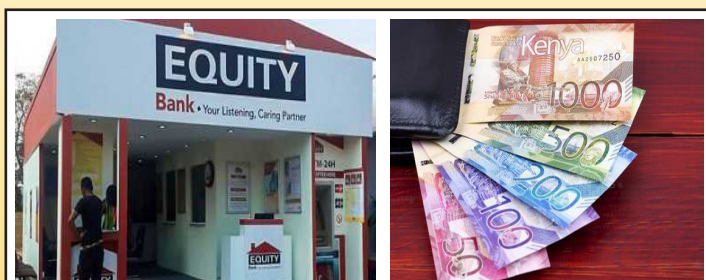


- f) Designing gender-sensitive policies and programs that recognize and address the specific needs of women in the Cashewnut value chain. This may include measures to address gender-based discrimination, promote women's leadership, and ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the value chain.
- g) Encourage women to engage in value addition and processing activities such as cashewnut drying, canning, sauce making, and packaging.

resources and training enhances their adoption of sustainable farming practices leading to improved crop yields and quality. Their involvement in value addition and processing results in enhancing the value of their products with higher profit margins. Furthermore, women's empowerment fosters gender equality, social cohesion, and community development. Recognizing and supporting women as actors in the value chain lead to inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.



Empowerment through access to credit



Empowerment through access to land

Empowerment through value addition

Outcomes of empowering women

Empowering women in the cashewnut value chain yields numerous positive outcomes. These includes: increased participation of women in the values chain from production, processing, marketing, and consumption which enhances household incomes and food security. For instance, increased women access to production



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EMPOWERING WOMEN IN CASHEWNUIT VALUE CHAIN





Introduction

Cashewnut is a major industrial crop in Kenya grown mainly for commercial purposes. As a commercial crop, Cashew interests men as they seek to assert their breadwinner role of tapping most financial gain in order to supply to the family as heads of households. Men often control access to land, inputs and information resources due to ability to attend more training sessions. On the other hand, women perform various activities in the Cashew value chain such as weeding, sorting and grading but do not get to participate in value chain on an equal level with men. This implies that commercialization of agriculture brings about competition between men and women for control of returns. To limit this competition, the issue women often select commodities that have lower value and lower return, which do not interest men.

Besides, customary gender roles assign women the responsibility of cultivating food crops to ensure food is on the table and that the whole family gets a healthy diet while men are supposed to provide the cash requirements of the household.

Challenges experienced by women in the cashewnut value chain

Women have less access to production resources such as land, credit and inputs. Women also have less access to land. Customary laws often limit women's land ownership and control, relegating them to secondary roles in intra-household decision-making power and resource allocation. Besides, women have less access to extension services, education and training. Moreover, women have limited access to appropriate technologies, innovations and management practices including post-harvest handling facilities which aggravates their issues leading to high post-harvest losses and reduced incomes. Furthermore, women have less access to markets and market information leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by middlemen subsequently affecting their productivity and competitiveness. Consequently, they are often relegated informal local markets while men dominate the more competitive lucrative premium regional and international markets. Furthermore, balancing domestic responsibilities with cashewnut work adds another layer of challenges. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that prioritize gender equality, access to resources, and supportive policies.

Strategies of empowering women in the cashewnut value chain

Concerted efforts are required to address these challenges. These includes:

- a) Ensuring that women have access to production resources such as land, water, quality seeds, fertilizers, and other resources necessary for

cashewnut cultivation. This may involve legal reforms, lobbying campaigns, and support for women's land rights.

- b) Designing gender responsive training and extension services tailored to women's needs covering topics such as modern farming techniques, pest and disease management, post-harvest handling, quality control, and entrepreneurship,
- c) Facilitating gender inclusive financial opportunities for women to enable them access credit, savings, and other financial services. Initiatives such as the women enterprise funds, table banking and merry go rounds, may enable women to access credit that may facilitate them to participate in economic activities and achieve financial independence.
- d) Facilitating women to access local, regional, and international markets for cashewnut products through market information systems, networking platforms, and linkages with buyers and retailers.
- e) Formation and strengthening of women's collective action initiatives such as self-help groups, and producer associations in the cashewnut value chain. These organizations can provide a platform for collective bargaining, advocacy, and mutual support among women farmers and entrepreneurs.