

A woman with vibrant red braids is smiling and holding a young child. They are positioned in front of a textured, brown wall. In the foreground, there is a large bunch of fresh green cilantro and a pile of ripe red tomatoes. The woman is wearing a dark blue zip-up jacket with light blue accents. The child is wearing a grey shirt and white sneakers with red stripes.

SHUJAAZ INC COMPASS

How Young People Can
Lead Kenya's Agribusiness
Transformation

SHUJAAZ
INC.

LETTER FROM OUR CEO.

‘We all need to put agriculture on our priority list and keep it there. This Compass is part of our commitment to do exactly that.’

At the start of this year, some of our team came together to ask each other a few questions: ‘What will the world look like for young people by 2030? And what role will Shujaaz Inc play?’

At first, we talked about the areas we’ve worked on for more than a decade; about unemployment and the potential of digital transformation and the informal sector; about elections and the next generation of young leaders. We talked about reproductive health, the progress we’re seeing, and the barriers left to break down.

But a few phrases kept reoccurring on our digital sticky notes. Phrases like: ‘we have to get young people into agriculture’, or ‘climate change, food shortages, unemployment? Ag is everything’.

And the experts agree. Faced with an increasingly unstable climate, and a fast-growing population, researchers say that by 2030, Kenya’s agriculture industry has to expand by 75% from its 2015 levels – adopting climate-resilient policies and practices along the way.

Experts also agree that an agribusiness transformation is only possible if it’s powered by young people. But as is often cited; in a country with a median age of 20, the average age of a farmer is 60.

In the last decade, we’ve worked on a range of discrete agriculture campaigns. We’ve built a picture of the barriers young people face and how to break them down and kept an eye on the key trends.

For those of you, who – like us – aren’t agriculture specialists, I imagine it’s the same for you. Agriculture has probably dropped in and out of your inbox, news feed or to do list. But the message from our team, and the experts is clear: this is a decade-defining issue. Whether we work on financial inclusion, or gender equality – we all need to put agriculture on our priority list and keep it there.

This third edition in our Compass series is a part of our commitment to do exactly that. It brings together new insights from interviews with more than 2,000 young Kenyans, trends from five years of tracking young people’s changing attitudes towards agriculture, along-side real-time updates filmed by our SuperFan journalists.

We’re not the agriculture policy experts and we can’t develop the next breakthrough hybrid seed – but we hope this Compass helps to map a road to engaging this generation of young people in powering that agribusiness transformation. We’d love to work with you all to realise it. And by 2030, I hope we can look back on the impact we have together.

As always, please do get in touch – we’re looking forward to discussing this with you.

ROB BURNET



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kenya's agriculture industry is the engine of its economy, employing 60% of the country's labour force and generating more than half of its GDP.¹

But to meet the needs of a fast-growing population and a rapidly changing climate, experts predict that by 2030, the industry must expand by an estimated 75% from its 2015 levels – and adopt a range of climate-resilient policies and practices capable of transforming the sector on an unprecedented scale.²

Organisations from the Kenyan government to the World Bank have highlighted that engaging Kenya's young, digitally native labour force is critical to driving this urgent agribusiness transformation. And yet, agriculture in Kenya remains a stubbornly ageing industry. According to data from our 2020 national survey, 15–24-year-olds*, who represent 36% of the working-age population, constitute only 5% of the core agricultural labour force.³

In this third edition of our Compass series, we explore the barriers that are preventing young people from working in this crucial sector – and begin to map the route to engaging them in an ambitious transformation of Kenya's agribusiness industry.

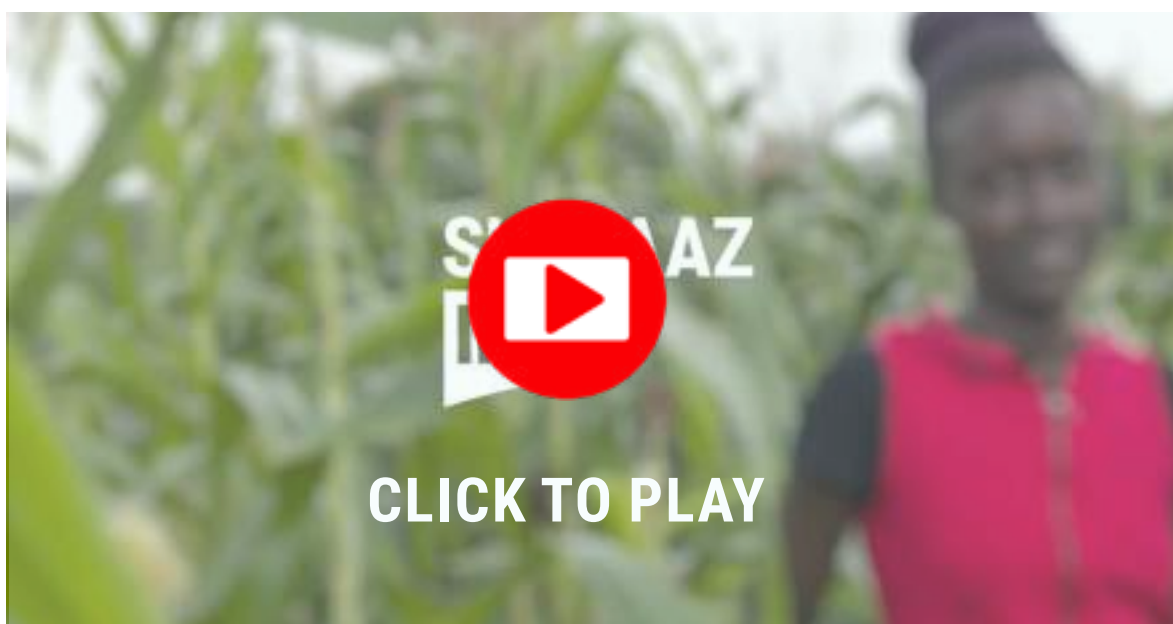
Drawing on new insights from interviews with more than 2,000 young Kenyans, we'll challenge the outdated stereotype that young people are simply 'not interested'

in agriculture. We'll demonstrate that, instead, wide-ranging social and economic barriers have structurally disincentivised a generation from seeking or accessing work in the agribusiness industry.

However, there's cause for optimism, as data from our annual survey shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a vital shift in attitudes and approaches to agriculture among young Kenyans. We'll show that more young people than ever say they would consider working in agribusiness and we'll introduce you to the hundreds of thousands of young people who have set up agribusiness micro-enterprises to get by during the pandemic.

