

AGRIPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUTH IN KENYA: A CASE OF KIAMBU COUNTY

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Abstract. *The purpose of this research was to explore the agripreneurship opportunities for the youth in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was motivated by the Kenya government's push to have the youth who are more than 60% of Kenya population to be involved in meaningful economic agricultural activities. The study was situated in Kiambu County which has a very high rate of youth unemployment, and it is meant to explore opportunities for youth to engage in viable economic agricultural activities and which in this study will be referred to as Agripreneurship. The concept of agripreneurship has the potential to bring about agricultural innovation and sustainable economic growth in the county. In the context of Kiambu County, which functions as one of the most agriculturally productive regions in Kenya, this study aimed at illustrating the importance of youth engagement in agriculture and agripreneurship to illustrate how the youth in Kenya can influence economic growth, enable food security, and promote sustainable farming practices. The research employed a desktop review, a qualitative approach, to explore recent studies on agripreneurship opportunities available to Kenyan youth in the agricultural sector. As per the research findings, Kiambu County plays a significant role in Kenya's economy from an agricultural perspective. This is associated with its flourishing agriculture industry, its strategic location to Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya and its significance as a hub for commerce. Also, the findings illustrated that the reasons that limit most of the youth to engage in agripreneurship opportunities include poor attitudes towards agriculture, limited financial resources and lack of awareness on potential sustainable agribusiness ventures. Furthermore, as per the findings, there are several agripreneurship opportunities that could be explored by the youth in the county, from dairy farming practices, horticulture and floriculture to poultry farming practices. The research managed to illustrate that agripreneurship in not only empowering to the youth but also in enhancing the overall agricultural productivity of Kiambu County. Nonetheless, further research is necessary in examining how the youth could make use of technology to create agripreneurship opportunities in the county.*

Keywords: *Agripreneurship, Agripreneurs, Agribusiness, Unemployment, Innovation*

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that by 2050, the global population will increase to 9 billion with the youth population making 14% of the population (Geza et al, 2021). An increase in population suggests a high food demand, an aspect that facilitates further insecurity particularly in developing nations. This puts into perspective Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals that aims at ending all forms of poverty and Goal 2 that focuses on eliminating hunger to attain food security and elevate sustainable agriculture. A significant aspect to note is that agriculture covers 32% of the total global employment level (Geza et al, 2021). Kenya is estimated to have 13.7 million youth an aspect that suggests that 35.4% of the nation's population is the youth (Geza et al, 2021). It also suggests that the population makes up 60% of the entire labor force but only 10% of the population engage in the agricultural sector. The most ironical aspect is that despite agriculture functioning as the backbone of Kenya's economy, the rural areas are characterized with high levels of poverty. Also, unemployment remains one of the big problems facing the Kenyan youth especially those living in the rural areas. The idea is that most of them tend to go to urban centers to look for white collar job opportunities especially when they are unable to make profits from agricultural activities in their rural homes. Also,

when they fail to access jobs in the urban centers, they return to their rural homes. Agriculture, in this case, is viewed as an occupation that people who have failed in life resort to, but this is not the case. The study is motivated by the Kenya government's push to have the youth who are more than 60% of Kenya population to be involved in meaningful economic agricultural activities (Adeyanju et al., 2023). Kiambu County, despite having rich soils and a flourishing agricultural industry, it is characterized with a very high rate of youth unemployment (Sitawa et al., 2016). Thus, the study aimed to explore opportunities for youth to engage in viable economic agricultural activities, a concept that will be referred to as agripreneurship. The idea is that the concept of agripreneurship has the potential to bring about agricultural innovation and sustainable economic growth in the county.

Statement of Purpose

In the context of Kiambu County, which functions as one of the most agriculturally productive regions in Kenya, the research looks into the importance of youth engagement in agriculture and agripreneurship to illustrate how the youth in Kenya can influence economic growth, enable food security, and promote sustainable farming practices. The idea is to highlight some potential agripreneurship opportunities that youths in the county could explore for them to improve their wellbeing and to take part in economic development. Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore the agripreneurship opportunities for the youth in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Research Question

What are the potential agripreneurship opportunities for the youth in Kiambu County, Kenya?

