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Author(s): Dorthe von Bülow and Anne Sørensen

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## Gender and Contract Farming: Tea Outgrower Schemes in Kenya

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*Dorthe von Bülow & Anne Sørensen*

**This article demonstrates the necessity of looking at gender as a major analytical category in the analysis of agricultural development. Contrary to other production systems like plantations and state farms, it is characteristic of smallholder outgrower schemes that their operation is based on the farmers' control over land and labour. However, this study of smallholder tea production in Kericho District, Kenya shows that men do not automatically control their wives' labour. In the survey area, one-third of all tea plots were partly or completely neglected largely because of conflicts between spouses. The problem of low productivity in smallholder tea production is thus intimately linked to the prevailing gender relations in a local community, a factor characteristically ignored by studies of smallholder contract farming which tend to focus narrowly on technical, institutional and economic factors.**

In recent years, feminist scholars have tried to relate their theoretical understanding of gender relations to the concrete development efforts and urgent priorities of African societies. Numerous studies confront the specific problems of African women. They show how gender relations affect and are themselves affected by development and demonstrate that gender relations are not 'natural', but socially constructed and historically created.

Nevertheless the majority of scholars and practitioners concerned with development in Africa and in other parts of the third world have continued to ignore or 'ghettoize' gender issues in both socio-economic studies and planning. This is the case, for example, in the 603-page book, *Strategies for African Development* (Berg and Whitaker, 1986), which is used by World Bank planners as a reference source. It includes a separate chapter on women in development, written by Jane Guyer, but the rest of the book largely neglects gender issues (Stamp, 1989). This is also symptomatic of national development plans, although there are also exceptions and recent signs of change.

This article contributes to the continuing efforts of feminist scholars to make gender visible in development research and planning, using our research in Kenya to demonstrate the close interrelation of gender with development problems in contract farming among tea producing smallholders in Kericho

(see end note 1). We suggest that the introduction of contract farming has exacerbated tensions in gender relations, which in turn have had a severe impact on the operation of tea outgrower schemes (in this article, the terms 'contract farming' and 'outgrower schemes' are used interchangeably, although the former is strictly a subset of the latter, since there may be outgrower schemes without written contracts (Glover, 1984)). Our central argument is that gender inequalities may act as a serious constraint to production. The limited returns to women's labour in tea production and pervasive inequity in the distribution of the benefits from tea growing within the household are important factors in explaining the low level of productivity among certain groups of tea growers. The success of tea outgrower schemes would appear to depend upon good co-operation between husband and wife within the household.

## **Contract Farming**

Outgrower schemes for smallholders aim at developing export crops such as tea, sugar, tobacco and coffee for national and international consumption. Contract farming is generally seen as a rational system for increasing the productivity of smallholder farming through the provision of credit, inputs and technical information (Minot, 1986).

The general literature on contract farming shows a heavy bias towards system- and technically-oriented studies (Treville, 1986). Studies addressing problems of productivity attribute these to technical and organisational problems outside the household which arise at various levels in the organisational structure of contract farming and in the relationship between the scheme and the outgrowers (CDC, 1982; Lamb and Muller, 1982).

Issues of labour and gender relations at the household level are generally neglected and few look at labour from an explicitly gender perspective. Yet it is particularly with regard to labour-intensive crops such as tea, coffee and tobacco that the gender division of labour and gender relations of production play an essential role in the adoption of a new production system and its integration into the farming system.

Exceptions are studies by Davison (1988), Mbilinyi (1988) and Odgård (1986) who have investigated women's role in contract farming in Eastern Africa and the work of Glover (1987) and Buch Hansen (1980; 1982 (with Kieler); 1982 (with Secher Marcussen)) which addresses the impact of contract farming on subsistence cropping, labour and processes of socio-economic differentiation.

Compared with other outgrower schemes for smallholders, tea schemes in Kenya are generally looked upon as a success story (Buch Hansen, 1980; Buch Hansen and Secher Marcussen, 1982; Lamb and Muller 1982). However, this production system exhibits problems of productivity at the level of the smallholders which have not yet been dealt with satisfactorily.