The upheaval of 2020 has created fertile ground for a national effort to engage young people in the agriculture sector. However, even as they tend to their new micro agribusinesses, young people in our network are quick to reinforce the level of investment and policy change that's needed; from opening up access to markets, land and capital, to rolling out training in the latest technologies.

Faced with an increasingly unstable climate and an expanding population, experts tell us one thing is clear: Kenya's future depends on a transformation of its agriculture industry. But that transformation needs a new generation of energetic and digitally native young urban agri-entrepreneurs and rural innovators to power it.



¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/youth-employment/ica-programme/kenya/en/ and www.fao.org/kenya/fao-in-kenya/kenya-at-a-glance/en/ | Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Quarterly Labour Force Report – Quarter 3 2020: <https://www.knbs.or.ke/?wpdmpo=quarterly-labour-force-report-quarter-3> | ² Reliefweb, <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/food-security-under-threat-kenya> | ³ Population Pyramid, www.populationpyramid.net/Kenya and Shujaaz Inc 360 annual survey (N=2,015), December 2020–January 2021. * According to The Employment Act 2007 Part VII (https://www.labourmarket.go.ke/media/resources/The_Employment_Act_2007.pdf), children between the ages of 13 and 16 can be employed to perform light work, while children aged 16 to 18 are employable. Hence, traditional employment in Kenya is allowed for people aged 16 and above. However, for statistical purposes Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (<https://www.knbs.or.ke/?wpdmpo=quarterly-labour-force-report-quarter-3>) defines the working age population as all persons in the population aged 15-64. In this report, we follow KNBS definitions and refer to young Kenyans aged 15-24 as young people of working age and young people in the labour force.



01 SETTING THE SCENE

BIG PICTURE RECAP: THE FUTURE OF KENYA'S AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

CLIMATE CHANGE, POPULATION GROWTH & FOOD SECURITY: AGRICULTURE WILL DEFINE KENYA'S FUTURE

TO MEET
KENYA'S NEEDS,
AGRICULTURE
MUST GROW

75%

BY 2030

Let's start with a reminder of the big picture. Employing 60% of the country's labour force, the agriculture industry is the foundation of Kenya's economy. It's directly responsible for 26% of GDP, with the broader value chain indirectly responsible for another 27%.⁴

But Kenya's food consumption is already outpacing production. Estimates from the Institute for Security Studies suggest that the country's annual agricultural output needs to expand by as much as 75% from its 2015 levels in order to meet the needs of a fast-growing population.⁵ And rapid expansion of the sector isn't the only challenge.

An estimated 98% of Kenya's agricultural systems are dependent on rainfall, but predictable weather patterns are fast disappearing.⁶ A recent government report, submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, highlighted that between 2014 and 2018, droughts pushed 3.4 million people into food insecurity and left half a million without access to water. In 2018 alone, flooding displaced 230,000 people and drowned 20,000 livestock, damaging 8,500 hectares of crops.⁷ And in 2020, Kenya's worst locust infestation in 70 years damaged 100,000 hectares of land.⁸ Without significant investment in new climate-resilient agriculture practices, the climate crisis poses an existential threat to this crucial industry. In more ways than one, Kenya's future depends on the transformation and expansion of its agricultural economy.

AGRIBUSINESS TRANSFORMATION IS POSSIBLE – BUT ONLY IF IT'S POWERED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

There will be many demands on Kenya's agriculture industry over the coming decades – but the scale of opportunity is vast.

The Kenya Land Alliance reports that Kenya is home to more than 580,000 square kilometres of land available for agriculture, with naturally high levels of fertility making 59% of soils suitable for growing produce.⁹ But research suggests that much of the country's land is under-utilised – only 2% of arable land is under irrigation, compared with 6% in sub-Saharan Africa generally or 27% in Asia. This means there are huge opportunities for growth.¹⁰

And, as a range of reports have highlighted, techniques that are ready for implementation now could improve productivity in some sub-sectors by as much as 40 to 50%.¹¹ From investing in irrigation and fertilisers to adopting breakthrough digital technologies, the innovations required are within reach.

Crucially, as organisations from the Kenyan government to the World Bank highlight, Kenya has a fast-growing, young and increasingly tech-enabled working-age population – who, with the right support, could power the transformation of agriculture.¹²

⁴ FAO, www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/youth-employment/ica-programme/kenya/en/ and www.fao.org/kenya/fao-in-kenya/kenya-at-a-glance/en/ | ⁵ Reliefweb, <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/food-security-under-threat-kenya> | ⁶ Future Agricultures Consortium, https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/18050/1/FAC_Working_Paper_070.pdf | ⁷ The Guardian, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/08/kenya-faces-62bn-bill-to-mitigate-climate-linked-hunger-drought-and-conflict?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other | ⁸ FAO, www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1259082/code/ | ⁹ Kenya Land Alliance, http://kenyalandalliance.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/kla_land_use_in_kenya_case_for_policy.pdf#~:text=1.1%20Agriculture%20Land%20is%20the%20most%20important%20resource,the%20arable%20land%20is%20covered%20by%20forest%20reserves | ¹⁰ World Bank, www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/publication/kenya-economic-update-transforming-agricultural-productivity-to-achieve-food-security-for-all | ¹¹ The Economist, www.economist.com/special-report/2020/03/26/african-countries-must-get-smarter-with-their-agriculture | ¹² Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017–2021, <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/ken171450.pdf>



BUT AGRICULTURE IS A RAPIDLY AGEING SECTOR

15-24-YEAR-OLDS
CONSTITUTE

ONLY **5%**

OF KENYA'S CORE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOUR FORCE

Every year almost 1 million young job seekers enter the labour market in Kenya, but an estimated 90% aren't able to find formal employment and a stable salary.¹³ However, experts underline that a flourishing agricultural sector could create both formal and informal employment and work opportunities for millions of young Kenyans, improving livelihoods and reducing poverty at scale.

Right now, however, not nearly enough young people are working in agriculture. As we detail below, new research from our annual survey highlights that Kenyans aged 15–24 constitute only 5% of the country's core agricultural labour force – despite representing 36% of the working-age population.¹⁴

One statistic paints a starker picture than most: despite a national median age of 20¹⁵ and an average life expectancy of 66, the average age of a farmer in Kenya is 60.¹⁶

COVID-19 HAS OPENED A WINDOW FOR CHANGE

However, as we'll go on to explore, we think the COVID-19 pandemic has opened up a window for change. In 2020, the pandemic had a seismic impact on the lives of young people. Their parents lost jobs, schools shut, the price of basic essentials was inflated by limited supply and levels of hunger dramatically increased.¹⁷

But, while many sectors ground to a halt, farmers and agri-entrepreneurs continued to work and trade. As a result, hundreds of thousands of young people turned to agribusiness for the first time, in search of a reliable income. What's more, new data from our national survey suggests that the pandemic altered young people's perceptions of agriculture, by demonstrating that the industry can provide a livelihood for people of all ages and backgrounds.