Research Objectives

To identify the importance of Kiambu county in the economy of Kenya

To examine why the youth in the county do not engage in agricultural opportunities

To identify potential agripreneurship opportunities that the youth in Kiambu County can explore

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research employed a desktop review, a qualitative approach, to explore recent studies on agripreneurship opportunities available to the Kenyan youth in Kiambu county in the agricultural sector. The research design functioned as a useful approach in assessing what has been recently done by other scholars in the research topic and to offer insight on the possible opportunities that the youth from the county can explore. The design is considered useful in situations where time and costs are limited. Nonetheless, it offered further insight on the research topic. The key terms used to access the articles were "Agripreneurship", "Agripreneurs", "Agribusiness", "Unemployment" and "Kiambu county." The involved data analysis entailed looking into the key factors highlighted by the scholars. The information was divided in terms of the importance of Kiambu county to the economy of Kenya, factors that limit most of the youth in Kiambu county to engage in agripreneurship opportunities and potential agripreneurship opportunities that the youth in Kiambu County can explore.

Table 1.

A list of the articles used in the review

Article	Author(s)	Findings
The importance of Kiambu county in the economy of Kenya	MoALFC (2021)	Kiambu's role in Kenya's economy, agricultural industry, strategic location, and commerce.
Agriculture in Kiambu: Matumbi and Muchelule's perspective	Matumbi and Muchelule (2023)	Significance of Kiambu in the nation's agricultural sector, focus on coffee, tea plantations, and farming.
Environmental issues in Kiambu: Wangai and Namusonge's study	Wangai and Namusonge (2023)	Impact of industrial growth, population increase, and unsustainable agriculture on water catchment areas and deforestation
Factors limiting youth in agripreneurship: Mutinda's study	Mutinda (2023)	Poor attitudes, lack of land, limited financial resources, negative perception, and lack of business management skills.
Challenges faced by youth in agripreneurship: Karuga's research	Karuga (2022)	Limited financial resources, negative perception, lack of skills, difficulty in accessing affordable staff, and other challenges.
Financial risks and climate change: Ambuga's findings	Ambuga (2019)	Youth concerns about financial risks due to climate change, preference for job opportunities over agripreneurship.
Lack of awareness and knowledge: Mureithi's research	Mureithi (2022)	Lack of awareness among youth about agribusiness opportunities and available financial sources.
Agripreneurship opportunities: VijaBiz initiative	Shiraku (2019)	Overview of VijaBiz initiative, focusing on entrepreneurship capabilities, marketing connections, digital inventions, and agribusiness financing.
Dairy farming opportunities: Ketere and Osoro's findings	Ketere and Osoro (2023)	Opportunities in dairy farming, value addition, and distribution in Kiambu County.
Status of dairy farming in Kenya: Kenya Dairy Board	Kenya Dairy Board (2019)	Insights from the 2019 report on the status of dairy farming in Kenya by the Kenya Dairy Board.
Horticulture and Floriculture: Ateka et al.'s research	Ateka et al. (2019)	Potential in horticulture and floriculture for Kiambu's youth, favorable climate, and fertile soils.
Poultry production: Yensuk's study on broiler management	Yensuk (2019)	Economic opportunities in poultry production for youth, with a focus on broiler management.
Commercial broiler production in Kiambu: Yensuk et al.'s research	Yensuk et al. (2022)	Growth and popularity of commercial broiler production, contribution to GDP in Kiambu County.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

