of food insecurity in Evurore Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>very high</th>
<th>high</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Very low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project coordinators</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own field work data)

Data on table 4.1.2 above shows that project coordinators and farmers rating trend was similar. Most coordinators and farmers rated lack of knowledge and poor farming practices as Very High. They observed that most farmers lacked knowledge on farming practices such as the use of fertilizers and modern methods of keeping livestock.

It is this ignorance that caused massive crop failure in many parts of Kenya including Evurore Division in 1978. Munene (I.O,15:12:2011), the Catholic Diocese of Embu Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) Coordinator observed that, despite efforts by the church to enlighten farmers on modern methods of farming, most of them still cling to their traditional methods. Farmers expressed unwillingness to change, arguing that they had practiced their traditional methods for long before and had good harvests.

Some farmers (F.G.D: 26:12:2011) observed that lack of adequate information on the weather patterns resulted in massive crop failure. For example, Njue(0.I:26,11, 2011), cited the 1997 incident of El-Niño rains where food production was doing very well in
the field but rains came just a week before they could harvest and destroyed all the beans. Farmers had expected a dry spell in early January to harvest beans and peas. The meteorological department however, failed to alert them of the heavy rains that came in January 1998, contrary to the usual dry weather pattern. If the farmers had prior information that the rain would come early in January, they could have harvested in December before the rains. The unusual rain caused a lot of damage in the agricultural sector. Ireri (O.I. 3:12:2011) observed that the year 1998 was an exceptional one because he had very high hope of a bumper harvest in beans. Unfortunately, when the rains returned all his hopes were dashed. The dry beans were rained on in the farm making it difficult to harvest. Even what he was able to salvage from the farm became waste because it could not dry due to the wet weather. Eventually all his harvest went to waste.

Fr. Njeru (O.I: 24:11:2011) from Kirie Catholic parish observed that the residents of Evurore lack knowledge on modern farming methods that could increase food production. For example, River Ena which is a permanent river passes through the region and even those who live next to it do not exploit its waters for irrigation. Ngithi (O.I:16:12:2011) argued that farmers especially in the lower Ishiara location are not adequately informed about some important information relating to farming. Many of them are not aware of the onset of rain. When they plant late, the crops end up receiving very little amount of rainfall and therefore dry up before they mature. Ngithi also noted that some farmers do not use manure or fertilizers to increase soil fertility and thus boost their crop yields. This is because they believe that using fertilizers in
their farms would destroy their soil fertility or pollute their soils. This eventually results in poor crop yield.

Fr. Namu, from Gwakaithi parish (O.I:8:2011) noted that some farmers had knowledge on how to take good care of their crops and livestock and were able to obtain reasonable return. This is why the priest rated ignorance as average. Kiraithe (O.I:20:08:2011), a farmer at Murari village observed that they have read from the papers about the export market for avocado but they had not benefitted. This is because they sell their fruits at home to middle men or in the local market at a very low price which does not benefit them.

From the farmers’ response, (F.G.D:7.4. 2012) it is clear that Evurore residents lack sufficient information on better methods of farming. This ignorance has greatly contributed to food shortage in the recent past in Kenya. For example many farmers use broadcasting method in planting millet. The broadcasting method is not scientific and seeds are planted without consideration of space and seed rate. There is also no application of fertilizers. Farmers are advised to use the modern method of roll planting as opposed to the broadcasting one. The roll method ensures maximum utilization of the land and the available plant nutrient since crops are spaced enough and do not compete over nutrients.

4.1.3 Poverty and laxity in Farming among Evurore Community Members

Kenya is a country of many contrasts, from its landscape to demographics, and more so it’s social and economic inequalities. Kenya is one of the most unequal countries in
the sub-region. 42 per cent of her population of 44 million live below the poverty line. On the other hand a good number also enjoy luxuriant life. Access to basic quality services such as health care, education, clean water and sanitation, is often a luxury for many people. Large segments of the population, including the burgeoning urban poor, are highly vulnerable to climatic, economic and social shocks. As such, progress on the Millennium Development Goals, especially in regards to social security, is mixed (UNICEF, 2016).

In Mbeere, livestock keeping and subsistence farming are the main sources of income for most of the households. Additionally, other residents are engaged in self-employment and wage employment. However their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remains low. Jane, (O.I:26:8:2011), who is a teacher noted that due to lack of any meaningful economic activities, many residents of Evurore sell their livestock to cater for the basic needs at home. Eventually, they are left without any tangible asset to depend on in times of economic crisis. Consequently, this increases the level of food insecurity. Friedman (1992), who is described as a promoter of what he calls “alternative development” describes poverty by focusing on powerlessness as lack of access to social power. He notes that in a social development people exclude poor households. He further observes that poverty is related to lack of access to social power. Due to being powerless, the poor cannot make any reasonable bargain of their resources including their own human resource and so end up being paid very low wage.
Chambers (1983, 103-39) describe the poor as living in a “cluster of disadvantage”. The household is poor, with nothing to save and so they are vulnerable to eventualities such as drought or other climatic related phenomena or price hike by traders. They also lack strength due to many dependents. They are isolated by the larger society and thus lack education or valuable knowledge on farming methods and so their produce is usually poor. He also notes that the poor are vulnerable, powerless and easy to be coerced. They are entangled in a system which Chambers call “poverty trap.”

Table 4.1.3 below shows responses on poverty as a cause of food insecurity.

Response on Poverty and laxity as a cause of food insecurity in Evurore Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Very High</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F   %</td>
<td>F   %</td>
<td>F   %</td>
<td>f  %</td>
<td>F   %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>1   16.7</td>
<td>4   66.7</td>
<td>1   16.7</td>
<td>0   0</td>
<td>0   0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Coordinators</td>
<td>4   20.0</td>
<td>12  60.0</td>
<td>4   20.0</td>
<td>0   0</td>
<td>0   0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>25  41.7</td>
<td>40  57.1</td>
<td>5   8.3</td>
<td>0   0</td>
<td>0   0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own field work data)

Information in Table 4.1.3 shows that all the participants responded to the three higher categories of Very High, High and Average only; none of them responded to Low or Very Low. This is an indication that poverty adversely affects food security in the division. Most respondents observed that poverty was a major cause of food insecurity. They responded as follow: priests (66.7 per cent), coordinators (60.0 per cent), and farmers (57.1 per cent).

Among the farmers, high was the first in rating (57.1 per cent), Very High second (41.7 per cent) while Average was rated last with (8.3 per cent). Some farmers
claimed that they work hard in their farms although they get low crop yield. It could therefore be observed that poverty contributes significantly to food insecurity in the division. The priest who mentioned High noted that the cost of inputs such as fertilizers and seeds has gone up impacting negatively on the farmers, especially the poor ones in the region. The priest noted that even when the area receives adequate rainfall, many farmers could not afford to buy high quality certified seeds. This eventually results in poor crop yield despite adequate rainfall.

