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EVALUATING GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON YOUTH-DRIVEN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture remains the cornerstone of Kenya's economy, contributing approximately 33% of Gross Domestic Product and employing over 40% of the population. However, youth participation in the sector continues to decline despite high unemployment rates among young people exceeding 38%. The Kenyan government has developed numerous policy frameworks including the Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy 2019-2029, Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018-2022, and Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019 aimed at integrating youth into agricultural value chains. This paper evaluated the effectiveness of these government policies in promoting youth-driven agriculture and rural development in Kenya. The paper adopted a desktop research methodology, reviewing and synthesizing secondary data from government policy documents, peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, and statistical publications. The analysis was anchored on Human Capital Theory which posits that investments in education, skills development, and enabling environments enhance individual productivity and economic contribution. Findings revealed significant gaps between policy articulation and implementation outcomes. Structural barriers including limited land access due to customary tenure systems, financial exclusion arising from stringent collateral requirements, inadequate skills development programs, and weak rural digital infrastructure continue to constrain youth engagement in agriculture. Coordination failures among government ministries and development partners resulted in fragmented interventions with limited sustainability. Monitoring and evaluation systems remained inadequate for evidence-based policy refinement. The paper concludes that existing policies have largely failed to translate into tangible opportunities for youth in agriculture, threatening Kenya's food security and rural economic vitality as the farming population ages without adequate generational replacement. Recommendations include establishing youth land banks, developing dedicated agricultural credit facilities, reforming agricultural education curricula, accelerating rural digital infrastructure investments, instituting interministerial coordination mechanisms, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems to track youth agricultural engagement outcomes.

Keywords: *Government Policies, Youth-Driven Agriculture & Rural Development*

1.1 Introduction

Agriculture remains the backbone of Kenya's economy, contributing approximately 33% of the Gross Domestic Product and employing over 40% of the total population, with rural areas depending almost entirely on farming activities for livelihoods and food security (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The sector holds immense potential for addressing the twin challenges of unemployment and food insecurity, particularly among the youth who constitute about 75% of the country's population below the age of 35 . Despite this demographic dividend, young people continue to drift away from agricultural pursuits, perceiving farming as an unprofitable, laborious, and low-status occupation associated with older generations (Yeboah & Jayne, 2020). This rural-urban migration pattern threatens the sustainability of food production systems and exacerbates urban unemployment, creating a cyclical poverty trap that undermines national development aspirations (Rocca & Schultes, 2020).

The Kenyan government has implemented various policy frameworks aimed at reversing youth disengagement from agriculture and positioning young people as drivers of agricultural transformation. The Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy 2019-2029 prioritizes youth inclusion through targeted interventions in value chain development, mechanization, and agribusiness entrepreneurship (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2019). Complementary initiatives such as the Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018-2022 sought to create an enabling environment for youth participation by addressing barriers related to land access, capital, skills development, and market linkages (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2018). The Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019 further reinforces the government's commitment to harnessing the productive potential of young people across all economic sectors, with agriculture identified as a priority area for employment creation and wealth generation (Government of Kenya, 2019).

Regional and international frameworks have equally emphasized the centrality of youth in agricultural transformation across Africa. The African Union's Agenda 2063 envisions a continent where young people are empowered to drive sustainable development, including agricultural modernization and rural industrialization (African Union Commission, 2015). Development partners such as the African Development Bank have channeled substantial resources toward youth-focused agricultural programs in Kenya, recognizing the strategic importance of engaging young people in agribusiness value chains (African Development Bank, 2023). The Food and Agriculture Organization's Rural Youth Action Plan 2021-2025 provides a global blueprint for integrating youth perspectives into agricultural policy formulation and implementation, calling for investments in skills training, digital agriculture, and enabling policy environments (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021). These multilateral commitments underscore the growing consensus that sustainable food systems depend fundamentally on attracting and retaining young people in agricultural enterprises (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2025).