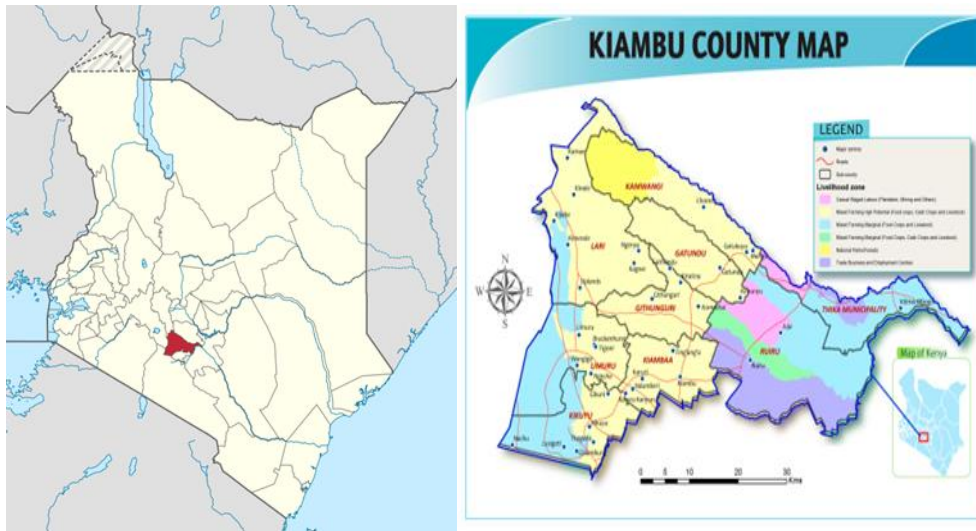


Figure 1. Map Showing Kiambu County (Kiambi et al., 2021)

The importance of Kiambu county to the economy of Kenya

Kiambu County plays a significant role in Kenya's economy from an agricultural perspective. This is associated with its flourishing agriculture industry, its strategic location to Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya and its significance as a hub for commerce (MoALFC, 2021). Its population is diverse and is characterized with an economic dynamic that exceeds its borders. As per the research by Matumbi and Muchelule (2023), Kiambu is significant in the nation's agricultural sector because of its vast coffee and tea plantations. About 74% of the land is characterized with farming. This also includes dairy farming, an aspect that makes agriculture one of the main sources of livelihood for individuals in the region. Nonetheless, in the past few years, as per the research by Wangai and Namusonge (2023), the county has been affected by various development and environmental issues. The argument is that industrial growth, rapid population increase, and unsustainable agricultural methods have contributed to the destruction of water catchment areas, deforestation including the invasion onto natural areas as a result on evolving socio-economic factors. This also includes climate change that has brought about unpredictable weather patterns especially irregular drought and weather patterns that have affected agriculture production (Wangai and Namusonge, 2023).

As an industrial and business hub, about 17% of the population rely on agriculture as the main source of income. It is perceived that most homes in the region engage in pig farming, crop production, poultry farming and dairy farming. A significant aspect to note is that before the mid-1990s, tea and coffee functioned as the main cash crops. However, due to poor market performance of the two, the farmers started to engage in livestock production. The high demand of poultry and milk from urban centers including Nairobi, have supported livestock farming in the region. The county also engages in fish farming, with the main species being tilapia and catfish. As per the 2021 (p.2) report by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Co-operatives, "The total value of agricultural products produced in Kiambu County annually contributes 4.7% of the county's gross domestic product." This positions Kiambu as a significant contributor to Kenya's economy. Nonetheless, the youth in the region

are viewed to face challenges such as education, land, access to financial resources and information including unemployment. This puts into perspective the concepts of agribusiness and agripreneurship and their relevance in improving the wellbeing of the youth in the region.

Factors that limit most of the youth in Kiambu county to engage in agripreneurship opportunities

As per the study by Mutinda (2023), poor attitudes towards farming and lack land function as the main factors that discourage the youth in Kiambu County to engage in agricultural opportunities. In relation to poor attitudes, the notion is that some individuals do not consider agripreneurship as prestigious and thus show little interest in pursuing it (Mutinda, 2023).

The study by Karuga (2022) highlights that limited financial resources and a negative perception that agriculture is not profitable by the youth in the county are among the factors that discourage the youth in the county to engage in agripreneurship activities. The study also mentions the lack of skills in managing a business, and difficulty in accessing affordable staff as some of the main factors that limit the youth from the county to engage in agripreneurship (Karuga, 2022). Other significant challenges include access to inaccessibility of mentors, inaccessibility of agricultural inputs, inaccessibility of technical assistance, inaccessibility of markets especially since there are already elderly individuals and cooperations dominating the industry and inaccessibility of agricultural machinery (Karuga, 2022).