The Diocese coordinators had similar sentiments with those of the priest that poverty contributed enormously to food insecurity since many farmers cannot afford farm inputs. Igoki (O.I, 2009), a farmer in Kavengero village, Kanyuambora location observed that certified seeds and cattle feeds are unaffordable to most farmers and so they use cheap methods of crop farming and livestock rearing. This is simply working with the available resources. The farmers plant seeds that are not certified from the shops. On the side of the cattle, they graze their animals on the natural pasture without going for the concentrates or the dairy feeds.

Some farmers (F.G.D: O.I, 26; 08:2011) observed that they are very discouraged by the high cost of inputs and cattle feeds and other farm inputs. This has made some farmers to abandon farming and turn to other modes of livelihood. According to Ngochi (O.I, 04:2012) the residents of Evurore plant the seeds that they have at their disposal regardless of their viability. Most of them do not bother to go for the certified seeds from the shop. In addition, they do not use fertilizers when planting or to topdress. Eventually they get very low yields leading to food insecurity. These farmers
are sometimes to blame for their fate. They have dug their own grave because of their ignorant. As Boff and Pixley (1989) observes the poor resign themselves passively to their poverty or seek an egotistical liberation. They lack hope and unable to believe that change is possible and so they can do nothing about their fate.

Munene (O.I: 15:12:2011) observed that many farmers lack adequate structures to store their produce. Due to poverty level farmers are unable to build efficient stores that keep away rodents, and ants. Farmers are also not keen on how they store their produce after harvest. According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) 24 per cent of the food loss is at the post-harvest stage.

There were some farmers (FGD: 26.08.2011) who stated that they find it easier to work in other people’s farms for a day’s wage than struggle to buy inputs for their farms that do not pay back. They prepare very little for the rains and in many occasions they plant late and also weed after working in other peoples’ farms. This leads to poor harvests in their farms. Njiru, (O.I, 2011) noted that casual jobs had kept him away from tending to his farm; thus resulting in poor harvest. Other farmers observed that the youth in Mbeere have developed a negative attitude towards food crop farming. They have even given up doing manual work in the farms since they have not realized benefits from the farm. The youth who could do farming in the rural areas have despised and abandoned farming leaving it to their parents who have little knowledge on modern farming methods.
4.1.4 Inadequate Policies on Food Production

Food policies are formulated by the government to increase the production and utility of crops. Food insecurity in Kenya has prompted the government to formulate numerous policies for the purpose of increasing food production in the country. For example, the Session Paper Number 4 of 1981, on National Food Security Policy was meant to ensure adequate supply of food to all parts of Kenya at all times. It recommended the growing of drought resistant crops, especially in the arid and semi-arid areas to ensure adequate supply of food in all parts of Kenya. The paper also recommended food processing, as an ideal measure for providing all regions of Kenya with food required at the lowest levels. This policy seems not to have yielded fruits in Evurore Division because the community grows the usual drought resistant crops but do not get reasonable yield. At the same time, farmers grow mangoes, paw paws and avocado, but the government has not initiated fruit processing plants. Farmers sell their produce at very low prices while others perish in the farm. The National Food Security and Nutrition Policy (2010), was meant to increase the quantity and quality of food available to all Kenyans at all times. However, food insecurity in Evurore has however remained persistent.

A poor crop yield could be as a result of environmental factors. Kamau (O.I:16:12:2011) vividly recalls the 1981-82 famine which they named “Ningua ngwete” (I will die holding) which literary meant; people starved to death even though they held money but there was no food to buy. The residents survived on food donations from the Government and the Catholic Diocese of Embu. The long drought was followed by the heavy El Niño rains in 1986. The residents (F.G.D:25:09:2011)
asserted that even with the presence of the heavy rains, no agricultural officer advised them on what they could do to increase food production. For example, the heavy rains lasted for a longer time than normal but they did not benefit from it because they lacked the necessary information to harness the rains for increased food production. The residents planted the usual short rain crop variety that is affected by high rainfall.

Food production, just as food shortage is not always evenly distributed in a region. For instance in a region that is faced with food shortage, there could be some households that are well endowed with food production. In Kenya, parts of Rift Valley, Eastern and North Eastern provinces are often faced with famine yet in other areas in Central, Rift Valley and Western provinces receive bumper harvest that at times goes to waste because of the challenges in post-harvest practices. The Food Safety and Quality Control Policy was meant to create public awareness, setting, promoting and enforcing appropriate guiding standards and a regulatory framework to enhance food production. However, this did not assist Evurore community. In Evurore, the responses of the people with regard to policies are presented in Table 4.1.4.

Table 4.1.4
Response on Inadequate policies as a cause of food insecurity in Evurore division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Very High</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F  %</td>
<td>F  %</td>
<td>F  %</td>
<td>F  %</td>
<td>F  %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>0  0</td>
<td>1  16.7</td>
<td>3  50.0</td>
<td>2  33.3</td>
<td>0  0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Coordinators</td>
<td>0  0</td>
<td>1  5.0</td>
<td>11  50.0</td>
<td>6  30.0</td>
<td>2  10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>0  0</td>
<td>6  8.5</td>
<td>21  35.0</td>
<td>36  51.4</td>
<td>7  10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Source: own field work data)
From Table 4.1.4, it was clear that none of the participants rated inadequate policies as significant cause food insecurity. The priests and Coordinators trend of response was similar. Most priests (50 per cent), and coordinators (55 per cent), identified it as average or Low implying that they did not regard it as a serious contributor to food insecurity.

Those farmers (FGD, 26; 12:2011) who rated inadequate policies as average observed that the government had come up with some policies and land tilling patterns to prevent soil erosion and encourage farmers to grow drought-resistant crops such as cassava and millet. However, there was no follow-up to ensure that the policies are actually implemented. Those who rated inadequate policies as low noted that the problem of food insecurity in Ewurore division go beyond policies. This is because the area experiences persistent drought and abject poverty that makes it hard for the locals to engage in farming. The above discussion shows that there are no specific policies in the region that could ensure sustainable solutions to the problem of food shortage.

The priests and coordinators responses appeared to support (Mohamed, 1994) who assert that food insecurity, in the African continent is largely induced by misconceived food policies; and also the difficulties within which they have been developed. The farmers observed that the problems of lack of food in the area had to do with weather patterns and poverty. Most of them cannot afford to buy inputs such as certified seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and proper farm equipment. The farmers also pointed out that the cattle feeds are too expensive for them to buy.
4.2 Religio-cultural factors that influence food production in Evurore division Mbeere sub-county

The second objective was to find out the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices that influence the production and consumption of avocado in the enhancement of food security in Evurore division. It highlighted the Ambeere world view in relation to the production and consumption of some food. The study has particularly focused on the production and consumption of avocado fruit in enhancing food security among the residents of Evurore Division.