Despite these policy pronouncements and programmatic interventions, youth engagement in Kenyan agriculture remains disappointingly low, with structural barriers continuing to limit meaningful participation in farming and agribusiness activities (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, 2024). Land tenure systems that disadvantage young people, inadequate access to affordable credit, limited technical skills, and weak market infrastructure collectively constrain youth entry into profitable agricultural ventures (Rogito & Makhanu, 2024). The disconnect between policy intentions and ground-level realities raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of existing government frameworks in catalyzing youth-driven agricultural transformation (Ouko et al., 2022). This situation necessitates a critical evaluation of how well Kenya's agricultural and youth development policies have performed in fostering an enabling environment for young people to thrive as farmers, agripreneurs, and rural development actors (Mulema et al., 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement

Kenya faces a paradoxical situation where agriculture, the largest employer and contributor to national income, struggles to attract youth participation despite alarming unemployment rates among young people estimated at over 38% (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The government has invested considerable resources in developing policies and strategies aimed at integrating youth into agricultural value chains, including the Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018-2022, the Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy 2019-2029, and the Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019, yet these interventions have yielded minimal impact on reversing youth exodus from rural areas and farming activities (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2018; Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2019; Government of Kenya, 2019). Young Kenyans continue to perceive agriculture as an occupation of last resort characterized by drudgery, low returns, and social stigma, preferring instead to migrate to urban centers in search of white-collar employment opportunities that remain equally elusive (Yeboah & Jayne, 2020). This persistent disengagement threatens Kenya's food security ambitions, rural economic vitality, and the sustainability of intergenerational knowledge transfer in farming communities (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2025). The aging farmer population, with the average Kenyan farmer now exceeding 60 years, signals an impending crisis in agricultural productivity and continuity that demands urgent policy attention (Heifer International, 2021).

The fundamental problem lies in the apparent disconnect between well-articulated policy frameworks and their actual implementation, monitoring, and outcomes at the grassroots level where youth reside and make livelihood decisions. Structural barriers including inequitable land tenure systems that deny youth access to productive land, prohibitive collateral requirements by financial institutions, inadequate agricultural education and extension services, poor rural infrastructure, and fragmented market systems remain largely unaddressed despite being consistently identified in policy documents (Rogito & Makhanu, 2024; Mulema et al., 2021). Development partner interventions, though substantial in financial terms, have operated in silos without adequate coordination with national policy frameworks, resulting in duplication, inefficiency, and unsustainable project-based approaches that collapse once external funding ceases (World Bank, 2024). The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (2024) confirms that youth participation in Kenya's food system remains marginal, with young people concentrated in low-value, informal activities rather than profitable segments of agricultural value chains. Without a critical evaluation of why existing government policies have failed to translate into tangible opportunities for youth in agriculture and rural development, the country risks losing an entire generation's potential contribution to agricultural transformation.

1.3 Research Objectives

The paper was guided by the following specific objectives;

i. To assess the effectiveness of government policies in promoting youth participation in agriculture and rural development in Kenya.
ii. To identify key challenges and barriers limiting youth engagement in agricultural and rural development initiatives in Kenya.
iii. To recommend policy interventions for strengthening youth-driven agriculture and rural development in Kenya.

2.1 Methodology

This article adopted a desktop research approach, relying exclusively on secondary data sources to evaluate government policies on youth-driven agriculture and rural development in Kenya. The methodology involved a comprehensive review and synthesis of existing literature, including government policy documents, strategic frameworks, peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports from development organizations, and statistical publications. Documents were purposively selected based on their relevance to youth engagement in agriculture, policy implementation, and rural development within the Kenyan context and broader African experience. The analysis employed a thematic approach, organizing findings around policy effectiveness, implementation challenges, and intervention outcomes to draw evidence-based conclusions and recommendations.

3.1 Theoretical Review

This article is anchored on the Human Capital Theory, originally advanced by Theodore Schultz in 1961 and further developed by Gary Becker in 1964. The theory posits that investments in education, training, skills development, and health enhance individual productivity and earning potential, thereby contributing to broader economic growth and development. Human capital encompasses the knowledge, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that enable them to create economic value through productive activities. The theory argues that just as physical capital such as machinery and infrastructure drives economic output, so too does the accumulation of human capital through deliberate investments in people's capabilities and capacities.

Applied to youth engagement in agriculture, Human Capital Theory provides a compelling framework for understanding why young people remain disengaged from farming activities despite available opportunities. Youth participation in agriculture depends fundamentally on the acquisition of relevant technical skills, business acumen, financial literacy, and innovative capacities that enable profitable engagement in modern agricultural value chains (Akrong & Kotu, 2022). Government policies aimed at promoting youth-driven agriculture must therefore prioritize investments in agricultural education, vocational training, extension services, and entrepreneurship development programs that equip young people with competencies required for successful agribusiness ventures (Ninson & Brobbey, 2023). The theory suggests that youth perceive agriculture negatively partly because they lack the requisite human capital to exploit emerging opportunities in mechanization, digital agriculture, value addition, and agro-processing that offer attractive returns comparable to other sectors (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022).