So, here's the big picture: as organisations around the world call for governments to 'build back better', Kenya has a unique opportunity to transform its most important industry, invest in its young labour force and tackle the urgent threat of climate change.

“THE TRICK I HAVE USED TO SURVIVE DURING THIS CORONA PERIOD IS TO PLANT SUKUMA, CABBAGE AND ONIONS. I CURRENTLY HAVE A LOT OF INCOME.”

FEMALE, 20, KAKAMEGA



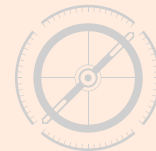


**“THE HEART IS WILLING
TO START SOMETHING
IN AGRICULTURE – BUT
THE RESOURCES ARE
NOT THERE.”**

ANONYMOUS, SMS



**SHUJAAZ
INC.**



02 MAPPING THE TERRAIN

UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S RELATIONSHIP TO AGRICULTURE IN KENYA

INTRODUCTION: YOUNG KENYANS REMAIN EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST INDUSTRY

The introduction to the Kenyan government's 2017 Youth Agribusiness Strategy states: 'The decreasing number of young people involved in farming as an occupation or business is a national signal of distress.'¹⁸ According to the report, only 10% of young people are directly participating in the agricultural sector – a much lower figure than in neighbouring countries.¹⁹ Data from our 2020 national survey paints a similar, if not starker picture:²⁰

ONLY 4% OF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GAINFULLY 'EMPLOYED' IN THE CORE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

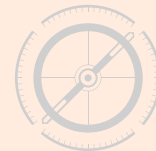
In our annual survey, only 4% of 15–24-year-olds reported that they were gainfully, consistently 'employed' in the core agriculture sector. Of those, three-quarters were self-employed (3%), while only a quarter were employed by another individual or business (1% of all 15–24-year-olds).

A FURTHER 2% FIND SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT

An additional 2% of young people reported that they were able to find seasonal, occasional employment in the sector, for example during harvest periods, but were not able to find sufficient work for agriculture to be their main occupation. In fact, interviews with our network suggest that a significant proportion of young people in rural areas are doing unpaid work on family farmland.²¹

Put simply, young Kenyans – who represent more than a third of the national labour force – remain almost entirely excluded from the country's most significant industry; the place they're needed most.





BEYOND THE 'PERCEPTION CHALLENGE' – YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN STRUCTURALLY EXCLUDED FROM AGRICULTURE

In Kenya, the discussion about youth engagement in agriculture is often framed by the need to overcome a 'perception' challenge. But too often, that challenge is positioned as a quirk of personality; young people are described as simply 'uninterested', or unwilling to 'get their hands dirty'.²²

However, the reality is that there are powerful structural, social and economic reasons behind the low levels of youth engagement. Young people aren't inherently opposed to working in agriculture. Instead, our research shows that they've been discouraged, disincentivised and structurally excluded from making a living in the sector.

As we'll go on to highlight, young people do hold powerful negative perceptions of agriculture – but those perceptions are rooted in first-hand experiences. To change young people's minds about this crucial industry, we have to change the structures that shape their perceptions.

#1 Agriculture has been framed as 'failure'

The Kenyan education system is designed to encourage students to graduate from school or college and seek full-time, formal employment.²³ For this generation, and their parents, 'success' means working in cities, behind a desk.

That's one reason why the proportion of young Kenyans living in urban areas has continued to rise, increasing from 33% to 40% between 2016 and 2020.²⁴ The proportion of young people who have completed secondary, advanced or tertiary education has also increased by 22% (from 27% in 2016 to 33% of those aged 15–24 in 2020), as young people pursue their dream of formal employment.²⁵

30%
OF YOUNG PEOPLE
(AGED 15–24) WOULD
NEVER WORK IN
AGRICULTURE – OR
SEE IT AS A LAST
RESORT

BETWEEN 2016
AND 2020 AROUND
1.6m
YOUNG PEOPLE
MOVED TO URBAN
AREAS IN SEARCH
OF WORK

**“MOST PARENTS TAKE YOU TO SCHOOL
TO GO FOR WHITE COLLAR JOBS.
COMING BACK TO THE [NEIGHBOUR]
HOOD IS HARD FOR THE YOUTH.**

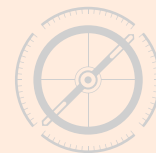
ANONYMOUS, SMS

But the trap of what academic Lauren Berlant calls 'cruel optimism' persists. As highlighted earlier, data from the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics suggests that less than 10% (we estimated closer to 3%) of new entrants to the job market secure a formal job.²⁶

Those who miss out are often unwilling to let go of their unachievable dream of formal employment. The idea of returning home to 'the village', or seeking alternative work in agriculture, has been framed as the ultimate failure. In our 2020 annual survey, 30% of young people said they would 'never' work in agriculture, or that they saw it as a 'last resort'. For many young people the term 'agriculture' has become synonymous with 'failure'.

As Mary Nyale, programme co-ordinator for Farm Africa, put it: 'Agriculture was used a lot in primary and secondary schools as a punishment. Anything bad you do in school, you would be told to go to a farm and till a bit of land.'²⁷

²² Reuters, www.reuters.com/article/africa-farming-food-idUSL8N1AR4WS; LSE, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2016/07/25/youth-is-the-key-to-unlock-africas-agriculture-potential/>; World Economic Forum, www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/06/how-young-people-are-solving-africas-agriculture-challenge/ | ²³ Ministry of Agriculture, Youth Agribusiness Strategy, <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/ken171450.pdf> | ²⁴ Shujaaz Inc 360 annual survey (N=2,011), January 2016; Shujaaz Inc 360 annual survey (N=2,015), December 2020–January 2021 | ²⁵ *ibid* | ²⁶ World Bank, Kenya Social Protection and Jobs Programs Public Expenditure Review, 27 June 2019 | ²⁷ BBC, www.bbc.com/future/feature/follow-the-food/the-ageing-crisis-threatening-farming/



#2 Subsistence role models: farming as survival, not success

85% OF YOUNG PEOPLE
**VIEW AGRICULTURE
AS 'SUBSISTENCE'**

The primary form of agriculture in Kenya today is subsistence farming. Many young Kenyans from rural areas have therefore witnessed their parents, or people in their communities, running smallholder farms in order to feed their families.

