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Transforming Kakamega County's Agricultural Landscape: Strategies for Value Chain Improvement

Key messages

- Kakamega county faces several challenges that must be addressed for growth to happen. These include high poverty rates, food insecurity, and the harmful impacts of climate change.
- The Kenyan agricultural sector is crucial for achieving the national Vision 2030, with a focus on value chains in Kakamega County, including sweet potatoes, bananas, and more.
- The study identified unique characteristics and challenges in each value chain, such as equipment shortages, lack of technical skills, and ineffective marketing strategies.
- Recommendations to address these challenges include fostering cooperative formations, enhancing technical skills, and exploring value addition.
- Successful implementation of these strategies requires collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies and local communities, to promote sustainable agricultural growth and economic development.

Executive Summary

Developing value chain resource and suitability maps for Kakamega County has previously produced scientific data indicating the suitability of priority value chains based on biophysical, economic, social, and political factors. However, the county continues to experience challenges in these aspects and interventions are needed. The Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) with support from the Ministry of Investment, Trade, and Industry (MITI) conducted a sectoral value chain mapping survey in Kakamega County under the Kenya Industry and Entrepreneurship Project (KIEP), funded by the World Bank Group. The aim of this policy brief is to advise the County government and other stakeholders on ways to address these challenges. To enhance the suitability of value chains, various adaptation measures are recommended, including adopting innovations and technologies such as agroforestry, improved animal husbandry practices, better storage and shelter for livestock, soil erosion control, water harvesting, and strengthening market access and linkages.

Methodology

The survey data involved literature reviews, structured interviews, focus group discussions, site visits, observational techniques, data analysis, and stakeholder consultations to understand and address challenges in Kakamega County's agricultural and livestock sectors

Findings

- The study revealed a high dominance of women the agricultural value chains with over 61%, men at 39%. Youth and people living with special needs at less than 1%.
- Lack of processing infrastructure has also led to farmers cutting down the palm trees as the plantations do not have a direct economic value opting to plant subsistence crops like maize.
- Farmers are poorly organized thus they are not able to negotiate for competitive prices leading to exploitation by middlemen in all the value chains
- Actors in the value chains have inadequate knowledge and skills in value addition technologies, product development, quality control and standards, marketing, environmental, health and safety practices.

Identified Gaps in Value Chains

The following challenges were identified:

1. **Palm Oil Value Chain**

- Inadequate harvesting and processing equipment.
- Inadequate skilled labour
- Lack of farmers' cooperatives in the palm oil value chain
- Limited access to finance by the farmers to facilitate farming and production activities.
- Inadequate technical skills in value addition to palm oil, labelling and packaging

2. **Sweet Potato Value Chain**

- Limited infrastructure for value addition and product diversification of sweet potatoes
- Inadequate resources for farming of sweet potatoes e.g. land.
- Limited skills and infrastructure for the management of post-harvest losses
- Inadequate knowledge on quality control and standards

3. **Soya Bean Value Chain**

- Inadequate infrastructure for value addition of soyabeans
- Limited knowledge and skills in value addition technologies including packaging, labelling and marketing
- Limited access to finance to facilitate acquisition of processing

4. **Banana Value Chain**

- Inadequate infrastructure for value addition and product diversification in the banana value chain
- Limited capacity, knowledge and technical skills in value addition technologies to the banana value chain
- Inadequate knowledge on quality control and standards
- Inefficient marketing and business models

Vegetables Value Chain

- Inadequate infrastructure for value addition and product diversification of the vegetable value chain

Policy Brief Recommendations

1. Establishment of CAIPs to facilitate value addition in the processing of palm oil, sweet potato, soyabean, banana and vegetable value chains
2. Training and capacity building in value addition technologies, product development, quality control and standards, marketing, environmental, health and safety practices.
3. Provision of affordable credit facilities and grants
4. Facilitate farmers to form and run cooperatives
5. The County Government should create partnerships and linkages to promote productivity and growth of the identified value chains.

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