Human Capital Theory further illuminates the critical role of enabling environments in maximizing returns on investments in youth capabilities. Even where young people possess adequate skills and knowledge, structural barriers such as limited access to land, credit, technology, and markets constrain their ability to deploy human capital productively in agricultural enterprises (Geza et al., 2021). Effective government policies must therefore combine human capital development interventions with complementary investments in physical infrastructure, financial inclusion mechanisms, and institutional reforms that create conditions for youth to translate acquired competencies into tangible agricultural outcomes (Bello et al., 2021). The theory underscores that policy success in promoting youth-driven agriculture hinges on a holistic approach that simultaneously builds young people's capabilities while dismantling systemic obstacles that prevent them from realizing the full benefits of their human capital investments in farming and rural development activities.

3.2 Empirical Review

Youth participation in agriculture has attracted considerable scholarly attention across Africa, with findings consistently highlighting both the untapped potential and persistent barriers that characterize young people's engagement in farming and agribusiness activities. Geza et al. (2021) conducted a scoping review examining youth participation in agriculture and established that young people's involvement remains constrained by multidimensional factors spanning economic, social, institutional, and structural dimensions. The authors found that negative perceptions of farming as a low-status occupation, coupled with limited access to productive resources, discourage youth from pursuing agricultural livelihoods despite high unemployment rates in other sectors. Yeboah and Jayne (2020) corroborated these findings by demonstrating that African agriculture is increasingly becoming the preserve of elderly populations as young people migrate to urban areas in search of alternative employment opportunities. Their analysis revealed that the average age of farmers continues to rise across the continent, raising fundamental questions about the future sustainability of food production systems. Glover and Sumberg (2020) further argued that meaningful youth engagement requires transformative approaches that reposition agriculture as an attractive, profitable, and dignified career pathway capable of competing with other sectors for young talent.

The Kenyan context presents unique dynamics that shape youth involvement in agricultural value chains and rural development initiatives. Ouko et al. (2022) examined youth involvement in agripreneurship and established that young Kenyans demonstrate willingness to engage in farming activities when enabling conditions exist, particularly access to land, capital, markets, and technical support services. Their findings indicated that agripreneurship offers a viable pathway for poverty reduction and rural employment creation, provided that structural barriers are systematically addressed through targeted policy interventions. Rogito and Makhanu (2024) specifically investigated access to land as a determinant of youth involvement in agricultural value chains in Kenya and concluded that land tenure systems significantly constrain young people's entry into farming enterprises. The authors documented how customary land ownership patterns, high land prices, and inheritance practices that favor older family members collectively exclude youth from accessing productive agricultural land. The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (2024) assessed the economic and social impact of youth engagement in Kenya's food system and found that despite constituting a significant demographic segment, young people remain concentrated in informal, low-value activities within agricultural value chains rather than profitable upstream and downstream segments.

Government policy frameworks and programmatic interventions aimed at promoting youth-driven agriculture have yielded mixed outcomes across different African contexts. Bello et al. (2021) evaluated the impact of youth-in-agribusiness programs on employment creation in Nigeria and established that well-designed interventions can generate positive outcomes when implemented with adequate resources and institutional support. Their findings demonstrated that participants in structured agribusiness programs experienced improved employment outcomes and income levels compared to non-participants, suggesting that targeted investments in youth agricultural entrepreneurship can deliver measurable benefits. Suleiman et al. (2023) similarly examined whether youth participation in farming programs impacts farm productivity and household welfare in Nigeria and confirmed that program participation enhances both agricultural output and broader household wellbeing indicators. However, the authors cautioned that sustainability of outcomes depends on continued access to support services beyond initial program engagement. The World Bank (2024) evaluated Kenya's Youth Employment and Opportunities Project and documented improvements in youth livelihoods among beneficiaries, while also identifying implementation challenges related to coordination, targeting, and sustainability that limited overall program effectiveness.