These young Kenyans have seen farmers struggling, against droughts and a restrained market, to generate even a modest income. It's therefore unsurprising that, in our 2020 survey, 85% of young people described agriculture as 'cultivating crops or animals, or farming fish mostly to feed yourself or your family'.²⁸ Smallholder, subsistence farmers are the primary agricultural role model for young people.

While 69% of those questioned recognised that agriculture could also include farming 'high-value' crops or animals as part of a business, awareness of the broader agribusiness value chain remains limited. Only 46% recognised that working in agriculture might include selling 'inputs' to farmers, such as seeds or fertiliser, while only 37% identified 'processing' produce as part of the agricultural value chain.²⁹

When young Kenyans hear the term 'agriculture' they think 'farming'. When they think 'farming' they think of subsistence farming for survival, not a career, profit or success. This narrow understanding of agriculture as farming, rather than as a broad sector encompassing a wide value chain of opportunities, makes it difficult for young people to imagine the alternatives opportunities available – like being an agri-entrepreneur.

#3 The same old story: outdated agricultural methods

LESS THAN **1/3** OF YOUNG PEOPLE BELIEVE
WORKING IN AGRICULTURE
INVOLVES **TECH OR SCIENCE**

In WhatsApp focus group discussions conducted this year, Shujaaz fans described their view of agriculture as hard, physical work, characterised by farming basic crops and rearing livestock using the same, age-old methods their parents and grandparents did. They thought of agriculture as a particular type of 'lifestyle'; slow-moving and suitable for older people. They also talked about long waits for little money, and high levels of risk.³⁰

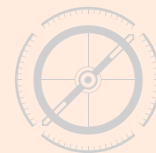
In addition, our surveys suggest that fewer and fewer young Kenyans associate technology and science with agriculture. The number of young people describing agriculture as 'working in a laboratory to develop improved types of plants and animals' fell from 35% in 2019 to 24% in 2020, and those who thought it involved 'developing and selling technology to help farmers farm better' dropped from 37% to 30%.³¹

Returning to the focus groups, young people highlighted that in contrast to 'slow-paced' agriculture, they're seeking work with 'vibe' – exciting, fast-paced and tech-centred – and with a regular income.



IT IS FOR THE OLD PEOPLE.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT



#4 Structural barriers: lack of training, markets, finance and access to land

When young people do show an interest in a career in agriculture, they report facing a range of seemingly insurmountable barriers. These include:

TRAINING

Agriculture is no longer an examinable subject in Kenyan schools, so most young people haven't had access to basic training.³² Beyond school level, the limited number of training programmes covering agribusiness skills or innovation in farming, tend not to target young people, preferring to focus on more experienced, dedicated farmers. As a result, young people get little hands-on experience of running an agribusiness, or of commercial farming techniques and technologies. They report rarely being hired by commercial farmers, who are concerned that they might make mistakes with chemicals or damage machinery.³³



LAND

The majority of young people report that they're unable to access or own land, due to a combination of laws, customs and policies. Older people who do own land tend to operate strict control over who can use it (and how they can use it), leaving younger people with only enough space to 'grow and sell something small'. This can even lead to hostile land disputes between family members, eager to access portions of their parents' land.³⁴



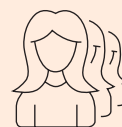
FINANCE

Viable agribusinesses need capital and insurance to flourish. But young agri-entrepreneurs are often excluded from formal and semi-formal financing (to a greater extent than entrepreneurs in other sectors).³⁵ Financial services are not tailored to the needs of young people, who often don't have a formal credit history or financial identity against which they could secure a micro-loan or credit line.



MARKETS

Young people have grown up seeing little diversification in their parents' farming. Agribusiness needs to be driven by intelligence on what products the market needs, as well as prices in different parts of the country. The collapse of the cooperative movement in the 1980s led to a loss of bargaining power and fragmented markets, and farmers have struggled to adapt since. This means they don't always get the most competitive prices for their produce, hindering the overall profitability of the sector.



PAUL ASKED TO BE GIVEN A SHARE OF HIS LAND, BUT THIS LED TO A LOT OF DISPUTE BETWEEN HIM AND DAD. IT WAS SO BAD THAT WE HAD TO INVOLVE THE VILLAGE ELDERS.


MALE, 24, ISIOLO

#5 Gender inequality: girls and women are disproportionately affected

The barriers to working in agriculture affect girls and young women more than any other group. To begin with, rural girls tend to be less educated than their urban counterparts – only 24% of rural girls aged 15–24 have completed secondary or higher education versus 46% of urban girls of the same age.³⁶ Rural girls are also less likely than urban girls to have access to the internet or a mobile phone, meaning they have less chance to gain knowledge about opportunities in agriculture.³⁷

As a result of Kenyan inheritance laws, girls are also unlikely to inherit and own land independently, or be allowed to make decisions about what they want to grow. It's estimated that only 1% of all registered land in Kenya is owned by a woman, and only a further 5–6% in joint name with a man.³⁸ Girls and women are also more likely than boys and men to be forced into unpaid employment in agriculture. Such gender inequality is part of the reason the agricultural sector is stagnating – it disregards the potential of rural girls and women to propel it to success.

³² Ministry of Agriculture, Youth Agribusiness Strategy, <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/ken171450.pdf> | ³³ Rutherford and Mirzoyants, www.youthpower.org/resources/kenya-cross-sectoral-youth-assessment-report | ³⁴ FAO, www.fao.org/3/i3947e/i3947e.pdf | ³⁵ Rutherford and Mirzoyants, www.youthpower.org/resources/kenya-cross-sectoral-youth-assessment-report | ³⁶ Shujaaz Inc 360 annual survey (N=2,015), December 2020–January 2021 | ³⁷ Shujaaz Inc 360 annual survey (N=2,015), December 2020–January 2021 | ³⁸ Mercy Corps and Mastercard Foundation, AFA Case Study: Digital Pathways For Youth In Agriculture, http://mercycorpsagriffin.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/230118_afa-youth-final-vf-compressed.pdf



**“CORONA HAS CAUSED
YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE ME
TO KNOW THAT WE CAN
ACTUALLY DO BUSINESS.
LIKE FOR ME, IT HELPED
ME REALISE I CAN PLANT
VEGETABLES AND SELL,
I HAVE SO MANY
CUSTOMERS.”**

FEMALE, 19, BUSIA



03 FINDING FERTILE GROUND

THE ROAD AHEAD: THE YOUNG PEOPLE THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT AGRICULTURE

As we've seen, for more than a generation, young Kenyans have been structurally disincentivised from working in agriculture; the barriers to entry are high and their perceptions of the sector shaped by their first-hand experiences. But young people's attitudes to agriculture, and crucially to 'agribusiness', are not black and white. In-depth conversations with our network reveal that beneath young Kenyans' concerns lie alternate mental models for working in the broader sector – models that are sometimes aspirational.