The British initiated tea production on plantations in the 1920s. From the late 1950s, tea outgrower schemes were introduced for selected smallholders by the colonial administration's Special Crop Development Authority (SCDA). In 1964, SCDA was transformed into the Kenyan Tea Development Authority (KTDA), a parastatal organisation with its mandate restricted to tea. Since then, KTDA has supervised and promoted smallholder tea production by providing the outgrowers with planting materials, fertiliser on credit and technical assistance. The tea outgrowers, primarily male household heads, are attached to a nucleus estate and a regional factory on a contract basis. Their products are subject to quality control, while they maintain control over land and labour.

In his studies of tea outgrower schemes in Kericho District, Kenya, Buch Hansen (1980) reveals that there is a striking internal variation in productivity among smallholders. The productivity of a significant number is far below average, lowering the overall productivity of the smallholder sector.

Using detailed information on production and income from a random sample of 200 tea growers covering the period 1972 to 1979, he demonstrates that almost one-third of the growers produced less than half of the expected output. But even more astonishing, it turned out that ten per cent produced less than a tenth of the expected output and for some, output was virtually nil! At the other end of the scale, five per cent of the sample produced more than twice the expected amount.

While the average income was Kshs4,235, 25 per cent of the growers had an income from tea of less than Kshs1,000 a year (Buch Hansen, 1980; Buch Hansen and Secher Marcussen, 1982). Buch Hansen tries to explain variation in productivity by testing the relationship between productivity and various other factors, such as experience in tea growing and size of the tea farm, but he finds no significant positive correlation.

In their analysis of KTDA, Lamb and Muller (1982) have identified labour as a key area of concern, but they hesitate to investigate the underlying causes. Instead they focus on levels of fertiliser application, extension service and inappropriate research as reasons for low productivity (Lamb and Muller, 1982).

Our own survey of tea outgrower schemes in Kericho District confirmed the huge variations in productivity found by Buch Hansen (1980). These differences could not only or easily be attributed to such factors as ineffective extension service, non-availability of fertiliser or other extra-household factors like poor infrastructure and lack of credit schemes and incentives to the farmers. A much more significant explanatory factor was intra-household gender relations (Bülow and Sørensen, 1988).

## **Gender Relations in Outgrower Schemes — Kericho**

Kericho district is mainly inhabited by the Kipsigis. Most are smallholders who keep cattle and cultivate food and cash crops. Maize is the staple, but other food crops include millet, sorghum and vegetables (see end note 2). Tea is by far the most important cash crop in Kericho District. Others of less significance are coffee, pyrethrum and sugar-cane. By contrast to the latter, tea has a very good yield potential in this area. In addition, tea prices on the world market have increased steadily since the mid-1970s. In the period 1979-1984, tea growers experienced a five-fold increase in producer prices. Real producer prices have been sustained over a period of 20 years (Bülow and Sørensen, 1988; Cohen, 1986).

Today approximately 25 per cent of all smallholders in the district grow tea. Tea production is considered a very profitable venture by most farmers and many more would like to embark upon it, could they afford to do so; their problems usually relate to land and labour.

On average tea farmers devote one acre of their land to the cultivation of tea. The average size of landholdings among tea farmers in Kericho District is seven acres, well above the average of 4.5 acres for the area as a whole (Ministry of Agriculture, 1985). KTDA issues tea licenses to male household heads on the basis of their title deeds to land. Monthly payments and annual bonuses are paid directly into the license holder's bank account. Credit schemes and extension services are oriented towards the male farmers.

Women are generally not given any publicly recognised role in the system of contract farming (see end note 3). While young men may be encouraged and supported by KTDA to establish themselves as independent tea-growers, this is not at all the case for women. If a married woman should want to start her own production of tea, this would be seen as a threat to the husband's dominant position in the household and to his control over family labour.

An exception is a women's group in Buret Division which has a large tea farm worked entirely by hired labourers. Tea production organised within the framework of a women's group is less threatening to the women's husbands than if it had taken place within their own individual households. The husbands 'support' the women's group in various ways in order to obtain influence in decisions regarding tea proceeds. The women also grow tea together with their husbands on their family farms, and this tea is completely controlled by the husbands.