Regional and international dimensions of youth engagement in agriculture reveal both common challenges and context-specific factors that influence policy effectiveness across different settings. Geza et al. (2022) examined the dynamics of youth employment and empowerment in agriculture and rural development in South Africa and identified structural unemployment, skills mismatches, and inadequate support infrastructure as key barriers limiting young people's productive engagement in farming activities. Their analysis emphasized that empowerment approaches must address both individual capabilities and systemic constraints that shape youth livelihood opportunities in agricultural sectors. Geza et al. (2023) further investigated whether young people perceive value in agriculture through a case study of youth participation in agricultural value chains in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and found that perceptions vary significantly based on exposure to successful role models, availability of support services, and access to profitable market segments. Mulema et al. (2021) conducted a broader assessment of barriers and opportunities for youth engagement in agrifood systems across East and Southern Africa and documented how limited access to finance, land, technology, and markets collectively constrain youth participation across the region. Akrong and Kotu (2022) provided economic analysis of youth participation in agripreneurship in Benin and demonstrated that profitability of agricultural enterprises significantly influences young people's decisions to engage in or exit from farming activities.

The role of digital technologies, climate-smart approaches, and value chain integration in enhancing youth engagement in agriculture has emerged as a critical area of policy and scholarly focus. AUDA-NEPAD (2022) highlighted that enhancing digital agriculture strengthens entrepreneurial opportunities for Kenyan youth by reducing information asymmetries, improving market access, and enabling precision farming approaches that increase productivity and profitability. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2025) confirmed that youth in agrifood systems demonstrate greater receptiveness to technological innovations compared to older farmers, positioning young people as potential drivers of agricultural modernization when adequately supported. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (2017) developed Kenya's Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy 2017-2026 recognizing that sustainable agricultural transformation requires engaging youth in environmentally responsive farming practices that ensure long-term productivity. Ninson and Brobbey (2023) reviewed strategies for engaging youth in agribusiness and concluded that comprehensive approaches combining skills development, financial inclusion, market linkages, and mentorship deliver superior outcomes compared to single-component interventions. The Food and Agriculture Organization and African Union Commission (2022) provided investment guidelines for youth in agrifood systems in Africa, emphasizing that coordinated investments across the agricultural value chain create multiplier effects that enhance youth employment and income generation outcomes. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (2022) similarly documented that investing in rural young people generates substantial returns through improved agricultural productivity, enhanced food security, and strengthened rural economies.

4.1 Results and Discussions

4.1.1 Policy Implementation Gaps

The evaluation of government policies on youth-driven agriculture and rural development in Kenya revealed significant gaps between policy articulation and implementation outcomes. The Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy 2019-2029 set ambitious targets for youth inclusion in agricultural value chains, yet progress toward these objectives remained modest due to inadequate budgetary allocations, weak coordination mechanisms, and fragmented implementation structures across national and county government levels (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2019). The Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018-2022 expired without comprehensive evaluation of its achievements, and many of its flagship initiatives including youth agricultural incubation centers, preferential credit facilities, and land access programs failed to reach scale or achieve sustainability beyond pilot phases (Ministry of

Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2018). The Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019 articulated cross-sectoral approaches to youth empowerment but lacked specific agricultural sector implementation guidelines, monitoring frameworks, and accountability mechanisms that would ensure systematic tracking of youth engagement outcomes in farming and rural enterprises (Government of Kenya, 2019). These findings align with Mulema et al. (2021) who documented that policy implementation gaps constitute a primary barrier to youth engagement in agrifood systems across East and Southern Africa.

4.1.2 Land Access Constraints

Access to productive land emerged as the most critical constraint limiting youth participation in agricultural activities despite policy pronouncements emphasizing land reform and youth inclusion. Rogito and Makhanu (2024) confirmed that Kenyan youth face systematic exclusion from land ownership due to customary inheritance practices, prohibitive land prices, and absence of targeted government programs facilitating youth access to agricultural land. The Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018-2022 proposed establishing youth land banks and facilitating access to public land for agricultural production, yet these initiatives remained largely unimplemented at the strategy's conclusion (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2018). County governments, despite holding constitutional mandates over agriculture and land administration, demonstrated limited capacity and political will to prioritize youth land access in their development planning and resource allocation decisions. Without secure land tenure, young people cannot access formal credit facilities that require collateral, cannot make long-term investments in soil improvement and permanent crops, and cannot participate in contract farming arrangements that demand production guarantees (Geza et al., 2021). The intergenerational land transfer challenge compounds these difficulties as elderly landowners retain control over family holdings, leaving youth to either wait indefinitely for inheritance or seek non-agricultural employment alternatives (Yeboah & Jayne, 2020).