What's more, new data from our 2020 annual survey shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked positive shifts in young people's attitudes and behaviour in relation to agriculture and agribusiness. Many turned to growing and selling produce as popular informal industries like mitumba (second-hand clothing) ground to a halt, and one thing became clear: even in times of crisis, there will always be a market for food. These shifts and new mental models act as important signposts to a road ahead – and foundations on which we can build new types of youth engagement in the wider agribusiness sector.





FUTURE RURAL INNOVATORS

TIES TO HOME: NOT ALL YOUNG PEOPLE DREAM OF AN URBAN FUTURE

For young people who grew up in rural areas, agriculture carries an association with home, community and belonging. Our conversations with young Kenyans indicate that 'returning home' is an aspiration for their future – a way of settling down and giving back to their communities.

In our recent large-scale studies of young people across six counties, many young people said they were interested in working in agriculture, but faced limited access to capital and restricted access to land. In the study of young people living in conservancy areas, many expressed a strong desire to stay in their home region and avoid having to relocate to urban areas for education and work. Young people, particularly boys, told us that if they could access land or capital, they would stay and make a living on their ancestral land.³⁹ But for now, many see this as a plan for later in life, believing they must first make money and achieve financial stability by different means, often in urban areas.

These ties to home are powerful sentiments to build on. If we can break down the barriers preventing young people from engaging with agriculture, we can give young Kenyans a reason to believe that it can be part of their present as well as their future.

I HAVE THOUGHT OF IT, BECAUSE IT WILL HELP ME BE CLOSE TO MY FAMILY.

ANONYMOUS, SMS

MAYBE IN THE FUTURE – RIGHT NOW, I DON'T HAVE LAND.

ANONYMOUS, SMS

I AM SELLING FOOD STUFFS LIKE MAIZE, BEANS AND VEGETABLES BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT HAS HIGH DEMAND NOW (CORONA TIMES).

FEMALE, 18, BOMET

AGRIBUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS

SEEDS OF CHANGE: COVID-19 OPENS UP A NEW POINT OF ENTRY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

650k MORE YOUNG PEOPLE BEGAN MAKING MONEY IN AGRIBUSINESS MICRO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN 2020

While only 4% of 15–24-year-olds are consistently, gainfully employed in the agriculture sector and 2% find seasonal employment, results from our annual survey show that a further 11% are informally 'making money' in the food and agribusiness economy. That's an additional 1.1 million young people who report either 'occasionally growing or selling produce or livestock' or making money in the broader agribusiness value chain. That means they're likely to be running a small self-contained agri-enterprise, often as a side hustle alongside school or other odd jobs.

Micro-agribusinesses – like growing sukuma (collard greens) or rearing one or two chickens – can generate steady profits with little investment or change in lifestyle. Micro-entrepreneurship can be a powerful entry point for young people who are otherwise excluded from the agribusiness sector.

Our national survey showed that in 2019, 31% of young Kenyans – around 3 million people – were entrepreneurs, running their own micro-businesses in the informal sector.⁴⁰ However, a year later, at the height of COVID-19 lockdown measures, 92% of entrepreneurs in our network reported having to scale down or close their venture. By the end of May 2020, 74% told us they'd gone to bed hungry at least once in the previous week.⁴¹

In the face of uncertainty, many young Kenyans told us they were forced to adapt their micro-businesses, exploring new ways of generating money to help themselves and their families get by. As a result, many turned to agribusiness and food to earn income – often for the first time. Data from the 2020 annual survey suggests that around 650,000 more young people were earning income through agriculture entrepreneurship than in 2019.



AGRICULTURE OFFERS GREATER FINANCIAL SECURITY

**\$12
MORE** A MONTH EARNED BY YOUNG
AGRI-ENTREPRENEURS THAN
YOUNG KENYANS (ON AVERAGE)

In a time of instability, working in the agribusiness economy provided young people with higher levels of financial security.* According to our research, young people involved in agriculture in 2020 earned an average of \$57 (KES 6,242) a month. Though low, that figure is \$12 (KES 1,321) higher than the average monthly income for a 15–24-year-old in Kenya (KES 4,921) – a significant difference when it comes to a young person's financial stability.⁴²

Young people engaged in agriculture also outperformed their peers across a range of other financial health indicators. In 2020, 24% reported being very well prepared to cover their daily expenses, as opposed to 15% of young people on average. And 41% of those working in agriculture had a positive income–expense balance in the month prior to being surveyed, versus 32% on average.⁴³

These are all reasons why, in an SMS survey of our network conducted in December 2020, the majority of young people who had begun working in the agribusiness sector last year said they plan to continue even once COVID-19 restrictions come to an end.⁴⁴

“IT’S TRUE WE TOOK AGRICULTURE AS A SPARE WHEEL BECAUSE OF COVID, BUT FROM THE EXPERIENCE AS A YOUTH I BELIEVE MORE IN FARMING AND I LOOK FORWARD TO HAVE BIGGER INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURE.

ANONYMOUS, SMS

“MY PERSONAL HUSTLE IN THIS CORONA PERIOD IS TO SELL FRUITS AND FRESH VEGETABLES, IT’S GENERATING INCOME TO KEEP ME GOING.

MALE, 24, MOMBASA



⁴² Shujaaz Inc 360 annual survey (N=2,015), December 2020–January 2021 | ⁴³ Shujaaz Inc 360 annual survey (N=2,015), December 2020–January 2021 |

⁴⁴ Shujaaz Inc SMS survey (N=450), December 2020 | * It is important to note that due to the state of agricultural development, the risk adjusted rate of return on agriculture varies significantly across different counties, and in some areas (e.g., in arid areas or in the areas of on-going human-wildlife conflict) it can be worse than the rate of return on insecure casual labour in urban areas.



