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## The Impact of the Wezesha Kirinyaga Agriculture initiative on dairy farmers

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| County:                                                           | Kirinyaga                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                   |                              |
| Sector/s:                                                         | Agriculture                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Sub-sector/Theme: | Dairy farming transformation |
| Keywords: (for search in the online platform)                     | Wezesha Agriculture<br>Mountain City Blueprint                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                   |                              |
| Target Audience:                                                  | Farmers in Kirinyaga County<br>County directorates-in-charge of agriculture                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                   |                              |
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### Introduction

Kirinyaga County, situated in the former Central Province, covers an area of 1,478.1 square kilometers and is home to a population of 610,411. The County derives its leadership strategy from the Mountain Cities Blueprint, which outlines its vision 2032. The Mountain City Blueprint is supported by four main pillars namely Agriculture, Social-economic, Urban Development and Private sector as demonstrated below.



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## Kirinyaga County Mountain Cities Blue Print 2032



Source: County sessional paper No.1 of 2018 | Empowering youth, women & vulnerable and marginalized groups

To execute activities aligned with the four pillars, the County coined the phrase **"Wezesha Kirinyaga"**. The mantra aims to empower local communities and address the challenges faced by youth, women and marginalized groups, encompassing concerns such as unemployment, escalating poverty rates and the need to improve the quality of coffee and tea production.

Under the agriculture sector, the County has committed substantial efforts to boost productivity, optimize land use, establish markets for agricultural goods and encourage value addition. In executing the activities under the agriculture pillar, the County is guided by the following five mandates:

1. Enable food production and ensure safety.
2. Promote the growth of agro-based industries.
3. Promote the sustainable use of agricultural resource base.
4. Facilitate both domestic and international trade.
5. Implement measures to prevent and control pests and diseases in crops and livestock.



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To fortify the five essential mandates within the agriculture sector, the County Government has developed a Wezesha Agricultural Transformation Strategy (2023-2027). This strategy prioritizes crucial areas for effective implementation the departmental mandates including;

1. Modernization of extension services
2. Upscaling production to commercialization thresholds
3. Enhancing agro-market access
4. Promotion of agro-processing industries
5. Revitalization of the Kirinyaga Agriculture Training Centre



Through the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Veterinary, and Fisheries, the County Government of Kirinyaga coordinates various farmer groups categorized by different agricultural enterprises such as fish farming, dairy and other livestock and crop enterprises. These are organized into 942 farmer groups, each consisting of 25-30 farmers with each group integrated into a value chain system.

**Implementation of the practice (solution path)**



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In 2017, recognizing the need for strategic development, the County Government of Kirinyaga convened a team of economic advisors. Their primary task was to identify pivotal pillars essential for advancing the goals outlined in the Mountain City Blueprint.

By 2018, the economic advisors formulated the Mountain City Blueprint and provided a comprehensive framework to guide the implementation of the Wezesha Kirinyaga initiative, aiming to address economic challenges and foster sustainable growth.

In 2019, the Wezesha Kirinyaga policy was developed, serving as a foundational document to support and reinforce all initiatives and activities outlined in the Mountain City Blueprint. This policy aimed to provide a structured approach to achieve the region's economic objectives.

As of 2020, the County embarked on the practical execution of activities outlined under the identified pillars within the Mountain City Blueprint. Simultaneously, during the same year, a concerted effort was made to fortify the Dairy value chain. This involved a strategic focus on specific services aimed at enhancing and promoting the overall efficiency and productivity of the dairy sector as follows:

1. Digital extension
2. Farmer training
3. Artificial insemination
4. Animal Diagnostic Centre
5. Affordable Working Capital
6. Fodder Bulking and Conservation
7. On-farm feed formulation
8. Milk Aggregation and Chilling
9. Milk Market and Value Addition
10. Milk Processing





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## Wezesha Kirinyaga Dairy Wheel



The County has organized all dairy farmers into distinct projects, with groups specializing in various enterprises such as feed processing and fodder bulking. This approach is replicated across all ten value-addition projects, as illustrated in the dairy wheel above.

The County, through the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Veterinary and Fisheries has 80 trainers deployed to the 20 wards to provide comprehensive training to farmers. The training sessions cover a diverse range of subjects, encompassing crucial topics such as fodder bulking, milk aggregation and artificial insemination. These trainers play a pivotal role in equipping farmers with the necessary knowledge and skills, fostering advancements in various aspects of dairy farming and contributing to the overall development of the agricultural sector within the County.