Another issue entails financial risks, an aspect that has been heightened by climate change. As per the study by Ambuga (2019), a majority of the youth fear that they may not acquire sufficient profits due to the unpredictable weather patterns. Thus, most prefer seeking job opportunities instead of engaging fully in agripreneurship to reduce financial risks. This also puts into perspective the absence of enough youth groups in the county that are led by experts to equip the youth with sustainable agripreneurship skills (Ambuga, 2019).

Another factor involves lack of awareness among the youth in the county of the available opportunities regarding agribusiness as per the research by Mureithi (2022). It also includes lack of knowledge on the available financial sources that they can borrow money in form of loans to support their businesses. The scholar suggests the need for a holistic approach to identify the most effective strategies to appeal to many young people to engage in agripreneurship opportunities (Mureithi, 2022).

Table 2.

Thematic Analysis of the factors that limit most of the youth in Kiambu county to engage in agripreneurship opportunities

Themes	Author(s)	Main Findings
Poor Attitudes	Mutinda (2023)	Youth show little interest in agripreneurship due to poor attitudes towards farming, considering it less prestigious.
Limited Financial resources	Karuga (2022)	Youth face challenges due to limited financial resources and a negative perception that agriculture is not profitable.
Lack of Business Management skills	Karuga (2022)	Challenges include a lack of skills in managing a business and difficulty in accessing affordable staff for agripreneurship.
Accessibility Challenges	Karuga (2022)	Youth encounter challenges such as inaccessibility of mentors,

		agricultural inputs, technical assistance, and markets.
Financial Risks and Climate Change	Ambuga (2019)	Financial risks heightened by climate change lead youth to prefer job opportunities over agripreneurship for reduced risks.
Absence of Youth Groups	Ambuga (2019)	Lack of youth groups led by experts contributes to the absence of sustainable agripreneurship skills among the youth.
Lack of awareness	Mureithi (2022)	Youth lack awareness of available agribusiness opportunities and knowledge on financial sources like loans to support their ventures.
Need for Holistic Approach	Mureithi (2022)	The need for a holistic approach to identify effective strategies to encourage youth engagement in agripreneurship opportunities.

Potential agripreneurship opportunities that the youth in Kiambu County can explore

One of the potential agripreneurship opportunities that the youth in the county could explore is taking part in the VijaBiz initiative that has proven to be effective in counties that include Kilifi and Nakuru. As per the analysis by Shiraku (2019) on the effectiveness of VijaBiz to nurture the future generation of agripreneurs, the initiative focuses on developing the entrepreneurship capabilities of the youth, establishing marketing connections, facilitating the utilization of digital inventions, and creating value chains. The goal is to establish sustainable employment for the youth by ensuring that they are actively engaged in agribusiness to reduce poverty and create wealth. It achieves this through agribusiness financing. The venture is founded by the view that one of the main factors that prevents the youth from engaging in the agricultural sector is limited capital. This is despite them owning ancestral land and having the will to make it profitable. Its success in places such as Kilifi and Nakuru shows that it has the potential to encourage the youth in Kiambu County especially since they will be able to access resources that will make their business ventures sustainable.

As per the 2019 report on the status of dairy farming in Kenya by the Kenya Dairy Board, the demand for milk and milk products in Kenya is growing at a rate of 7%, with Kiambu County being the leading supplier. As per the research by Ketere and Osoro (2023), Kiambu county is known for its robust dairy farming sector, hence such increase in demand for quality and safe products creates opportunities and decent jobs for the youth entrepreneurs who can explore opportunities in dairy production, value addition (such as cheese and yogurt) and distribution. It also offers various agripreneurship opportunities in terms of dairy farming, and supply chain distribution of milk (Ketere & Osoro, 2023). The idea is that since the demand of milk from the county is relatively high, the youth in the county, can immerse into the dairy farming market as agripreneurs, either as farmers or distributors.

