

Value Chain Scoping and Actor Mapping in Gusii Region-Kisii and Nyamira Counties

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Literature Review	4
Approach to Desktop Review	4
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	4
Limitations of the Review	5
Overview of the Gusii Region	5
Socio-Economic Profile of Gusii Region	7
Regional Demographics	7
Regional Economic Performance	7
Nyamira County Economic Performance	7
Nyamira County Sectoral Performance	7
Kisii County Economic Performance	8
Kisii County Sectoral Performance	8
Economic Sectors and Value Chains in Gusii Region	9
Targeted Economic Sectors	9
Methodology	11
Site Overview	11
Gusii Region.....	11
Data Collection.....	12
Data Collection Methods	12
Findings	14
Demographics.....	14
Respondents Age.....	14
Country Representation	15
Sector Involvement	15
Value Chains in Gusii Region.....	16
Agribusiness and Value Addition Sector.....	16
Artisanal and Handicraft Industries	18
Recycling Industry and Waste Management.....	19
Value Chain Actor Mapping.....	20
Banana Value Chain Actor Mapping.....	20
Avocado Value Chain Actors Mapping	23

Local Vegetables Value Chain Actor Mapping.....	24
Handicraft Value Chain Actor Mapping.....	26
Organic Waste Value Chain Mapping.....	30
Value Chain Actor Roles	30
Banana.....	30
Local Vegetables.....	32
Avocado	34
Organic Waste	36
Handicraft Value Chain	37
Reasons for Value Chain Selection (Opportunities and Challenges)	38
Market Access	41
Circular Economy Practices	42
Challenges for Youth and Women.....	42
Policy and Support Gaps.....	42
Opportunities for partnership and collaboration with key enabler institutions.....	43
Conclusion	48
References	49

Introduction

The International Solidarity Foundation (ISF), a Finnish development organization established in 1970, is dedicated to empowering women and girls by promoting their self-determination and bodily integrity. Between 2026 to 2029, ISF aims to support the growth of businesses in promising sectors of the green economy, focusing strongly on inclusivity for women and the youth. This feasibility study identifies high-potential value chains within the green economy in Kenya's Gusii Region, with a strong emphasis on promoting youth and women's economic inclusion. Outcomes of the study include:

- A detailed mapping of viable value chains with strong employment and income-generation potential.
- An analysis of key actors and institutions involved in these value chains, clarifying their roles, relationships, and influence.
- SWOT analyses for prioritized sectors to assess their competitiveness, scalability, and alignment with circular economy principles.
- Actionable recommendations to strengthen inclusive, sustainable, and resilient livelihoods—guiding ISF's strategic planning, partnership development, and implementation efforts.

Target sectors include artisanal industries, agri-business (especially value addition using byproducts), recycling and waste management, and other eco-friendly product innovations

Literature Review

Approach to Desktop Review

Desktop review is a fundamental approach in gaining insight into the secondary data, relevant to adoption and practice of circularity in different sectors and specific value chains in the Gusii region. Performing a review of secondary data is critical to developing contextual understanding and to inform the design of primary data collection tools.

The review process assumed a thematic approach. Thematic areas identified based on the Terms of Reference (ToR) and preliminary research include; sector-agribusiness and waste management, value chain stages- input, production, processing and marketing, and principles of circularity, sustainability and inclusivity. Sources of information have been analyzed to extract key findings, identify gaps and develop insights reliable for completion of the study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

There is vast literature that exist on different value chains in the Gusii region and a large the republic of Kenya. Numerous studies and similar research have been conducted to map out different players and their key roles in various value chains. While the dearth of knowledge that is exist is essential to this study, it is critical to access data sources that are more relevant to the value chains within the target sectors of this study. Hence, an inclusion and exclusion criteria were adopted with the intension of gaining to the most relevant sources of information during the desktop review.

For inclusion, sources of information ought to be geographically relevant to the Gusii region. Such includes studies that have been conducted in Nyamira and Kisii counties. More preference is placed on sources that provide sub-county level insights. The desktop review does not

however exclude studies that might have been conducted across the Republic of Kenya and inclusive of information relevant to Kisii and Nyamira counties. Sources of information ought to have direct relevance to the priority sectors for this research, which include; artisanship, agribusiness, recycling, eco-innovation. For inclusion in the desktop review, sources of information must have been published between 2015 and 2025 to ensure currency of the information sourced. Equally, sources of information ought to be reputable. Some of the sources prioritized include governmental and development institutions relevant to the various sectors and reputable academic institutions within and beyond the country. For inclusion, sources that offered structured findings like actor roles, different value chain stages, highlighting challenges and offering policy recommendations were prioritized.

