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Youth in Agriculture; Perceptions and Challenges for Enhanced Participation in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture in Kenya can develop gainful employment opportunities for youth that would enable them exploit their economic innovation and enhance equal opportunities for the male and female youth for national economic growth. Improving youth participation in the agricultural sector is thus of paramount importance for the nation to develop. Youth's interest in agriculture is however likely to be positively related to their perceptions in terms of agricultural related activities mostly being portrayed as difficult and assumed to be meant for the ageing rural population. The relationship between youth's perception on agriculture and their participation in agriculture in Kajiado North Sub-County was poorly understood and hence the need for this study, which used a cross-sectional design to collect data from 397 randomly selected youth and 22 youth and agricultural officers. Content validity of the youth and agricultural officers' questionnaires was ascertained by extension experts while reliability was determined through a pilot test involving 30 respondents. The reliability coefficient were 0.86 α and 0.80 α respectively, which were above the 0.70 threshold for acceptable reliability. The study showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between youth perception on agriculture and their participation in the study area ($r=0.675$ $p=0.01$), $p=.001$). The study revealed youth's negative perceptions of agriculture as a reason why many did not participate in the sector; where 18.1% youth felt that there were no role models in agriculture and 17.6% claimed that agriculture was not profitable. The government and other development partners should come up with strategies of addressing the issue of negative perception that has an implication on youth participation in agriculture. Government can ensure that agricultural education and training reflects the needs of the agricultural labour market and enhance youth's familiarity with the world of work, including its practical challenges and rewards. Youth should be directly linked to business partners and they should be given hands-on experience.

Key Words: Agriculture, Employment, perceptions, challenges, Youth.