The section was steered by the premise that the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices have negatively affected the consumption of avocado thus giving it a low profile in the region. The conceptual framework also guided the researcher to analyze the extent to which the cultural beliefs and practices contribute to realization of livelihood security. According to Chambers, model, the quality of life is beyond the categories of wealth and poverty. A responsible well-being is open to the whole range of human experience including religious or spiritual perspective. Cultural beliefs could either promote or limit the capability to attain livelihood security thus frustrating the goal of becoming a responsible well-being. Religio-cultural beliefs and practices were identified as a factor that influences the production and consumption of some foods. The Ambeere cultural perception that relates to consumption of fruits has highly affected the production and consumption of avocado in the region. This could be because they clung on their cultural beliefs and fear to adapt to new culture. The researcher is basically concerned with the religio-cultural beliefs that are hindrance to sustainable food security.
4.2.1 General World View on Food Production

Food is one of the major basic needs in human life that form the backbone of any country’s development. No society in the world can boast to prosper if it is threatened by food insecurity. Food security is a good indicator of a stable growing economy. About 80 per cent of Kenya’s population lives in the rural areas where agriculture dominates their economic activities yet more than one third of the country’s population is threatened by food shortage at any given time. About 10 million Kenyans suffer from chronic food shortage based on dietary and energy supply. Most residents of Evurore are in dire need of food. They depend on food donations from the government and well-wishers. A growing problem of food insecurity is mostly linked with the disappointing growth of agricultural production.

Human beings do not eat just to live; there are other important aspects of life attached to eating. For example, Fergus Kerr (2013) asserts that through eating, human beings express values about what they think is important. People eat what they enjoy or value most and leave out what they do not, regardless of the nutritive value or taste. Sharing of a meal has a social function. In the process of eating together, people experience the concept of sharing and creating harmony in the community. A common saying among the Ambeere community asserts that “He who eats alone chocks alone” (Kabeca, 1975).

Among the Ambeere community, all important functions are celebrated through sharing food. For example during marriage negotiations, a barrel of honey and beer are listed as part of the bride wealth. Honey is for making the local liquor. Beer is
meant for the old people. During the negotiations plenty of food is prepared. To start off the negotiations the bride groom’s family take a goat to bride’s home. The goat is slaughtered by the bride groom’s family and the meat is shared between the two families. This marks the commencement of a relationship between the family of the bride and that of the bridegroom.

Sharing of food is common in religious functions worldwide. For example, in Bulgaria, no single festival in folk tradition can be celebrated without ritual bread. Ritual bread is distinguished from ordinary bread in its preparation and decorative elements. It is usually made from the largest and purest wheat grains (Comenius Partnership, 2011). Food is also an important part of religious observance for many faiths including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and even Traditional African Religion, just to mention a few. For example, Christianity and Judaism have certain restrictions on certain foods. Islam has a season of fasting which is part of the pillars of their religion. Buddhist chose to be vegetarian to avoid killing animals. Hindus avoid foods that may have caused pain to animals during preparations. Many Hindus choose to be vegetarians but not compulsory. To them a cow is a totem and held to be sacred and therefore should be preserved. The release of Israelites from slavery in Egypt is itself commemorated in a meal, the Passover feast. Jesus Christ also told his disciples to remember him not in words but in the sharing of a meal, that is, the Eucharist (Luke 22:14-21). In the Catholic Church, Holy Mass is marked by celebrating the Eucharist that is, sharing the Holy Communion.
The researcher established that many people in Evurore division consider the Ambeere cultural beliefs and practices as playing a significant role in food production. For example among them, land is owned by men. In most of the homes, it is the man who determines the utilization of the land. If the man is not innovative enough, then the land may remain unattended or underutilized thus leading to low productivity (F.G.D. 26-12 2011). This underutilization of land results in low crop production leading to food shortage.

Cultural beliefs play a very significant role in the selection of food. A cultural group provides guidelines regarding acceptable foods and eating patterns (Lowry, 1976). Compliance with these guidelines creates a sense of identity and belonging for the individual. Within large cultural groups, subgroups exist that may practice variations of the group's eating behaviour, though they are still considered part of the larger group. For example, among the Ambeere fruits are culturally eaten by children. However, the elite who understand the importance balanced diet will tend to ignore this perception. This cultural perception on food has contributed negatively to the utilization of avocado in Evurore division. Ngithi (O.I.26.11.2011) observed that since fruits are not regarded as part of the diet in the community, avocado has not been considered as a valuable source of overcoming food insecurity.

Food traditions sometimes vary widely throughout the world even among people who share similar cultural background. According to Kittler and Suche (1998), every individual has unique likes and dislikes concerning foods. These preferences develop over time, and are influenced by factors such as, personal experiences due to exposure
to different foods, family customs and rituals (ibid). In addition, advertisement and popularization of certain food and personal values influence the individual’s choice of food. For example, a person may choose his or her diet depending on health requirement prescribed by a doctor, personal interest or taste which is also highly dependent on the financial status of the individual (Atkins and Bowler, 2001). An individual’s level of education or exposure in life is an important factor in food choice. Wanjeru (I.O:26:11:2011) observed that people who have interacted with others from different communities that consume avocado have also developed interest in the fruit.

Choice of food may also be determined by the nature of work that one does. For example, people who are engaged in manual labour such as working in the building and construction industry consume high energy giving foods such as ugali (maize meal food) and githeri. Njeru (O.I.07.04.2012) noted that he likes eating avocado because it keeps him energized especially when he is doing manual work.

Besides this, individual’s religio-cultural background plays a major role. For example, among the Ambeere, millet is common food stuff that children are fed with from a very early age. Ambeere believe that in order to be strong and energetic one must take millet either as porridge or the raw ground millet mixed with water to form dough which is referred to as kimere, in Mbeere language (Ngiri, O.I.26.11.2012). This cultural perception explains why even those Ambeere who live in towns or away from Mbeere prefer porridge made from millet. The Ambeere believe that their traditional foods are more nutritious than other imported foods and thus they are reluctant to
consume them (Kugoca O.I.03.11.2011). Evurore people enjoy beverages such as porridge made from millet, peas and beer in their social gatherings. These are believed to add energy to a person and make one strong for heavy duties. However, they do not include avocado in their diet. This could be due to their cultural perception that fruits are for children and so they do not take avocado as valuable food in the community.

In each community there are both readily acceptable and unacceptable foods. Ngithi (O.I. 26:11: 2011) observed that what is termed as food among the Ambeere are grains and cereals that are cooked. Anything that cannot be cooked is not perceived as food. However, meat is regarded as special food. Njue (O.I 26:11:2011) observed that most families slaughter their animals only during important occasions such as Christmas festivals, wedding or during family gatherings. However; they rarely slaughter animals for ordinary household consumption.