4.1.3 Financial Inclusion Deficiencies

Financial inclusion mechanisms targeting youth in agriculture demonstrated limited reach and effectiveness in enabling young people to establish and expand farming enterprises. Commercial banks continued applying stringent collateral requirements, high interest rates, and risk-averse lending policies that effectively excluded youth from accessing agricultural credit despite government guarantees and subsidized lending programs (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, 2024). The Youth Enterprise Development Fund and Uwezo Fund, though designed to provide affordable credit to young entrepreneurs, disbursed minimal amounts to agricultural ventures due to perceived risks associated with farming activities and preferences for trading and service enterprises with faster turnover cycles. Akrong and Kotu (2022) emphasized that economic viability fundamentally determines youth decisions to engage in agripreneurship, and without access to adequate startup and working capital, young people cannot exploit profitable opportunities in mechanized farming, value addition, and agro-processing. Mobile-based lending platforms emerged as alternative financing sources but offered short-term, high-interest loans unsuitable for agricultural production cycles that require patient capital with flexible repayment schedules aligned to harvest periods (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022). The disconnect between financial sector products and agricultural enterprise requirements perpetuated youth exclusion from capital-intensive segments of agricultural value chains where profitability potential is highest.

4.1.4 Skills Development and Agricultural Education

Skills development and agricultural education systems failed to adequately prepare young Kenyans for successful engagement in modern, technology-driven agricultural enterprises. The formal education curriculum emphasized theoretical agricultural knowledge over practical competencies in agribusiness management, financial literacy, market analysis, and entrepreneurship that youth require to establish viable farming ventures (Ninson & Brobbey, 2023). Technical and vocational training institutions offering agricultural programs suffered from outdated curricula, poorly equipped facilities, and instructors lacking exposure to contemporary farming technologies and market dynamics. Agricultural extension services, historically the primary channel for transferring knowledge to farmers, remained understaffed, underfunded, and oriented toward older farmers rather than youth with distinct information needs and technology preferences (Geza et al., 2022). The Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy 2017-2026 recognized the importance of building youth capacities in sustainable farming practices but implementation of youth-targeted training programs proceeded slowly and reached limited numbers of beneficiaries (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2017). Human Capital Theory underscores that productivity in agriculture depends fundamentally on knowledge and skills, yet government investments in building youth agricultural competencies remained insufficient relative to the scale of the youth unemployment challenge and agricultural transformation aspirations (Bello et al., 2021).

4.1.5 Digital Agriculture Opportunities

Digital agriculture and technology-enabled farming presented significant opportunities for youth engagement that government policies only partially exploited. Young Kenyans demonstrated high levels of mobile phone penetration, internet connectivity, and digital literacy that position them advantageously for precision agriculture, e-commerce platforms, agricultural information services, and technology-based value chain coordination (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022). The Food and Agriculture Organization (2025) confirmed that youth exhibit greater receptiveness to agricultural innovations compared to older farmers, suggesting that technology-centered approaches offer promising pathways for attracting young people to farming. However, government programs promoting digital agriculture remained fragmented, small-scale, and disconnected from broader youth employment and agricultural transformation strategies. Rural infrastructure deficits including unreliable electricity supply, limited internet connectivity in farming areas, and poor road networks constrained the practical application of digital technologies in agricultural production and marketing (Heifer International, 2021). The Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Implementation Framework 2018-2027 acknowledged the role of information and communication technologies in modernizing agriculture but implementation prioritized climate adaptation over youth-targeted digital agriculture initiatives (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2018). Bridging the digital divide between urban and rural areas and between youth and older farmers requires substantial infrastructure investments that government budgets have not adequately prioritized.

4.1.6 Coordination Failures

Coordination failures among government agencies, development partners, and private sector actors undermined the effectiveness of youth-focused agricultural interventions. Multiple ministries including Agriculture, Youth Affairs, Education, and Devolution implemented overlapping programs targeting youth in agriculture without systematic coordination, information sharing, or joint planning mechanisms (Government of Kenya, 2019). Development partners including the African Development Bank, World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development, and Food and Agriculture Organization operated parallel youth agricultural programs with varying approaches, targeting criteria, and sustainability strategies (African Development Bank, 2023; World Bank, 2024; International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2022; Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021). The Food and Agriculture Organization and African Union Commission (2022) emphasized that coordinated investments across agricultural value chains generate multiplier effects, yet Kenyan interventions remained siloed within specific commodities, geographic areas, or value chain segments without linkages that would enable comprehensive youth support. Private sector engagement in youth agricultural programs remained limited despite policy frameworks calling for public-private partnerships in agricultural transformation. The absence of effective coordination platforms resulted in duplication of efforts in some areas while leaving significant gaps in others, inefficient resource utilization, and inability to achieve economies of scale that would enhance program impact and sustainability (Glover & Sumberg, 2020).