Horticulture and Floriculture also comes into consideration as an area where the youth In Kiambu County have the potential to engage in agripreneurship opportunities. As per the research by Ateka et al. (2019) on production technologies and smallholder farmers in Kiambu County, the county’s favorable climate and fertile soils create an ideal environment for horticultural and floricultural ventures. The scholars highlight that farmers in the region cultivate high-value crops such as pineapples, avocados, strawberries, and cut flowers for local and export markets. This implies that the youth have diverse horticulture and floriculture options that they can invest in as smallholder farmers. Apart from other countries like

Thailand, Philippines and Brazil being the main producers of pineapple, Kenya is viewed to appear in the list of important producers of horticultural fruits like pineapples together with mangoes, avocados and passion fruits (Ateka et al., 2019). Thus, youth engagement in horticulture crop production can create plenty of opportunities for the youth in the county.

In Kenya, the commercial broiler production is growing rapidly and is one of the popular animal husbandry subsectors contributing about 7.8% of the overall GDP (Yensuk et al., 2022). As per the research by Yensuk (2019) on the management of broilers in smallholders farms in Kiambu County, poultry production offers significant economic opportunities to the youth. The idea is that youth can be both consumers and producers as they are part of the growing population. Thus, to ensure food security for the growing population, the youth have the opportunity to explore and engage in safe poultry production practices to produce quality food products for consumption as well as marketing. This is also associated with the fact that most farmers in the county are seasoned when it comes to understanding the feeding of broilers, their health, their appropriate housing including how to manage their infections (Yensuk et al., 2022). Thus, the youth can learn from them and engage in successful poultry agripreneurship ventures.

The idea is that there are diverse opportunities that the youth in Kiambu County can explore as agripreneurship opportunities. They are advantaged in terms of vast lands, rich soils and favorable weather conditions. Through proper guidance and support through initiatives such as VijaBiz and proper government policies that enable them to access financial resources, the youth in the county have the potential of engaging in successful and sustainable agripreneurship practices.

Table 3.

Thematic analysis on the potential agripreneurship opportunities that the youth in Kiambu County can explore

Themes	Author(s)	Findings
VijaBiz Initiative	Shiraku (2019)	VijaBiz initiative is effective in Kilifi and Nakuru, focusing on developing youth entrepreneurship, creating value chains, and providing agribusiness financing. Success in other counties suggests potential in Kiambu
Dairy Farming Opportunities	Ketere and Osoro (2023)	High demand for milk and milk products in Kenya, Kiambu County as a leading supplier. Opportunities for youth in dairy production, value addition, and distribution.
Horticulture and Floriculture	Ateka et al. (2019)	Favorable climate and fertile soils in Kiambu create opportunities for horticulture and floriculture ventures. Cultivation of high-value crops for local and export markets.
Commercial Broiler Production	Yensuk et al. (2022)	Growing commercial broiler production in Kenya, contributing significantly to overall GDP. Opportunities for youth in safe poultry production practices for consumption and marketing.

Limitations of the study

One of the study's limitations is that it only relied on secondary data. Thus, more research, that involves primary data, is required to complement the study and to further the comprehension of agripreneurship opportunities that the youth in Kiambu County could explore.

CONCLUSIONS

The study focused on examining the potential agripreneurship opportunities for the youth in Kiambu County, Kenya with the focus on the importance of Kiambu county in the economy of Kenya, why the youth in the county do not engage in agricultural opportunities and the potential agripreneurship opportunities that the youth in Kiambu County can explore. As per the research findings, Kiambu County plays a significant role in Kenya's economy from an agricultural perspective. Also, the reasons that limit most of the youth to engage in agripreneurship opportunities include poor attitudes towards agriculture as a prospective career, limited financial resources and lack of awareness on potential sustainable agribusiness ventures. Furthermore, there are several agripreneurship opportunities that could be explored by the youth in the county, from dairy farming practices, horticulture and floriculture to poultry farming practices. The research managed to illustrate that agripreneurship is not only empowering to the youth but also in enhancing the overall agricultural productivity of Kiambu County. Nonetheless, further research is necessary in examining how the youth could make use of technology to create agripreneurship opportunities in the county.

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