Regional food habits do exist but they also change over time. As people migrate, food practices and preferences are also imported and exported. People connect to their culture or ethnic group through similar food patterns though there are some aspects of individual preference. Immigrants often use food as one means of retaining their cultural identity. For instance people from one background eat the same or like similar foods. These also include the methods of preparations, preservations and choice at various times (Kittler, 2001).
According to Mbiti (1975) an African moves with his religion whenever he or she goes; whether it is in the field where he goes to cultivate or in war fighting the enemy. Likewise, people migrate with their food habits from the rural areas to the city. For example, Ngiri (O.I: 26:11; 2012) who worked in Kitui as a teacher noted that he could not do without millet. He observed that even his colleagues had nicknamed him *Kiere* (millet) due his love for the porridge made from millet.

In addition to impacting food choices, culture also plays a key role in food-related etiquette. For instance, there are some cultural rules concerning whom to share a meal with (Kittler, 2001). Among the Ambeere and Aembu communities, a son in-law should not eat from the same plate with the mother in-law. This was meant to maintain respect between the in-laws (Kabeca, 1973).

### 4.2.3 Influence of Religio-cultural Beliefs and Practice in Food Production

This section discusses the religio-cultural factors that influence food production and utilization among the Ambeere of Evurore division. The study was concerned with the religio-cultural perception relating to production and utilization of avocado fruit among the Ambeere of Evurore Division.

Culturally, the Ambeere are hardworking people. Every person in the family regardless of age and gender is involved in the matters of food production in one way or the other. For example, men clear and till the land for planting. They also keep bees. Honey is a highly valued commodity among the Ambeere. It is used to make local liquor and medicine. It is also one of the precious commodities for the payment
of bride wealth. Women perform the household chores such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. They also cultivate the farm but do light tasks such as weeding or planting. Young children are trained from an early age to perform various duties. There are specific duties for boys and girls. The boys are taught by their male relatives while the girls are mentored by female ones. Young people also learn from their older siblings. Boys are responsible for herding cattle. Girls fetch firewood and other household chores. Sometimes boys and girls keep vigilant on millet in the farm to prevent birds from destroying it. This is normally done from dawn till dusk when birds go back into their nests.

Generosity is a common moral virtue among African communities. For example, if a stranger goes into a home and finds people eating, he or she is welcomed and offered some food regardless of whether one is a member of the family or not. There is a saying among the Ambeere community that says, “Cooked food does not buy a goat”. This means that cooked food is of little value and should not be denied to a visitor. Mbiti (1969) asserts that the Akamba of Kenya, share even a small bird among themselves during famine. This is a demonstration of their hospitality and concern for each other.

Among the Ambeere, food is depicted as the greatest measure of hospitality and generosity that one can give to a visitor or stranger. As Kabeca (1973) observed food is a social phenomenon that should not be denied to a hungry person. Traditionally, among the Aembu and Ambeere communities, foreigners and sojourners were allowed to eat sorghum and sugar cane that were growing on the edges of the farm.
next to the road without the owner complaining. This was an expression of concern for other people. One of the maxims among the Ambeere states that a visitor is like a river that is just passing and one cannot go hungry because of feeding a visitor. Wanjeru (O.I: 24:8:2011), observed that “When children visit a home frequently, it is clear that there is someone who feeds them.” Table 4.2.3 shows the respondents view on whether the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices with influence food production in Evurore division.

Table 4.2.3
Response on Religion-cultural influence in food production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project coordinators</td>
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<td>90.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own field work data)

The responses above indicated that religio-cultural factors played a major role in food production. However, the respondents noted that at individual level culture has little impact on food production in Evurore division. For example, Njeru (O.I:7.04.2012) noted that he likes avocado in the morning although to many people in Mbeere it is not a popular food. According to Njeru (ibid), the Mbeere cultural perception on food especially fruits does not influence his eating habits because he consumes what is available. However, many people like eating what they are used to rather than what is available.

According to the data presented on Table 4.2.3, two priests stated that culture does not influence food production in the division while four noted that it does. Those priests
who said that culture does not influence food production observed that in most cases food habit or choice are based on individual’s income and exposure to other cultures. They noted that families that are well endowed economically have a different choice of food from those that are of low income. They also observed that people who are exposed to other cultures eat differently from those that have remained in their cultural environment. However, most priests felt that people’s culture had contributed to food insecurity because some farmers still hold on to their traditional food sourcing and were not ready to adapt to the new methods. For example, some farmers still regard avocado as a fruit that should only be consumed by children but not the old people.

About 90 per cent of the project coordinators said that religio-cultural beliefs affect food production while 10 per cent noted that it does not. Among the farmers, 89 per cent farmers said religio-cultural factors have significant effect on food production while 10 per cent noted that it does not. The coordinators noted that that religio-cultural beliefs and practices play a major role in food production. They gave examples of fruits such as avocado which people have ignored because of their traditional perception. Some of the respondents did not have specific reasons why they do not consume some foods.

Atkins and Bowler (2001) noted that food habit is sometimes based on peer and “class” influence rather than religio-cultural perception or nutritive consideration. For example, in America, only 58.4 per cent of the populations eat three square meals a day. The rest of the population take very little for breakfast, skip lunch and take
supper only for fear of being overweight. Consumers of junk food or snacks are well aware of the nutritive consequences of such foods but because of the peer pressure or class they still go ahead and take them.

There are certain foods that a community regards as part and parcel of their culture. For example, as noted earlier, porridge made from millet is a cultural drink among the Ambeere. The Ambeere believe that millet plays a significant role in people’s health especially to men who perform heavy tasks. It is therefore an obligation for every woman among the Ambeere to know how to make porridge from ground millet.

However, Ngochi (O.I:6:04:2012) observed that many young people in Mbeere have abandoned the indigenous food and gone for the new foods that are common and popular among the youth. Wanjeru (O.I: 24:08.2011), a farmer at Gwakaithi village in Kanyuambora location, who is also a nutritionist noted that the young people are avoiding the indigenous foods of the Ambeere despite its nutritive value. For example they do not consume porridge made from millet or kimere. Millet is a major food crop commonly grown in Mbeere because it is resistant to drought. Unfortunately, to the youth, millet is meant for the old. Instead they prefer processed foods sold in the supermarkets.

Some food habits have a significant connection with times. For example, during famine, there are certain foods that people consume which are not popular in ordinary times. So, such foods are regarded as famine foods. This makes many people dislike the food especially when there is plenty. Jane (O.I:07:04:2012) asserted that she hates
the avocado because of its green colour. She observed that the avocado reminds her of the green food that they used to feed on during the 1971 infamous famine that affected this region. The food was referred to as *kiviri* (a porridge-like substance made from green arrow root leaves). This concurs with Germor and Wilhams (1999) views who noted that in some cases people may starve not because they have no food but due to some religio-cultural convictions or personal attitudes. In Evurore Division, avocado is not considered as part of the diet or as food simply because of the cultural perception that it is a fruit meant for children. Besides, it is not a traditional food among the Ambeere and so most of the old people do not value it.