Overall the introduction of tea outgrower schemes has led to a further widening of the gap between the resources women and men control. In addition, it has reinforced the already ongoing process of social differentiation in the area. Poor farmers are rarely included in the schemes, while better-off farmers have been provided with yet another economically important resource.

Tea is a very labour-intensive crop. It is harvested every one or two weeks and

relies on manual labour all year round. Weeding is crucial for young plants, while picking is the most labour intensive job with mature plants. According to the gender division of labour, both women and men can weed and pick tea. Pruning is the only activity which is usually relegated to men, with specialists being hired for the task.

Family labour, particularly that of wives, is crucial to the majority of tea farmers. Three categories of tea growers can be roughly distinguished on the basis of their use of family or hired labour. The first, incorporating around half of the tea growers in our sample, relies almost exclusively on nuclear family labour in tea production. In the second category, around one-third of our sample, the tea growers regularly employ part-time labourers to supplement family labour. The third category (15 per cent of the sample) employs full-time permanent labourers, all of whom are men (Bülow and Sørensen, 1988).

The latter group comprises the better-off farmers in terms of land, cattle holding, incomes from off-farm employment, education and housing standards. The two other categories are less easily differentiated from one another in socio-economic terms. They both consist of middle and less affluent farmers. Factors such as the household life cycle and off-farm employment play an important part in determining the availability of family labour and access to cash. Hence while middle-aged, relatively well-off tea growers are able to use only family labour in their tea production, younger and less affluent men often have to hire labour.

Compared with other farmers, tea growers on average have larger farms and livestock holdings, a larger percentage of improved cattle breeds, better paid off-farm employment and utilise more hired labour. Introduction of tea outgrower schemes has reinforced the ongoing process of social differentiation in the area, which started in the 1920s with the introduction of private property and maize as a cash crop. However, the differentiation of farmers cuts across the divide between tea growers and non-tea growers.

To women of less affluent and middle income farmers, involvement in tea outgrower schemes means a heavy increase in their labour burden. In addition, pressure on wives' labour increases in peak labour periods (weeding and harvesting of maize) because few are willing to work as casual labourers during that time. Everybody concentrates on his or her own maize field.

Problems of labour shortage are worsened by a general decline in the use of traditional labour groups in food crop production due to increased socio-economic differentiation among farming households. These labour groups were essential to the pre-colonial Kipsigis farming system. Large groups of women and men within the neighbourhood (*kokwet* labour) were mobilised along age-set lines for digging, weeding (which involved only women) and harvesting of finger millet and, later, maize. In addition, women worked together in smaller rotating labour groups (*morik* groups) based on reciprocity and piece-work.

Today, *kokwet* labour groups are still used in relation to maize, but never in tea. They are, however, on the decline because maize plots are of very unequal sizes. In addition, many men are absent from the farm, engaged in some kind of employment, contract labour or business. Women's *morik* groups are still widely used in both maize and finger millet, but are not common in women's kitchen gardens since vegetables are mainly grown for sale. Recently, women have also begun to hire out their *morik* group on a contractual basis to weed maize in neighbouring farms. *Morik* labour groups are today one of women's few sources of additional labour. Children's labour contributions are generally decreasing due to enrolment in school, and women do not usually control enough money to employ hired labour.

Many women find it difficult to fulfil all labour tasks satisfactorily considering their many other responsibilities in relation to maize production, cattle care, domestic work, and child care. Approximately half of the tea growers' wives claimed that they managed their labour responsibilities by putting in more effort, by working longer hours or by getting assistance from family members, neighbours and friends (through *morik* labour groups). However, 35 per cent of these women said that tea production was affected negatively in peak labour periods because of their labour burden. Characteristically the households of which they were a part did not use any hired labour for maize or finger millet and only occasionally for tea (Bülow and Sørensen, 1988).

In general, women give priority to maize production above any other activity, and wives of tea growers are no different in this regard. Kipsigis women are considered the main providers of food (maize) and to be a good wife and mother one has to feed one's family properly. Tea production is given second priority after maize, often at the expense of women's own small-scale production of vegetables and other minor cash-generating activities.

