

GENDER IDENTITIES AND GROWTH OF EXPORT HORTICULTURE ENTERPRISES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the export horticulture subsector and proposes tracing the gender identities along the product value chains to enable an understanding of gender relations and the influence these have on the performance of the enterprises. A huge gap exists in the methodology often applied by growth analysts in the sector as gender identities in the value chains are rarely factored in reporting leading to either skewed presentation of men as the main drivers of growth since most export companies are owned /managed by men or overlooking the gender perspective in totality. This paper reports findings of a survey of 28 enterprises members of the Fresh Produce Exporters Association Of Kenya (FPEAK). The results indicated that gender identities are reflected very clearly in the four value chains of the export horticulture sector (the input suppliers; the producers; the post harvest and the marketing value chains.) the gender of the actor significantly affects the performance of the enterprises and identification of positioning along the chains are more frequently driven by choice as opposed to commonly held belief that women face discrimination. The study recommends a shift in methodology of assessing growth from one aspect i.e marketing only to having a comprehensive analysis of the entire value chain identifying gender relations and how they determine the ultimate earnings within and across the Export Horticulture enterprises value chains. The fact that it is documented that women control 80p% of the labour economy in the sector which is 3rd contributor of Kenyas GDP is an indicator that the female gender has significant influence on the overall performance and growth of the Kenyan economy.

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