4.2.4 The Utilization of the Avocado and the Ambeere View of Fruits

Avocado is a new crop in Mbeere sub-county. It was introduced here in early 1970s. In Brazil and Vietnam, avocados are considered as sweet fruits, and are frequently used for milk-shakes and occasionally added to ice cream and other desserts (Esminger and Esminger, 1986). Regular eating of the fruit boosts the family nutrition and makes people healthy and strong to perform other duties. Avocado can also make a great snack with potato chips or vegetable (See image 4 in appendix 6).

According to ([https://www.doctoroz.com](https://www.doctoroz.com 2014)) the fruit is cholesterol and sodium free. Avocado contains good unsaturated fats that do not raise blood cholesterol. Therefore it should be included in the dairy diet. Avocado has high content of potassium and foliates which helps to control blood pressure and to maintain regular heartbeat and a healthy nervous system. One cup (300mls) of avocado shake has 23 per cent of the Daily Value for folate, a nutrient important for a healthy heart.
According to Bazzano and Odgen, (2002) the United States Food and Drug Association affirmed that: “Diets containing foods that are good sources of potassium and low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke.” To determine the relationship between folate intake and heart disease, researchers followed over 80,000 women for 14 years using dietary questionnaires. They found that women who had higher intakes of dietary folate had a 55 per cent lower risk of having heart attacks or fatal heart disease. Another study showed that individuals who consume folate-rich diets have a much lower risk of cardiovascular disease or stroke than those who do not consume as much of this vital nutrient (Bazzano, and Odgen 2002).

(https://www.doctoroz.com) noted that avocado is also rich in vitamin E and C and antioxidants which help to prevent certain cancers. It is therefore very necessary to include a portion of avocado in the daily menu. Avocado is health for weaning babies who are four months old because they are loaded with healthy unsaturated fat.

Avocado was introduced in Kenya by the Portuguese in 1930’s. There are various species of avocado grown in Kenya but the most popular are Hass, Puebla and Fuate. Evurore division lies within the tropical climate, which means that avocado can survive in Mbeere region. The researcher found out that the crop does well in the upper zones of Kanyuambora location which is cooler than the lower zone of Ishiara. Almost every home has at least an avocado tree in the Kanyuambora location.
The researcher has established that farmers who have avocado use it as ordinary fruit. Others especially the young people eat it as a salad. It is also mixed with milk to make shake (See image 6 on appendix). Njeru (O.I:07.04:2012) observed that a glass of avocado shake for breakfast is ideal for energizing him the whole day. However, due to Ambeere religio-cultural perception about fruits, there are many farmers who grow avocado but they do not consume them.

A more valuable use of avocado is in the preparation of soap and detergents. Soap made from avocado has high profit margin since the fruits are obtained at low price or provided by the farmers themselves. There are also no factory charges from the government. The ripe avocado flesh is prepared together with caustic soda, animal fat and lime to make powder or bar soap. Wanjeru (O.I:24:08:2011) noted that avocado can be used directly as hair shampoo. This is not done in Evurore mostly due to the influence of cultural beliefs or ignorance about the uses of the avocado. Most farmers (FGD.O.I 26.12.2011) noted that they are not aware of these ways of using avocado and they would like to be educated on them.

Other uses of avocado include feeding the animals. The leaves of avocado tree are fed to animals and also used as mulch. Avocado seeds are used as charcoal at home. They are cut into pieces and dried in the sun. When they are dried, they are used as fuel for cooking. Kiraithe (O.I:26:11: 2011), a farmer from Kanyuambora observed that although he sells his avocado at low price, his few trees of avocado have helped him to pay school fees for his children.
4.3 Consumption of avocado for the enhancement of food security in Evurore division

The third objective was to evaluate the contribution of the Catholic Church in the production and consumption of the avocado fruit. This section examines the contribution of the Catholic Church towards avocado production for the enhancement of food security in Evurore Division. Further, the sub-section analysis the extent to which the Catholic Church has empowered the Evurore community to attain the level of capabilities and sustainable livelihood in matters of food security. This was based on the research objective, to find out how the Catholic Church participates in the production and consumption of avocado for enhancement of food security. It was also guided by the premise that the Catholic Church has not fully participated in the production and consumption of avocado in Evurore division.

Pope Paul VI (1967) said the Catholic Church should be the church of the poor. The church should be the option for the poor where they are given the first priority. The Catholic Church enforces Christ’s mission of bringing Good News to the poor (Luke 4:16-21). These are good news of hope to the afflicted. She wishes to be the church of all especially the poor. Our biblical examination has shown that the option for the poor is reality of faith or theological truth (Boff and Pixley, 1989). Jesus Christ was concerned with the plight of the poor both spiritually and physically. The Bible presents Jesus as a compassionate person who took care of the needy by feeding the crowd that had followed Him to hear the Good News. In this miracle, over five thousand people were fed to their satisfaction and twelve basketful collected as remnant (Luke 10:11-21). The church represents Jesus amidst the poor.
The conceptual framework illustrated the church as being in the frontline as far as helping the needy is concerned by giving them first priority in matters of development by helping them to achieve a livelihood security that is sustainable (Chambers, 1997). It presents the church as spearheading the development of the people considering the poor (those in need) first. Chambers responsible well-being framework is quite helpful in this work. It insists on basic needs being met and speaks to transformational training and the importance of sustainability. However, Chambers does not address ignorant people, who do not believe in change. Adequate food and nutrition requires sustainable agriculture that is not dependent on chemicals. Agricultural well-being must be sustainable.

As Myers (1999) observed, the community also needs to believe passionately that it is dependent on God for survival but not agents like the church. No one is independent, even the church. We are all dependent on God. The ultimate source of sustainable life is not ours to control. It is God through Christ who sustains life. It is God who causes grass to grow and bring forth food from the earth, wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread that sustains his heart (Psalms 104:14-16).

Food is a major basic need. Unfortunately, it is scarce to many families in Evurore division. The church is involved in various ways for the provision of food to the people. The conceptual framework analyzed the causes of food insecurity in Evurore Division and attempts to provide some strategies to end the menace. In Evurore division, the Church is helping the poor in various ways with regard to food sourcing but the community still remains threatened by food insecurity. The avocado which is
grown in the region can be used in various ways to assist the community enhance food security. However, the crop is underutilized.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), informally known as Vatican II, addressed the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. It was the twenty-first Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church and the second to be held at Saint Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. The Council formally opened on 11th October 1962, under the Pontifíc of Pope John XXIII, and lasted until 8th December, 1965 during the Papacy of Pope Paul VI. It advanced both the major and minor reforms of the church doctrines and matters of faith. During the meeting, Pope Paul VI, reiterated that the Church is to be the solace of the poor and the needy. The council sought to renew the church’s life and activities in the light of the needs of the people in the contemporary world.