In poorer, less affluent tea growing households with limited or no use of hired labour, women's labour burden in tea may be a strain on her other activities, including food crop production and domestic work, not only in peak periods but all year round. These households often have to buy maize to supplement their own production. The husband usually controls most household income and expenditure, and women have little say in decision-making. Compared with other wives of tea growers, these women tend to have very few and limited sources of income. They simply do not have time to pursue their own activities.

By contrast, wives of better-off tea growers are distinguished by having more time for their own income-generating activities, as well as for participation in women's groups, domestic work, child care and relaxation, than do those in poorer households. Most work in tea and maize production is done by hired labour. To these women tea production means an improvement not only of living standards but also of their decision-making power vis-à-vis their husbands. While husbands control the household's major sources of income, in-

cluding tea, dairy cattle and off-farm employment, women have regained their former control over food production, including the sale of maize (Bülow and Sørensen, 1988; Roberts, 1988).

Wives of better-off farmers, however, only constitute a relatively small group. The majority of women in tea-growing households have to work hard to improve the household's living standard. However, our study showed that labour problems in tea production do not only originate from women's many competing labour tasks; rather, underproductive tea outgrowers often turned out to be farmers whose wives had withdrawn their labour from their husband's tea field as a protest against his use of the income from tea. Beneath the general assumption that men control household labour lie complex sets of negotiations and struggles between women and men over women's labour and over the product of women's and men's labour.

In the following, we will show how women, on the one hand, accept the gender structuring (see end note 4) in Kipsigis society and, on the other hand, try to manipulate existing power hierarchies by negotiating cultural principles concerning gender roles and male and female control over critical resources. In this way women try to exert influence over decision-making within tea production.

## **Gender-structuring of Kipsigis Society**

In pre-colonial Kipsigis society, men and women had fairly autonomous spheres of activity. Men were cattle holders and warriors, while women were the primary cultivators of the staple crop, finger millet. Women obtained access to the major means of production — land and cattle — through marriage. Polygamy was the dominant marriage pattern. By paying bridewealth, the suitor obtained rights to women's productive and reproductive services and custody over children. Wives were obliged to pay public deference to their husbands.

Although cattle and land were controlled by men, the 'house property system' provided the structural condition for women to exercise a certain economic autonomy vis-à-vis men (Gluckman, 1950 and Håkansson, 1984). Through this system, land, cattle and other property were allocated to the 'house' of each wife to secure her livelihood and that of her children; each wife's house property was eventually inherited by her sons.

The principle of usufructuary rights governed the cultivation of land. Land was plentiful, and prior to the arrival of the British colonisers, the Kipsigis had no conception of private and permanent ownership of land. Labour was largely divided by sex and age and was recruited within both the nuclear and the extended family as well as among neighbours. Women cultivated the 'fields of the house' which were exclusively for household consumption. The harvest was stored in a woman's granary, to which men were denied access.

Men assisted in clearing of land and harvesting of finger millet on 'fields of the house'. In addition, they had their own smaller 'fields of the household head', which were cultivated by the help of 'paid helpers', who were mostly young unmarried men compensated in kind. Finger millet grown in these fields was used for a man's entertainment of friends and in exchange for small stock. A wife's obligation to cultivate fields assigned to her for household consumption could not be extended to cover the 'field of the household' (Peristiany, 1939; Bülow and Sørensen, 1988).

However, this situation changed radically when maize was introduced in the Kipsigis farming system, first as a cash and later also as a food crop. Contrary to finger millet maize was cultivated in one large ploughed field and subsequently the distinction between women's and men's separate fields disappeared. The fact that maize was primarily a cash crop legitimised men's overall control of the total output from the maize harvest. Consequently, women lost much of their economic autonomy as food producers and their labour was appropriated as 'free labour' by their husbands.

The impact of commoditisation on Kipsigis women's access to economically significant resources such as land, cattle and labour has been deleterious. Similar to the situation in other areas of Kenya, Kipsigis women's rights in house property have increasingly given way to modern Western ideas of ownership and rules of inheritance (Davison, 1988a; Oboler, 1985; Pala, 1980). Land and other property are now inherited equally among a man's sons, and women can be denied access to land. Commoditisation of land and cattle also means that property is no longer easily distinguished as belonging to one or another house.