THE EVENTS OF 2020 CREATED NEW MENTAL MODELS

MORE YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD CONSIDER WORKING IN AGRICULTURE THAN EVER BEFORE

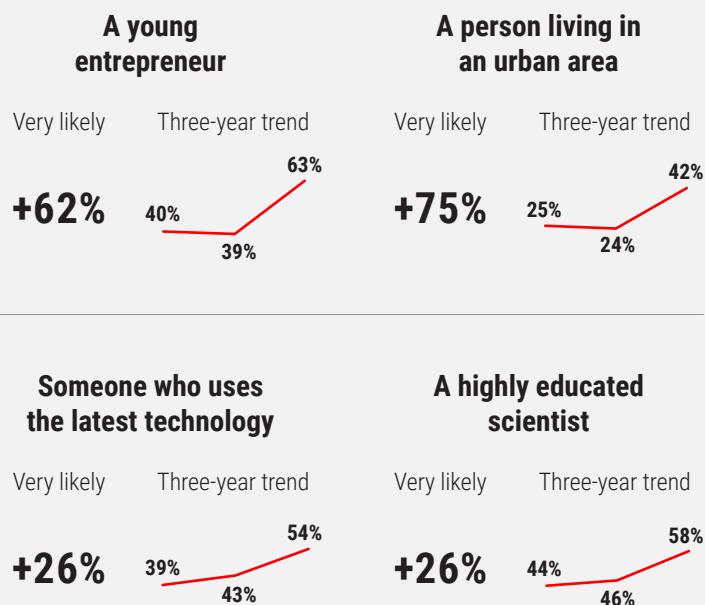
Our national surveys suggest that the pandemic has also shifted young people's attitudes to agriculture. In 2018, 16% said they would 'never' work in agriculture – in 2020, this fell to 8%.⁴⁵ That's nearly 0.9 million young Kenyans whose minds have been opened to the possibility of working in the sector.

PERCEPTIONS OF 'WHO' CAN EARN MONEY IN AGRICULTURE HAVE EXPANDED

Similarly, 2020 appears to have created new mental models for 'who' can work in the sector. We asked young people in our network to consider whether different types of people could work and earn money through agriculture. The results showed an increased acceptance of which groups of society could profit from the industry.



'HOW LIKELY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON IS TO ENGAGE IN AGRICULTURE?'⁴⁶



The largest shifts – those we've highlighted above – are particularly telling. Young Kenyans are starting to see a connection between agriculture and urban entrepreneurship, having previously understood it only as a traditional, rural way of life.

This is perhaps unsurprising, after a year in which young people in urban areas have seen first-hand the potential for making money from agriculture, and the stability agribusiness and food entrepreneurship can offer, even in times of upheaval. Critically, it suggests the start of an understanding of the wider 'agribusiness' value chain, beyond the limited mental models of traditional agriculture.

FARMING IS COOL, BY THE WAY I HAVE PLANTED VEGETABLES AND I AM AIMING TO GET MONEY IN THE NEXT 3 WEEKS. THANKS FOR THE GREAT IDEAS.

MALE, 26, TRANS NZIOA



THE COVID-19 AGRI-ENTREPRENEURS

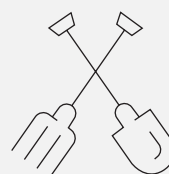
As the first coronavirus wave hit in April and public health measures were enforced, young entrepreneurs saw their earnings plummet. Many were forced to close their businesses altogether. They had to adapt. So they did their research and worked out which hustles were making money during the crisis. Food, they realised, is a basic need, even (or perhaps especially) during a crisis. So they pivoted to agribusiness. With little by the way of land or capital, they used what they had to operate small-scale operations: three chickens reared in a small plot, or vegetables like kale or onions grown in boxes of soil.⁴⁷

I HAVE ONE FRIEND WHO STARTED KEEPING BROILER CHICKENS IN THE VILLAGE. I DIDN'T THINK THE BUSINESS WOULD DO AS WELL AS IT DID. IT DID SO WELL EVEN I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT. DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON, FOR EXAMPLE, PEOPLE WOULD EVEN BUY UP TO TEN CHICKENS. PEOPLE MADE ORDERS DURING FUNERALS AS WELL, AND HE'D EVEN SELL EGGS TO SHOPS ... THEN I THOUGHT TO MYSELF ANYTHING CAN SELL ANYWHERE. HIS BUSINESS GREW, HE GOT MORE CHICKENS AND NOW HE DELIVERS EVEN MORE EGGS. HIS BUSINESS DID REALLY WELL, AND HE JUST STARTED DOING THIS AROUND APRIL LAST YEAR.

FEMALE, NO LOCATION

I AM A THIRD-YEAR STUDENT DOING A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS. I HAVE BEEN DOING CHICKEN FARMING SINCE 2017. WHEN WE CLOSED SCHOOL BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC, I GOT THE OPPORTUNITY TO REALLY TAKE TIME TO UNDERSTAND THE CHICKEN BUSINESS. I IMPLEMENTED WHAT I HAD LEARNED, AND I REALISED TREMENDOUS GROWTH. I STARTED WITH FIVE CHICKENS, WHICH I BOUGHT AT KES 250 (\$2.50) EACH. I VACCINATED THEM AND MADE SURE I FED THEM WELL. WITHIN A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS, THEY STARTED LAYING EGGS AND I COULD SELL SOME AND HATCH OTHERS. I CURRENTLY HAVE 175 CHICKENS AND I SOLD SOME A FEW DAYS AGO.

ROBERT, 23, EMBU COUNTY





I STARTED SOME PROJECTS DURING LOCKDOWN AND I'M STILL DOING THEM. THROUGH THESE PROJECTS, I GOT THE MONEY TO DO MOST OF MY THINGS. EVEN WHEN SCHOOLS REOPENED, I WAS ABLE TO PAY MY SCHOOL FEES BECAUSE I WOULD ALWAYS SAVE THE MONEY THAT I MADE. AS WE SPEAK, I DO NOT HAVE ANY SCHOOL FEES BALANCE BECAUSE OF AGRICULTURE. I'VE GROWN YAMS, CASSAVA, SUGAR CANE AND SOME VEGGIES AND MAIZE.

DAVID OTIENO, KAKAMEGA

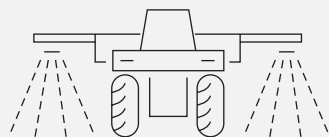


I HAVE FRIENDS WHO ARE DOING AGRIBUSINESS AND IT IS GOING SO WELL. SOME OF THEM HAVE EVEN EMPLOYED PEOPLE. ONE OF THEM STARTED KEEPING CHICKENS AND WITHIN A SHORT TIME, MY FRIEND STARTED GETTING ORDERS FOR THE EGGS AND CHICKENS AND I SEE THE BUSINESS IS DOING WELL. THEN THERE'S THE OTHER ONE WHO GROWS SPINACH. IMAGINE AFTER ONE MONTH, HE STARTED HARVESTING AND HE HARVESTS AND SELLS AFTER EVERY TWO WEEKS. HIS FARM IS ALWAYS FULL OF PEOPLE WAITING TO BUY THE SPINACH. THEIR PROGRESS HAS INSPIRED ME, AND I HAVE ALSO STARTED TO LOOK INTO DOING SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

FEMALE, NYERI

I KNOW A PERSON WHO STARTED PRACTISING AGRICULTURE DURING COVID. LIKE MANY PEOPLE, WHEN COVID HIT, HE HADN'T SAVED OR INVESTED A LOT, SO HE USED THE LITTLE MONEY HE HAD AS CAPITAL AND INVESTED IN AGRICULTURE. HE GREW SUKUMA AND SPINACH AND AFTER THREE MONTHS, THINGS WERE GOING WELL. HE STARTED SMALL AND NOW HE IS USING MACHINES ON HIS FARM. HE USES A SPRAYER TO SPRAY PESTICIDES, HE HAS A SPRINKLER WHICH HE USES BECAUSE HIS FARM IS NOW BIG, AND HE HAS EMPLOYED PEOPLE TO WORK FOR HIM. HE INSPIRED ME BECAUSE I SAW THAT ONE CAN START SOMETHING EVEN WITH LITTLE CAPITAL.