The Catholic Church is obliged to provide spiritual need as well as physical growth of the individual. To achieve this commitment, the Catholic Church in Kenya has engaged her members in many economic activities aimed at helping them to enhance food security and reduce poverty. The Catholic Church’s strategic plan of 2007 insisted on educating the members on ways of eradicating poverty and ensuring food security. Empowering the members of the community is expressed as one of the strategies of enhancing food security in Evurore division. The researcher was interested in sensitization of the community on the utilization of avocado since it is a crop grown in the region but which is not well utilized to enhance food security.
Pope Paul VI (1967), quoted in Benedict (2009), reminds Christians to feed the hungry. However, the Pope advises the church members to be actively involved in working for their needs rather than relying on the church. Byrne (1983) advised that planning and implementation of development projects should involve the people being targeted. He warns that paternalism is an obstacle to sustainable development because the community does not “own” the project.

In the Diocese of Embu, the head of the development arm of the diocese (IRDP) observed that the best help the church is “self-help”. This is where the members are fully involved in the production programme rather than being given the essentials. To make this practical, the church stopped giving farmers heifers and started upgrading their own cattle which made the farmers to be actively involved. One of the main precepts in the catechism of the Catholic Church is to provide for the needs of the Christians (Paulines, 1992). The church is thus involved in various activities that are aimed at improving the livelihood of the people (Benedict XVI, 2009).

One of the major concerns of the Catholic Church is to enhance food security for every individual. In its Catechism, members are required to help the needy in the community. The first of the seven boldly works of mercy requires a Christian to feed the hungry (Paulines, 2004). The Catholic Diocese of Embu is involved in various activities that are aimed at promoting food security in the region. These include: Training/Sensitizing farmers on various methods of farming, introduction of new crop varieties and upgrading of animals. The Integrated Rural Development Program coordinators do this by visiting farmers in their groups or as individuals and giving
them the required information. For example, farmers were trained on the new organic way of growing maize using, the nine seeds per hole-method, which would increase food production. However, the community has not adopted this new method. Most farmers are still using their traditional method of farming.

The researcher established that the Ambeere community has not yet embraced the use of avocado as a significant source of food resource. The church is selling avocado seedling to farmers at an affordable price but it has not done much to train them on its utilization. The Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practice about fruits has affected the consumption of the avocado. This negative attitude about avocado perhaps has spilled over to the church subsequently making it difficult to train the community on its utilization. Although the Church is involved in ensuring food security, she has not been able to eradicate food insecurity in the Evurore.

4.3.1 The Church Involvement in Production and Consumption of Avocado

There are various varieties of avocado that are grown in Kenya. Many farmers in Evurore have different varieties of avocado. The best varieties are the Fuate and Hass. These are the preferred variety for the export market because of their small size. The two varieties also take long to get spoilt. The varieties are also high producers in terms of the fruits. For example, one mature Hass tree can produce 2500 fruits per season. However, these varieties do better in high altitudes with well distributed rainfall. To make these varieties adoptable to low altitudes like Evurore with low rainfall, they are grafted with other varieties that are suitable for such environment.

The Catholic Diocese of Embu Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is
propagating these varieties in their farm. Seedlings are available for farmers at an affordable price.

Nevertheless, this study did not consider the variety of the avocado as a significant variable. The researcher considers avocado as an important source of food security because of its ability to survive in semi-arid climatic condition of Mbeere. Apart from using avocado as food in various ways, it is also a potential income earner in its diverse ways as noted earlier. Many farmers in Kanyuambora location have at least one avocado tree. Most of them observed that avocado is very valuable to them. However, some farmers (FGD, 26.11.201) noted that they have not realized much benefit from it because they only sell the fruits to unscrupulous traders who buy them, at a very low price. They also observed that the church has not educated them on the utilization of avocado.

However, despite the many benefits of avocado, its production in Evurore is still low. The study found out that many farmers even those who have avocado in their farms have not fully internalized it as an important food resource. For example there are some farmers who have planted avocado but do not eat them. Ngithi (O.I.26.11.2011) stated that among the Ambeere food constitute of grains or cereals but not fruits. The Catholic Church has a very wide network that can be exploited to train the farmers on the value of avocado but has not engaged farmers in avocado production and utilization. This study affirms the premise that the Catholic Church has not participated fully in the production and utilization of avocado in Evurore division.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
The previous chapter focused on the data analysis and interpretation. This chapter gives the summary of the study. First, the chapter outlines the synopsis of the major findings; secondly it gives the conclusion of the study, thirdly, it provides recommendations arising from the study and suggests some areas for more studies.

5.2 Summary
The study was carried out in Evurore division Mbeere north-sub County of Embu County. The title of the study is Participation of the Catholic Church in Consumption of Avocado to Enhance Food Security in Evurore Division Mbeere north sub-County, Embu County. The region exhibits semi-arid conditions that make it prone to drought that result in food insecurity. The purpose of this study was to find out how the Catholic Church has participated in avocado production and consumption for the enhancement of food security in the region.

5.3 Conclusion
The conclusion of the study was based on the data generated from the objectives of the study. The first objective was to find out the causes of food insecurity in Evurore division. This study has established that causes of food insecurity in Evurore division are numerous. However, the main factors include; drought, ignorance of proper farming methods, poverty, and inadequate policies in agriculture. The Ambeere
religio-cultural beliefs and practices were also identified as a major factor that influences people in avocado production and utilization in Evurore division.

The findings revealed that drought is the main contributor to food insecurity in the region. This is because drought dries the crops growing in the farm before they can mature resulting in very poor or no harvest. Drought also dries the pasture leaving livestock with nothing to feed on. This causes death to the animals and those that survive become very weak, a condition that makes the farmers to sell them at throw away prices. Besides causing loss of crops and livestock, drought leads to poverty. This is because people only think of food but not other development whether economic or physical. Consequently they spend all what they have on buying food.

Most of the residents noted that many times rains just fall for one month and disappear before the crops mature thus causing massive crop failure. The flow of water in rivers within the region is also affected by drought. Drought makes water for domestic use and watering of the animals a serious challenge in the area. Some people have to walk for long distances to look for water and in some cases they queue for hours. However, when the rainfall is high, the harvest is good.

Lack of knowledge by farmers about proper farming methods and access to important information about farming were also cited as important factors that contribute to food insecurity in Evurore. Farmers lack proper knowledge on the right seed varieties to plant in the area and other farming practices. The research findings established that many farmers do not plant certified seeds instead they plant whatever seeds that are
available. They also plant without using fertilizer because they are not able to purchase it. This results in poor crop yield.

Farmers observed that they rarely get information from agricultural officers. For example, when there was the unusual El Niño rains they did not know what to do. The rain came back in early January before the farmers harvested their beans. A lot of beans were rained on in the farms thus making harvesting difficult. Many farmers lost a lot of food that season due to inadequate information about the weather patterns.