This process has been furthered by the Christian Missions' condemnation of polygamy. Previously, polygamy worked to sustain and justify the rule of house property. The new emphasis on monogamous marriages has meant that property is thought of as belonging to the household under the authority of the male household head. As a result women have lost much of their economic autonomy as food producers and have been turned into unpaid family labour.

Introduction of tea outgrower schemes has increased tensions in gender relations of production and widened the gap between the resources women and men control. It is from this position of dependency that women now attempt to influence decision-making within the household and to gain access to and control over resources by using their bargaining power (Bülow, 1992).

## **Intra-Household Negotiations and Struggles**

As long as family labour and, in particular, wives' labour, continues to be the basic labour source relied upon for tea outgrower schemes, the main precondition for success in tea production is good co-operation between husband

and wife. Women have a traditional obligation to produce food for their family. However, tea was introduced in the Kipsigis farming system as a male cash crop and as a man's private business. Therefore, men cannot automatically command their wives to work in the tea field by referring to their obligation to farm family plots. Moreover, women have the power to withdraw their labour from the husband's field in favour of work relating to food crop production by referring to their responsibilities as mothers and food providers. However, this power does not usually extend to their own individual income-generating activities, but is intimately linked to their role in household production and their importance to the household welfare (Nypan, 1991; Roberts, 1988; Whitehead, 1984).

In tea outgrower schemes, women's labour is thus not a given, but rather the object of negotiation between women and men (Dennis, 1988). And this negotiation is not only restricted to the household, but involves women and men of the community.

This point is illustrated by the intervention of the 'elder' (respected) women of a neighbourhood in a case where a husband prohibited his wife from participating in her *morik* labour group and commanded her to pick tea instead. The wife in this case formerly worked once a week with the other women of her *morik* group, which provided collective labour in rotation on its members' fields. They also helped each other with daily tasks and lent each other milk and grain. In addition they assisted one another during delivery, sickness, and such crises as might arise. Consequently, for a woman to be barred from participating in the activities of her group was a serious matter.

Hence, the older women felt it necessary to intervene. They went and talked with the husband, asking him teasingly if he would be he to collect water and firewood for his wife when she delivered her next baby. Was he also going to cook meals for her and bring her milk? This proved sufficient to persuade the husband to let his wife continue in her *morik* group. For a man to cook for his wife would be unthinkable and most undignified.

In general, Kipsigis women accept that their labour obligation is enlarged to include work in their husband's tea field. They do so on the understanding that income from tea will be spent to the benefit of the entire family. Trouble arises where the husband neglects his responsibilities towards his family and spends all the income from tea on a second wife or on his personal needs. In such situations, a woman tries to influence her husband's behaviour. As a last resort, she might put pressure on him by withdrawing her labour from his tea field for a shorter or longer period.

A typical case was Mary, who was in her fifties and the first wife of a polygamous man. She lived on his first farm and was its manager. After marrying a second wife, he stopped giving her any of the money from tea despite the fact that the tea field was situated on land which according to Kipsigis customs belonged to Mary's 'house'. In consequence she refused to work in the tea

field. At first, he hired some labourers to pluck the tea, but later found he could not afford it. The tea field became completely neglected and the plants grew into tall bushes.

Mary's behaviour was not an attempt to challenge her husband's authority and power as head of household, but simply to make him understand that he was not fulfilling his responsibilities and to express her annoyance with his behaviour. She was able to do this without harming herself or her children or provoking sanctions from the community in the form of public condemnation. The same act, however, would have had quite different effects on the family and have caused negative reactions from the community if it involved withdrawal of labour from maize or milk production, which are so intimately connected with a woman's role as food provider (Bülow, 1991). A man's response to his wife's withdrawal of labour in tea may be to employ hired labour or to try to force her to work. But usually he will not dare to beat his wife on these grounds for fear that the neighbours might interfere.