MALE, MAKUENI COUNTY





**“I’VE BEEN KEEPING CHICKEN
SINCE JANUARY 2020 WHEN I
CAME BACK TO THE VILLAGE.
I NOW HAVE OVER 200 CHICKEN
AND EVERY DAY I SELL ABOUT
200 EGGS. I DON’T EVEN WANT
TO GO BACK TO NAIROBI TO
BE HONEST.”**

MALE, FACEBOOK



04 TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

KICK-STARTING KENYA'S YOUTH-LED AGRIBUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

IT'S TIME TO BUILD A NEW STORY

For more than a generation, agriculture in Kenya has been treated like part of the country's past, not its future. Stripped from most school curriculums, agriculture has been positioned by teachers and parents as a career choice of last resort and certain failure. Elsewhere, outdated laws and regulations are locking women and young people out of accessing fertile land and stopping aspiring agri-entrepreneurs accessing the tools and finance they need to succeed. Meanwhile, old methods are leaving Kenya's farmers trapped in a cycle of vulnerable semi-subsistence, as the climate rapidly changes.

It's time to invest in building an optimistic, future-facing new story. Kenya has a unique opportunity to transform, expand and update its most important industry; to create aspirational high-value work opportunities for its young population, and to adapt to a rapidly changing climate through innovation. Kenya's agribusiness sector is its biggest industry, job creator and international export – it should be an area of pride for everyone, from policy makers, to teachers, to young micro-entrepreneurs.

The upheaval of 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic has opened a crucial window of opportunity to engage young people in Kenya's agribusiness economy. As long-held perceptions begin to shift, and hundreds of thousands more young people turn to agri-entrepreneurship, there has never been a better time to invest in engaging and upskilling the next generation in this critical industry.

But conversations with young people in our network this year reinforce the unprecedented scale of investment and policy change needed to realise that opportunity. Drawing on more than 20 digital focus group conversations, in-depth one-to-one interviews and video reports from our ShujaaZ SuperFan journalists, we've highlighted below what this generation say needs to happen next.

#1. UPDATING THE NARRATIVE – FROM AGRICULTURE TO AGRIBUSINESS

For decades, from schools to media, working in agriculture has been framed as 'failure'. It's time to update the narrative. Young people in our focus group discussions think the first step is a change in terminology.

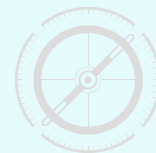
Instead of 'agriculture', which they associate with traditional, physical work and struggling for money, young people preferred the word 'agribusiness'. This term captures the broader opportunities available for entrepreneurship, profit and innovation within the sector – and focuses on the future.

“MOST YOUNG PEOPLE NOW SEE IT [AGRICULTURE] AS WAYS OF GETTING INCOME AND PROVIDING FOR THE FAMILY AND BECAUSE COVID BROUGHT ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“FARMING IS A GREAT HUSTLE THAT CAN IMPROVE YOUR LIVELIHOOD. BUT MOST YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT. THEY THINK FARMING IS DIRTY.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT



#2. ENTER STAGE RIGHT – NEXT-GENERATION AGRIBUSINESS ROLE MODELS

At Shujaaz Inc we know that role models can have a huge influence on young people's understanding and behaviour. As highlighted in our research, young people in our focus group discussions reported that their most common role models for agriculture are 'old' subsistence farmers, struggling to make ends meet.

It's time to introduce young Kenyans to new, future-facing agribusiness role models. If the agriculture sector expands at the rate it needs to over the coming decade, there'll be space for millions of young people to find work across the full value chain of the industry – from the urban agri-entrepreneur growing sukuma in Nairobi, to the young rural innovator using new digital platforms to grow their business.

Mass media platforms like Shujaaz, as well as television, radio and education curriculums, can play a critical role in increasing engagement with agribusiness, by telling aspirational, accessible stories about these next-generation agri-entrepreneur role models. Introducing gender-sensitive role models, who speak to the specific barriers girls face, is critical too.

“ I KNOW A PERSON WHO STARTED PRACTISING AGRICULTURE DURING COVID. HE INSPIRED ME BECAUSE I SAW THAT ONE CAN START SOMETHING EVEN WITH LITTLE CAPITAL.

MALE, MAKUENI COUNTY

“ THANKS, DJ B COS SHUJAAZ HAS ENCOURAGED ME A LOT DURING THIS CORONA SEASON AND YOUR LESSONS HAVE HELPED ME GROW SUKUMA WIKI WHICH IS HELPING ME A LOT.

FEMALE, 22, SIAAYA

“ THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO ALSO INVEST IN EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT FARMING. WE MIGHT BE DOING FARMING, BUT NOT IN THE RIGHT WAY. IF THEY COULD INVEST IN TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE WHOLE FARMING PROCESS FROM BEGINNING TO END, MANY YOUNG PEOPLE WILL BENEFIT.

MALE, UASIN GISHU

#3. UPSKILLING, EDUCATION, PEER-TO-PEER TRAINING AND MENTORSHIP

Throughout our conversations, young people continued to highlight the need for tailored, specific training in all aspects of the agribusiness economy. Despite being the country's biggest industry and employer, agriculture is no longer taught in Kenyan schools.

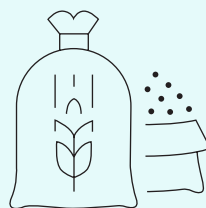
To unlock the promise of Kenya's young workforce, young people need practical training in climate-resilient, farming methods, entrepreneurship and financial management – as well as support in understanding the agribusiness value chain, and how to handle risks and shocks. As the pace of innovation continues to advance, it's crucial that training programmes engender a culture of ongoing learning, and openness to adopting new technologies, tools and practices.