Poverty hinders farmers from practicing the right farming method. As already noted, many farmers lack important knowledge on farming but even those who have it, are unable to utilize it because they are handicapped by poverty. Poverty renders farmers powerless in purchasing necessary farm inputs such as certified seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. Farmers also spend their valuable time working for a day wage from the well up members in the community and turn to work in their farms when it is too late in the season. These results in recurring poor crop yield since the farmer take very little care of his or her farm. The study thus affirms the premise that poverty is a major contributor to food insecurity in Evurore. This proposition is evidenced by the fact that when the farmers in the region were given free seeds and fertilizers by the government in 2010, the region experienced a bumper harvest.

The second research objective was to find out the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices that affect the production and consumption of avocado. The research findings revealed that the Ambeere religio-cultural beliefs and practices play a
significant role in food production and utilization. It influences the people’s choice of food, method of preparation and utilization. The Ambeere religio-cultural perceptions have restricted them to certain foods and disregarded others. This has made many people to ignore avocado despite its nutritive and economic value. In the case of this study, the researcher established that the old people in Mbeere do not eat avocado just because of the cultural perception that fruits are meant for children. Others do not value it because it is not regarded as food in the community. There were some respondents who stated that they do not eat avocado because of its green colour. They noted that the green colour reminds them of the food that they used to eat during the famine period.

The Chambers (1997) conceptual framework applied in the study expressed the Church as being the solace of the poor. The church is at the centre of development in creating a responsible well-being. The model is an interactive one involving all in the community. Chambers advised that well-being must be sustainable with the members having capability to create a livelihood security. Chambers illustrates people’s capabilities as being achieved through learning practice, training and also education. This study identified sensitization of the farmers as a strategy to food production in the region.

The third and last objective was to review the role of the Catholic Church in the production and consumption of avocado. The study established that the Church has a tree nursery that propagates the avocado seedlings and sells them to farmers at affordable price. However, the study established that the church has done very little to
educate the farmers of Evurore on the value of avocado as a source of food security. The residents are still ignorant about the value of the avocado and so they do not take it as an important source of food security. The church sells the seedlings but has not taken time to sensitize the community to change from their religio-cultural beliefs about fruits and appreciate avocado as a good source of food. The research findings therefore affirms the premise that the Catholic Church has not done much in educating Evurore people on the value and ways of utilizing avocado to enhance food security.

The study also established that the Catholic Church has contributed enormously in assisting Evurore community in matters of food security. The most notable contribution includes; giving food donation directing to those affected by famine, assisting some farmers with irrigation water and upgrading of local cattle goats breeds to increase milk production. It is worth noting that the church does not discriminate people on the basis of faith when offering services to the needy members in the community.

This study has introduced a new idea of eradicating food insecurity by using avocado as a food source. In the study, avocado is regarded as food stuff rather than a snack. It can be eaten alone or added to other foods to increase the amount or becomes an accompaniment to other food such as ugali. In the study, the church is identified as a very valuable means of sensitizing the community on the important of abandoning the religio-cultural perceptions that have negative impact on food security. This is because the church has a wide network in access to the population. Secondly, the
church can teach people right in the church during the service without calling for a formal meeting.

Food security can best be handled religiously by teaching the community to appreciate God’s given resources and use them to enhance their food source. Option for the poor concept can be adopted by the church and well up members within the community to create a sustainable livelihood to vulnerable members of the community. In this concept, the researcher breaks a new ground by approaching food security from a religious perspective rather than socio-economic stand point.

5.3 Recommendations

The study has put forward some recommendations that could assist in the enhancement of food security in Evurore Division.

The study has found out that drought is a major cause of food insecurity in Evurore. The study thus recommends initiation of a major irrigation project which will provide water for irrigation to the community.

The church should be more involved in educating the Ambeere community on various ways of eradicating food insecurity and poverty. The community should be sensitized to develop positive attitude towards eating avocado and other fruits in the region.
5.4 Suggestions for further studies

Based on the findings of the current study, the researcher makes the following suggestions for further research:

The study was on the participation of the Catholic Church to avocado production and consumption in Evurore Mbeere sub-county. Further study could be done on the contribution of the Catholic Church in livestock farming to enhance food security in other regions of Kenya.

The impact of the Catholic Church social teaching on the Ambeere cultural beliefs and practices in food production.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

A1: Location of Embu County in the Kenya County Map

Source: Geo Currents Map - Kenya Counties Map 2013
A2: A Map of Mbeere showing the administrative

KEY
1. Ishiara Location
2. Kanyuambora
3. Ndurumori Location
4. Kiango’mbie Location

Source: CBS, 2007
A3. Images on avocado

*Image 1: Avocado tree*

*Image 2: Avocado fruit*
Uses of avocado

Image 3: Ripe avocado fruit.
Image 4: Avocado sandwich
Image 5: Avocado spread
Image 6: Avocado shakes

Image 7: Avocado soap
Image 8: Avocado Lotion
A4: Image 1: showing a dry section of Ishiara location
A5: List of respondents

2. Fr.Muriuki (Gakaithi parish) 26:4:2012
5. Ireri 3:12:2011
8. Fr. Namu (Gwakaithi parish) 20:8:2011
10. Lillian 7:4:2012
12. Igoki (Kavengero) 24:8:2011
13. Namu (Kanyuambora) 26:8:2011
15. Chief Njiru (Kanyuambora) 26:8:2011
22. Lydia (Karigiri) 26:11 2011
23. Hosea (Kanyuambora)7:4:2012
27. Kithaka (Kirie parish) 14:12:2011
29. Mugo (Ishiara) 03:11; 2011
30. Kugoca (03.11.2011)
Data collection instruments

A6: An interview guide for farmers focused group discussion in Evurore division

My name is Eugenio Nyaga, M.A student at Kenyatta University. I am conducting a research entitled, Participation of the Catholic Church in Consumption of Avocado to Enhance Food Security in Evurore Division Mbeere north sub-County, Embu County, Kenya. Kindly, answer all the questions asked in this interview. All answers shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. This information is for academic purpose only.

Background Information (for all categories of respondents)

Name (optional) -----------------------------------------------

Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

Age: 18-24 [ ] 25-34 [ ] 35-44 [ ] 45-54[ ] 55 and above [ ]

Marital status: Single [ ] Married [ ] Divorced [ ] Separated [ ]

Religious affiliation: Christian [ ] Muslim [ ] Traditional Religion [ ]

Others (Specify)-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. Location? --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2. How long have you been living in this Evurore Division? --------------------------------------

3. Have you ever experienced a serious famine in the past? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If, yes, when? -----------------------------------------------

4. What can you say are the main causes of famine in Evurore?

5. How do you deal with the problem of famine?
   ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

6. Does the Catholic Church assist you during famine? Yes [ ] No [ ]
   If yes, please explain how.
   ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
7. Other than during famine, have you ever benefited from the Catholic Church in other ways? Yes [ ] No [ ] If yes, please explain---------------------------------

8. Do you eat avocado? Yes [ ] No [ ] If No, please explain why……………………………………………………………………………

9. What is your traditional belief about eating of fruits like avocado? ------------
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10. Other than eating, do you know of any other uses of avocado?
    No [ ] Yes [ ]. If yes, please state them……………………………………………………………………