4.1.7 Monitoring and Evaluation Weaknesses

Monitoring and evaluation systems for tracking youth engagement in agriculture proved inadequate for evidence-based policy refinement and accountability. Government ministries lacked comprehensive databases on youth participation in agricultural programs, land ownership patterns among young people, youth access to agricultural credit, and employment outcomes in farming and agribusiness sectors (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, 2024). The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2023) provided aggregate agricultural and employment data but disaggregation by age cohorts remained insufficient for detailed analysis of youth-specific trends and program impacts. Policy documents including the Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy 2019-2029 and Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018-2022 established targets and indicators but implementation reports documenting progress remained unavailable or incomplete (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2019; Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2018). Suleiman et al. (2023) demonstrated that rigorous impact evaluation can establish causal relationships between program participation and outcomes, yet such evaluations remained rare in Kenyan youth agricultural interventions. Without robust monitoring and evaluation, policymakers cannot identify effective approaches worthy of scaling, cannot diagnose implementation failures requiring correction, and cannot demonstrate value for money to justify continued budgetary support for youth agricultural programs (World Bank, 2024).

5.1 Conclusions

This paper concludes that government policies on youth-driven agriculture and rural development in Kenya have largely failed to achieve their intended objectives of integrating young people into productive agricultural value chains and reversing youth disengagement from farming activities. Despite the existence of comprehensive policy frameworks including the Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy, Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy, and Kenya Youth Development Policy, implementation has been characterized by inadequate resource allocation, weak institutional coordination, and absence of effective monitoring mechanisms. The persistent barriers of land access, financial exclusion, skills gaps, and infrastructure deficits continue to constrain youth participation in agriculture, indicating that policy pronouncements have not translated into tangible changes in the structural conditions that shape young people's livelihood decisions.

Digital agriculture presents underexploited opportunities for attracting youth to farming, yet government programs in this area remain fragmented and disconnected from broader agricultural transformation agendas. The coordination failures among government ministries, development partners, and private sector actors have resulted in duplication, inefficiency, and unsustainable interventions that collapse once external support ends. Kenya's agricultural sector faces an impending generational crisis as the farming population ages without adequate replacement by young entrants, threatening food security, rural economic vitality, and national development aspirations. Achieving meaningful youth engagement in agriculture requires fundamental shifts from policy rhetoric to implementation action, from fragmented interventions to coordinated approaches, and from supply-driven programs to demand-responsive support systems that address the actual constraints young people face in establishing viable agricultural enterprises.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this paper, the following recommendations are proposed for strengthening youth-driven agriculture and rural development in Kenya:

i. The national and county governments should establish dedicated youth land banks by setting aside public land for allocation to young farmers on long-term lease arrangements with affordable terms. Land reform initiatives should include legislative provisions that facilitate intergenerational land transfer and protect young farmers' tenure security.

ii. The government should develop youth-specific agricultural financing mechanisms through a dedicated Youth Agricultural Credit Facility offering patient capital with flexible repayment schedules, reduced interest rates, and innovative collateral alternatives such as group guarantees and crop insurance.

iii. Agricultural education curricula should be reformed to emphasize practical agribusiness competencies including entrepreneurship, financial management, and digital agriculture applications. Technical and vocational training institutions should establish demonstration farms and agribusiness incubators that expose young trainees to contemporary farming technologies.

iv. The government should accelerate investments in rural digital infrastructure including internet connectivity and technology hubs that enable youth to leverage digital platforms for precision agriculture and market access. Youth-targeted digital agriculture programs should be integrated into mainstream agricultural extension services.

v. An interministerial coordination mechanism should be established under a designated lead agency to harmonize youth agricultural programs across government ministries, development partners, and private sector actors, facilitating joint planning and resource pooling to eliminate duplication.

vi. The government should institute comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems with disaggregated indicators tracking youth participation, land ownership, credit access, and employment outcomes in agricultural sectors to identify effective interventions and diagnose implementation challenges.

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