The County has provided these officers with motorcycles, facilitating their mobility across different Wards. This enables them to promptly assist farmers whenever challenges arise, or their services are needed.

The Kirinyaga County Government has established an advanced Animal Diagnostic Center, where two highly skilled veterinary officers are dedicated to the crucial tasks of diagnosing diseases in animals. Beyond mere diagnosis, their responsibilities extend to anticipating and formulating effective solutions for emerging health issues within the animal population. This initiative reflects the County's commitment to ensuring improved health and livestock welfare, promoting disease prevention and



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addressing the challenges posed by new and evolving veterinary concerns. Through this specialized Centre, the County aims to enhance the overall health management of animals, thereby contributing to the sustainability and prosperity of the agricultural sector.

Through the Kirinyaga Agriculture Training Centre (KATC), there has been enhanced training and extension services. The Centre has ensured a high quality of vines and fodders provided to farmers for their animal consumption.

The County Government has further empowered farmers by providing feed-making machines to various farmer groups. This empowerment allows them to benefit not only within their respective groups but also by selling the produced feed to other farmers outside the group and sharing the profit.

In addition to furnishing farmers with feed-making machines, the County has equipped them with grass cutters and various other agricultural machinery for fodder preservation. Further, the County through KATC undertakes the crucial responsibility of repairing and maintaining the machines provided at no cost.

To support the marketing aspect, the County has provided different groups of farmers with coolers and chillers and empowered local cooperatives including Kirima, Rukingu and Rung'eto with yoghurt processing units.

### Digital Extension







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## Farmer Training



## Artificial Insemination Services



## Animal Diagnostic Center



## On-farm feed formulation







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## Milk Aggregation and Chilling



## Milk Market and Value Addition



## Milk Processing



## Results of the practice

1. Enhanced Standards of Living: The County has positively impacted the lives of over 50,000 farmers in Kirinyaga by ensuring they earn a minimum of KES 1,000 per day from different agricultural value-addition projects.
2. Increased Milk Production: The County has successfully increased milk production from an average of five liters to seven liters per cow daily. This results from a strategic focus on





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enhancing dairy cattle breeds through the implementation of Artificial Insemination techniques.

3. Dairy Value Addition: In a bid to increase farmers' earnings through dairy value addition, the County has strategically installed yogurt-making equipment at key locations, including Rung'eto, Rukingu, and Kirima Farmers' Cooperative Society. These machines can process up to 500 liters of yogurt in a day. This initiative has not only added value to dairy products but also created new opportunities for economic growth within the dairy industry.
4. Livestock Disease Management: Establishing a County Livestock Diagnostic Center in Kirinyaga has significantly improved real-time diagnosis capabilities. This has played a crucial role in enabling the timely management of livestock diseases, ensuring that farmers receive prompt and accurate information, allowing effective disease control and prevention measures.

#### **Lessons learnt:**

1. There is a need to consider the establishment of additional Livestock Diagnostic Centers and the training of additional officers. This strategic initiative aims to mitigate the substantial workload currently shouldered by the existing centre, ensuring more efficient and comprehensive livestock disease management services.
2. To achieve success within the dairy sector in the Counties, it is important to adopt strategic measures that synergize various aspects such as feed processing, animal diagnostics, artificial insemination, equipment provision and marketing.
3. The strategic organization or clustering of farmers into distinct groups stands as a key factor contributing to the success of diverse value-addition chains within the agricultural sector in Kerugoya. This has helped the County streamline resource allocation, implemented targeted interventions, and fostered collaborative efforts, ultimately promoting sustainable agricultural development and improving the overall economic well-being of the farming community.

#### **Conclusion**

The multifaceted initiatives undertaken by the Kirinyaga County Government have yielded commendable outcomes, significantly impacting the agricultural sector and the livelihoods of its farmers. The concerted efforts to enhance standards of living, increase milk production through innovative breeding techniques, promote dairy value addition and improve livestock disease management underscores the County's commitment to fostering sustainable agricultural practices. These efforts not only reflect a dedication to economic prosperity but also highlight a holistic approach to improving the overall well-being of the farming community. As the County continues to implement strategic measures and invest in cutting-edge agricultural technologies, it is poised to



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further elevate the resilience and prosperity of its agricultural sector, ensuring a brighter and more sustainable future for its farmers and the entire region.

**Further reading**

1. <https://kirinyaga.go.ke/>
2. <https://kirinyagaassembly.go.ke/>