11. Do you think avocado can assist in enhancing food security in Evurore division? Yes [ ] No [ ] Do you experience any problem in avocado farming?
    Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes, please explain-----------------------------------------------

12. Do you experience any problem in Avocado farming? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If Yes, please explain-----------------------------------------------
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13. Have you ever received any advice from the Catholic Church on how to utilize avocado? Yes [ ] No [ ] If Yes, please explain-----------------------------------------------

14. What problem do you experience in avocado farming----------------------

15. What do you think could be a long-term solution to the problem of food shortage in Evurore Division? ………………………………………

Thank you for your assistance
A7: A questionnaire for catholic priests in Evurore division

My name is Eugenio Nyaga, an M.A. student at Kenyatta University. I am conducting a research entitled, Participation of the Catholic Church in Consumption of Avocado to Enhance Food Security in Evurore Division Mbeere north sub-County, Embu County, Kenya. Kindly, answer the following questions and provide any other information not captured in this questionnaire that you think is important for this study. All answers shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. This information is for academic purpose only.

A. Background Information (for all categories of respondents)
1. Name (optional) .................................................................

2. How many years have you served as a priest?
   0-5 [ ] 6-10 [ ] 11-15 [ ] 16-20 [ ] 21 years and above [ ]

3. Kindly tick your highest education level
   Primary [ ] Secondary [ ] College or university [ ]

4. Current status: Parish Priest [ ] Assistant priest [ ]

5. Name of Parish

6. How long have you served in this parish?
   0-5 years [ ] 6-10 years [ ] 11-15 years [ ] 16 years and above [ ]
B. 1. Please rate the causes of food insecurity mentioned by putting a tick () in the appropriate box

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<th>Low</th>
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<td>Ignorance</td>
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<td>High cost of farm inputs</td>
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<td>Poor storage</td>
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<td>Laxity/laziness</td>
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<td>Inadequate policies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. How does the Church assist the residents of Evurore division during famine

3. What is the Church doing to help the residents of Evurore Division to curb the problem of food shortage?

4. Please rate the Catholic Church’s response on Church’s participation in enhancing food security in Evurore division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training/Sensitization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing new crop varieties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving food rations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any other(specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. Has the Catholic Church educated the people of Evurore on how to utilize avocado fruit as food and also earn some money from it?

Yes [ ] No [ ] If No, please explain_____________________________
6. Would you say culture has influenced the Ambeere negatively on the utilization of avocado? Yes [ ] No [ ]
If your answer is ‘Yes’ please explain__________________________
How is the Catholic Church assisting the residents of Evurore to enhance food security and reduce poverty?

Thank you for your assistance
A8: Questionnaire for Embu catholic diocese development coordinators

My name is Eugenio Nyaga, M.A student at Kenyatta University. I am conducting a research entitled, Participation of the Catholic Church in Consumption of Avocado to Enhance Food Security in Evurore Division Mbeere north sub-County, Embu. County, Kenya. Kindly, fill all the parts of this questionnaire for me and provide any other information not captured in this questionnaire which you think is important for this study. All answers shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. This information is for academic purpose only.

A. Background Information (for all categories of respondents)

1. Name (optional)  -----------------------------------------------

Gender:  Male [ ] Female [ ]

2. Please tick your age bracket:

25 years and below [ ] 26-35 [ ] 36-45 [ ] 46-55[ ] 56 and above [ ]

3. Marital status:  Single [ ] Married [ ] Divorced [ ] Separated [ ]

4. Highest level of Education:

Primary [ ] Secondary [ ] Tertiary [ ] University [ ]

5. Religious affiliation:

Christian [ ] Muslim [ ] Traditional Religion [ ]

Others [ ]  Specify______________________________________________________

6. How long have you served as development coordinator?

0-5 years [ ]

6-10years [ ]

11-15 years [ ]

16-20 years [ ]

21 years and above [ ]
Section B: Causes of food insecurity

1. Please rate the causes of food insecurity mentioned by putting a tick in the appropriate box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Very High</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Very low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drought</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ignorance</td>
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<tr>
<td>High cost of farm inputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor storage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laxity/laziness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor harvest practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Any other(specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please rate the Catholic Church’s response on participation in enhancing food security in Evurore division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other(specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Has this office educated farmers on how to use avocado fruit?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]
   If No, please explain why________________________________________________________

4. Would you say that the Ambeere religio-culture has hindered them from utilizing the avocado fruit? Yes [ ] No [ ] If yes please explain.
5. What challenges do you face when dealing with problems of food shortage in Evurore Division?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________

6. What do you think could be done in Evurore Division to end the problem of food shortage?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your assistance
A9: A questionnaire for farmers in Evurore division

My name is Eugenio Nyaga, M.A student at Kenyatta University. I am conducting a research entitled, Participation of the Catholic Church in Consumption of Avocado to Enhance Food Security in Evurore Division Mbeere north sub-County, Embu. County Kenya. Kindly, answer all the questions asked in this interview. All answers shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. This information is for academic purpose only.

Section A: Background Information (for all categories of respondents)
1. Name (optional) ________________________________

2. Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

3. Please tick your age bracket:
   25 years and below [ ]
   26-35 [ ]
   36-45 [ ]
   46-55 [ ]
   56 years and above [ ]

4. Please tick your marital status:
   Single [ ] Married [ ] Divorced [ ] Separated [ ]

5. What is your highest level of Education?
   None [ ] Primary [ ] Secondary [ ] Tertiary [ ] University [ ]

6. Please indicate your denomination: Catholic [ ] Protestants [ ] others [ ] If others, please specify________________________________________________________

7. Your Location? ________________________________________________
Section B

1. Have you ever experienced a serious famine in the past? Yes [ ] No [ ]
   If yes, indicate when? _______________________

2. Please rate the cause food insecurity in Evurore mentioned below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
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<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>Ignorance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What do you do for survival during famine?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

4. What are you doing to end the problem of food shortage in Evurore Division?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

5. Does the Catholic Church assist you during famine? Yes [ ] No [ ] If yes, please explain how
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

6. Do you eat avocado? Yes [ ] No [ ] If No, please explain why
   ______________________________________________________
7. What is your belief on eating of fruits like avocado? 

8. Other than eating as fruit do you know any other uses of avocado? Yes [ ] No [ ]. If yes, please state them 

9. From the above uses, which one(s) have you utilized? 

10. Have you received any advice from the Catholic Church on how to utilize avocado? Yes [ ] No [ ]
    If yes, please explain 

11. What problem do you experience in avocado farming? 

12. Do you think avocado can assist in reducing the problem of food shortage in Evurore Division? Yes [ ] No [ ] don’t know [ ]

13. What do you think could be done to end the problem of food shortage in Evurore Division? 

Thank you for your assistance