Organic farming of which Stover, trash and farm composite are components, offers considerable promise for increasing food production in Kenya. It nonetheless remains unclear whether, organic farming techniques lend themselves easily to adoption by small-scale farmers. And if so, why do some farmers adopt organic farming while others fail to adopt?

Using survey data collected from 119 households in Meru-South District, this study investigated factors that influence adoption of organic farming by small-scale maize farmers. A structured interview schedule was used to collect data on the socio-economic characteristics and the institutional factors affecting adoption of organic farming. The data collected was analyzed using econometric software known as Statistical Program for Social Scientists (SPSS). Both descriptive and regression results of the logit model are presented.

The farmers reported several constraints to adoption of organic farming, including inadequate knowledge, lack of market for organic products, inadequate market information, labour availability and expensive certification process. Conventional farmers reported uncertainty about the supply chain (market for organic product), strict certification procedure and reduced yield as the most important reasons for not converting to organic farming.

Major factors associated with adoption included farm size, awareness, social capital proxied by membership to farmer association, household size, farmer experience and ecological zones. These findings raise important questions as to whether organic farming techniques are really affordable to smallholders. To spur adoption, it is recommended that the government should come up with policy decisions and legislate organic laws that favour organic farming, while training activities should develop further into marketing, processing and certification of organic products. Extension messages should be focused on younger less experienced farmers and women who are more likely to adopt organic farming practices.