While school curriculums can play an important role, didactic 'information-first' approaches are rarely effective in filling knowledge gaps. Shujaaz Inc research shows that new information and training is most effectively delivered by people, and in formats, that young people already trust. For example, peer-to-peer training can be highly effective, because it helps drive social norm change. In particular, a blend of self-led digital and in-person learning can provide young people with the knowledge, skills, agency and sense of community they need to succeed.

According to external research, digital tools that 'bundle' a range of services for aspiring agri-innovators are highly effective. This could take the form of connecting young people to training materials, market information, mentors and networks in 'bundled' platforms and tools.⁴⁸



#4. STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND INNOVATION – OPENING UP ACCESS TO FINANCE, LAND AND MARKETS



This year, many young people told us that they felt government and businesses could play a larger role in designing policies and interventions to support them.

In particular, young Kenyans highlight the urgent need for access to youth-friendly financial services and tools. Right now, aspiring young agri-entrepreneurs remain largely excluded from formal access to the credit, insurance or savings products they need to set up, scale and succeed. While new products from FarmDrive and 4G Capital are promising developments, there is a need for the broader financial sector to invest in tailored products to support Kenya's agri-entrepreneurs. Government agencies can play a crucial role in creating the policy and regulatory environment financial service providers need in order to innovate.

“ I'D ASK THE GOVERNMENT TO HELP US BY GIVING US CAPITAL. I'D ALSO ASK THAT YOUNG PEOPLE GET HELP WITH MARKETING. I AM A SMALL-SCALE FARMER GROWING PASSION FRUIT, BUT IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT FOR ME TO GET MARKET FOR MY PRODUCE. THE GOVERNMENT IS ALWAYS EITHER IMPORTING THESE THINGS OR THEY BUY FROM ESTABLISHED FARMERS WHO ARE NOT YOUNG PEOPLE.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

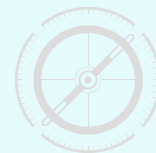
In addition, young people consistently emphasise the challenges they face because of restrictive inheritance and land laws, which particularly disadvantage girls and women. Without access to land, young people will remain excluded from the agribusiness economy, and prevented from advancing vital new climate-resilient practices. Programmes and policies designed to evolve land laws and open up access to affordable land leases for young people (and in particular women and girls) are critical.

Finally, many young people report struggling to access the quality 'inputs', tools and equipment they need to succeed, and say they face barriers when trying to access market information or navigate complex market structures. Schemes designed to affordably lease equipment and tools to young people, accompanied by training on how best to use them, are key.

Similarly, simple digital platforms sending SMS messages with agriculture advice have been shown to be highly effective. Recent research demonstrated that sending advice to smallholder sugar cane farmers increased yields by 11.5%.⁴⁹ In the same way, new platforms like M-Shaba and FarmLink are harnessing mobile platforms to share sustainable land management practices and market information. Using tech platforms to provide market insights, like product pricing, or to directly connect young agri-entrepreneurs to buyers could be powerful.

“ THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO ALSO SUBSIDISE THE COST OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE BECAUSE MANY YOUNG PEOPLE CANNOT AFFORD TO BUY THESE PRODUCTS. GIVE THEM INCENTIVES OR MONEY THAT WILL ENABLE THEM TO BUY ALL THE PRODUCTS THEY NEED FOR THEIR BUSINESSES.

FEMALE, UNKNOWN



#5. INVESTING IN CREATING WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

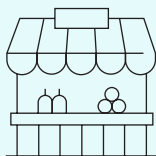
The most crucial step is to invest in more tailored, targeted work opportunities for young people in Kenya's agribusiness economy. As we've highlighted, right now young people remain almost entirely excluded from working and earning in the sector.

For example, recent reports highlight that ASALs (arid and semi-arid lands), which make up 83% of agricultural land in Kenya, are utilised at only 50% of their capacity.⁵⁰ With targeted national and international investment, experts

suggest that increasing the capacity of ASALs alone could create millions of additional jobs for Kenya's young workforce.

Urban agriculture represents a significant opportunity too, as demand for food in towns and cities grows. As we've seen this year, with relatively little support, urban and peri-urban producers can operate small-scale, semi-commercial models with little land or investment, making quick returns and a stable income.

#6. BEYOND FARMING – ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE VALUE CHAIN



Our focus group discussions highlighted that too many young people still think of working in the agriculture sector as 'digging dirt', growing crops and selling produce. As data from our 2020 annual survey showed, the proportion of young people who see agriculture as linked to technology or science is falling.

It's crucial that the government, NGOs and the private sector invest in opportunities for young people across the whole agribusiness value chain, demonstrating that this diverse industry can provide young people with the business-centric, tech-enabled work they're looking for.

This is especially true in areas of innovation, which have huge potential for growth:

- **Digital services:** Digital services for agriculture are on the rise, driving innovation around areas as diverse as soil testing, logistics, weather management, distribution and sales. Examples include [FarmLINK Kenya](#), an online platform with access to up-to-date farming information. Digitally native young Kenyans can play a powerful role as early adopters of these new technologies.
- **Financing:** There's a real need for growth in agricultural finance in Kenya, and digital initiatives like [FarmDrive](#) and [4G Capital](#) are leading the way. As well as benefiting from greater access to finance, there are opportunities for young Kenyans to get involved in sales, outreach and other work for digital financial services.

- **Climate-resilient innovation:** Agribusiness will play a vital role in tackling climate change in Kenya, and young people can help to fuel broader green innovation. From small-scale organic fertiliser hustles to renting cold storage to farmers to keep crops fresh for market, there are all kinds of opportunities for young Kenyans to make money from green micro-entrepreneurship.
- **Pesticides and fertiliser:** Demand has grown for pesticides, especially safer, more environmentally friendly ones. That creates employment opportunities at large companies, but also opens the possibility of young people starting their own enterprises, including small-scale weed-spraying hustles.
- **Seed development:** Kenya is one of the countries leading the way in development of hybrid seeds in Africa, through use of biotechnology. Again, there is scope for young people to be involved in customer support, sales, logistics, research and more – and they can also act as early adopters of these

“YOU KNOW, WITH OR WITHOUT A FARM, ONE CAN STILL DO AGRICULTURE. ONE CAN BUY THE PRODUCE FROM FARMS AND SELL TO CUSTOMERS, SO IN THE END, EVERYONE MAKES MONEY. AGRICULTURE SUPPORTS THOSE WITH AN ACTUAL FARM AND THE ONE WHO DO NOT OWN A FARM. IT'S ALL ABOUT KNOWING WHERE TO GET YOUR PRODUCTS AND ABOUT RESEARCH.

MALE, FACEBOOK