In another case, an old man had neglected his tea field for several years. His wife was sick and old, his sons worked elsewhere, and he could not afford to employ hired labourers. His only source of farm labour was his daughters-in-law. However, they had refused to work in what they considered to be his personal field unless they were compensated in cash. He continued to insist that as daughters-in-law they had an obligation to work for him. No immediate solution emerged as resolution to the conflict and their relationship remained very tense.

In households where the husband cannot afford to hire labourers to compensate for the loss of family labour, the consequences are severe: the tea field quickly becomes full of weeds and underplucked. In order to maintain a constant output, the tea bushes have to be plucked regularly and kept at a certain height (the so-called plucking table). Otherwise, they soon grow into irregular bushes or even trees, leading in the first instance to low productivity and eventually to no output at all.

In our sample of tea-growers, ten per cent of the tea farms were completely neglected while another twenty per cent were partly neglected (Bülow and Sørensen, 1988). Other factors may have played a role, but a major cause was 'bad co-operation' between husband and wife, or less frequently between fathers and adult sons and daughters-in-law. These households were characteristically among the less affluent within the sample. They did not use hired labour at all in maize and finger millet and only very occasionally in tea. It is possible that other cases of conflict existed among the more affluent households which were not visible because they hired labour to compensate for the loss of a wife's labour, so the figures may underestimate the degree of withdrawal of wives' labour. But even as they stand the figures reveal a phenomenon of some significance.

In situations of conflicts between fathers and sons, KTDA often tries to medi-

ate between the two partners and persuade the father to give his sons a license to at least part of the tea field. However, this solution is impossible in the case of conflicts between husbands and wives. First, it is against the policy of KTDA, and secondly, it is in direct opposition to customary norms. To encourage a wife to set up her own independent tea production could easily be interpreted as an encouragement to break up the family. Unless the husband can be persuaded to change his behaviour in relation to income from tea such conflicts are generally insoluble.

Tea extension officers know when tea fields are neglected because of conflicts between spouses. However, such problems are regarded as private matters which extension officers can do little about save for trying to mediate between the partners. The problem is known to KTDA's headquarter in Nairobi, as well. An officer told us that sometimes women travel all the way to Nairobi to claim part or all of the income from their husband's tea field, because they consider themselves to be the real managers of the tea field, while their husbands neglect them and their children. Nevertheless, since the husband is the tea license holder, the tea income belongs legally to him, and KTDA can do nothing to help the women.

These intra-household struggles represent individual women's resistance against men's exploitation of women's labour within the contract farming system. Other authors have reported on collective forms of resistance against male dominance within smallholder tea production. Mbilinyi (1988) describes how women and children in Rungwe District, Tanzania, have successfully struggled to transform gender relations of production by refusing to pick tea on household farms because they were not paid by the household heads. Instead, they hired out their labour to neighbouring tea growers for wages, putting pressure on household heads which persuaded them to share the income with their wives.

Davison (1988) reports on Kikuyu women's successful collective protest and organised resistance against the unjust system of distribution of benefits from tea growing in Mutira, Central Province, Kenya. In this case a group of women went to the KTDA committee to complain that their husbands spent their annual bonus from tea on beer, meat and other personal needs. The women demanded a share of this bonus commensurate with their labour contributions in picking the tea and succeeded in changing the tea bonus policy. Individual harvesters were subsequently allowed a percentage of the owner's bonus. Later, however, the system of both monthly payment and bonus was altered by KTDA on a national scale. While payments were previously paid out in the local buying centres, they were now transferred directly into their bank accounts. Although launched in the face of a series of robberies in tea buying centres, this policy change also meant a halt to the Kikuyu women's receipt of payment for labour.

There are several reasons why Kipsigis wives' reactions against male domi-

nance within cash crop production seem to take less collective forms than in Rungwe and Mutira. First, the majority of wives in tea growing households think that their families do benefit from tea growing under male control. They only withdraw their labour from tea in response to outright neglect on the part of their husbands. Secondly, tea growers are not a homogeneous category, and increasing differences between women belonging to various socio-economic strata of tea growers prevent their joining together in collective actions against male domination (Sørensen, 1990). Finally, in Kericho, the pressure on land has not yet reached the same alarming heights as in Central Province, where the impact of contracting within tea and coffee production has been detrimental to food production. Unlike Kipsigis women, who still spend the bulk of their time in food production, Kikuyu women in Mutira and Chwele use most of their time cultivating tea and coffee, increasingly depending upon cash to buy food they no longer produce themselves (Davison 1988:168).

## Conclusion

In contrast to other production systems such as plantations and state farms, it is characteristic of smallholder outgrower schemes that their operation is based on the farmers' control over land and labour. It is therefore all the more astonishing to note that most studies on contract farming have focused only on the contracting firm or organisation, almost totally neglecting the other partner to the contract, the growers.

In this article, we have demonstrated that the gender structure may cause serious constraints in outgrower schemes by virtue of affecting one of the most basic elements of contract farming, the farmer's control over labour. While tea is a particularly labour-intensive crop, labour is a critical factor as well in respect of most other crops produced within outgrower schemes.

Over the last several decades, labour has become a binding constraint in agricultural production in Kericho District, with smallholder tea production being particularly vulnerable to changes in the labour force. It has been shown how tensions in gender relations affect tea production negatively and lead to low productivity and neglected tea fields. Tensions arise, in particular, as a result of conflicts concerning control over the proceeds of tea sales. In pure cash crop production, the farmer controls the labour of the household members only to the extent that they also benefit from the production.

To the contracting firm or organisation, this type of problem is very difficult to tackle because it is located in the private sphere. Usually, the contracting firm's policies towards the farmers are confined to such aspects as extension services, the accounting system and various forms of incentives to the farmers, including growers' representation in the outgrower scheme, credit facilities and a well-functioning infrastructure (KTDA Annual Reports 1983-1987).

Further research on gender and labour is central to a solution to some of the problems inherent in contract farming. As women make up a larger part of the labour force in smallholder outgrower schemes, gender must be considered in relation to extension service, transfer of skills, choice of technology, effects on subsistence crops, organisation and unionization of growers, casual labour and socio-economic differentiation. These are all issues which have been raised in the literature on contract farming — without, however, direct consideration having been given to the influence of gender (Glover, 1984 and 1987; Lamb and Muller, 1982; Buch Hansen, 1980; Buch Hansen and Kieler, 1982).

There is evidence of growing awareness among planners and policy-makers of problems of gender conflicts, but as do researchers, they too continue to attribute problems of productivity primarily to technical and organisational factors. They may regard tensions between husbands and wives as too sensitive an issue or one on which they have little expertise to draw. But it is evident that this is a matter of considerable significance which, unless properly addressed and the needs of women fully appreciated, may lead to more neglected tea fields and a frustration of efforts.

*Dorthe von Bülow & Anne Sørensen* are at the Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen, Denmark.

### End Notes

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1. Fieldwork was carried out between March 1985 and April 1986 in Mosop Location, Belgat Division, Kericho District in Kenya. A random sample of 128 households was drawn within the location, consisting of 63 tea growers and, for comparison, 57 farmers who did not grow tea. Baseline data on farming systems and gender relations were collected through a questionnaire survey in which both men and women were interviewed. A selected sample of 14 households was chosen for further, in depth interviews on gender roles, gender relations within the household and inter-household relations.
2. The Kipsigis are a patrilineal, traditionally agro-pastoral society. In pre-colonial times they had a non-hierarchical, leaderless political

organisation and a social organisation that rested on territorial groupings of neighbourhoods (*kotwotinwek*) and men's age-sets and army groups (Peristiany, 1939).

3. Ten per cent of our sample were female growers. However, except for one divorced woman, they were all widows managing the farm on behalf of their unmarried sons.
4. Our use of the term gender-structuring is influenced by Davison (1988), who uses it to analyse changing gender relations of production across time and through space. The term, gender relations of production, includes both social and economic relations of production and is used as an organising construct in explaining the changes occurring in production relations in Africa. As used by Davison it refers to relations between females and males which may be characterised by differential assignment of labour tasks, control over decision-making and differential access to, and control over, the allocation of resources.

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