Limitations of the Review

A number of limitations emerged during the desktop review. This limitation may hinder the quality of the study conducted and thus its reliability. Well notably, there is scarcity of localized data. Most of the available information is relevant to the national and regional picture and not localized to Nyamira and Kisii counties. The desktop review is also limited with documentation gaps, evidenced in emerging sectors like eco-innovation and informal waste value chains. Subsequently, data access is poorly disaggregated, rendering it a challenge to obtain information relevant to youth and women. There are numerous terminologies used to describe information relevant to this study. Some of the search terms deployed especially in online research may have missed key data. Lack of data digitalization especially in the agribusiness sector limits access to valuable government and NGO documents especially at the county levels. To overcome these limitations, it is essential to engage in participatory approaches to gain insights from stakeholders through workshops, key informant interviews and focus group discussions to validate insights from the secondary review.

Overview of the Gusii Region

The Gusii region, located in southwestern Kenya, comprises the two counties of Nyamira and Gusii. Characterized by its highlands, fertile volcanic soils, and relatively adequate rainfall, the region has long established itself as one of Kenya's agricultural areas. Both counties are known for their deep agricultural roots, high population density, and a strong sense of community, making them significant contributors to the national food basket and rural economy.

According to the latest demographic data, Nyamira County had a population of approximately 605,576 as per the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census. Its capital, Nyamira town, hosts a smaller urban population but serves as a central hub for county administration and economic activity. On the other hand, Kisii County is more populous, with recent estimates placing its population at around 1.26 million people. This makes Kisii one of the more densely populated counties in Kenya, with over 950 people per square kilometer. Despite this, the county has managed to maintain a predominantly rural lifestyle, heavily reliant on subsistence and small-scale farming.

Agriculture is the cornerstone of the Gusii region's economy and livelihoods. Over 90% of the population is directly engaged in farming, either as smallholder producers or as sources of labour within agricultural value chains. The region's favorable agro-climatic conditions—including high rainfall and fertile soils—make it ideal for a diverse range of crops and livestock. In Nyamira County, key cash crops include tea, bananas, and pyrethrum, while emerging horticultural crops like avocado and vegetables are gaining traction, especially among youth and women's farming groups. Food crops such as maize, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, millet, and sorghum are grown for both household consumption and local markets.

Livestock farming also features prominently in Nyamira's agricultural economy. Dairy farming, in particular, has been receiving increased attention, with the county government providing subsidized veterinary services, improved breeds through artificial insemination, and training on modern husbandry techniques. These interventions aim to increase milk production and link farmers to markets through cooperatives and milk cooling facilities.

Kisii County shares similar agricultural patterns but on a relatively larger and more diversified scale. The county is particularly renowned for banana farming, which is a key source of income for thousands of households. Kisii bananas are consumed locally and transported to other parts of Kenya, including Nairobi and neighboring counties. Tea and coffee are also major cash crops, with the tea industry supported by both smallholder farmers and larger estates. Vegetables and horticultural crops such as tomatoes, kale, and onions are grown extensively and sold in local and regional markets.

One of Kisii County's unique economic features is the artisanal soapstone carving industry centered in Tabaka. This traditional craft, passed down through generations, has grown into a valuable economic activity with both local and international markets. Soapstone carvings, which range from decorative sculptures to functional household items, are a source of employment and cultural pride, attracting tourists and buyers from around the world.

The agriculture-based value chains in both counties are evolving. In Nyamira, the county government has invested in agricultural extension services, input subsidies, and market linkages to improve productivity and farmer incomes. Efforts have been made to organize farmers into cooperatives and groups, facilitating easier access to credit, training, and bulk marketing. Similarly, Kisii County has embraced agribusiness models, encouraging youth and women to engage in farming not just for subsistence but as a profitable venture. Initiatives such as agri-tech adoption, greenhouse farming, and farmer field schools are gradually transforming traditional farming into more sustainable and commercialized enterprises.

Despite its agricultural abundance, the region also relies on trade and small-scale business for supplementary livelihoods. In Kisii County, there are over 100 trading centers, 16,199 registered businesses, and over 12,000 licensed retail traders, indicating a robust informal sector. This is mirrored in Nyamira, where vibrant market centers and townships host grocery shops, salons, tailoring outlets, food stalls, and transportation services. Many of these businesses are run by local entrepreneurs who often combine trade with small-scale farming.

Manufacturing in the Gusii region remains limited but is gradually developing. Apart from soapstone processing in Kisii, small-scale manufacturing of furniture, textiles, and processed foods is taking root, especially in urban centers. The counties are also investing in infrastructure to support local industries, such as the construction of market sheds, improvement of rural roads, and development of water and electricity infrastructure in trading centers.

Education and healthcare services in the region are relatively well-established. Both counties boast a network of public and private primary and secondary schools, with growing access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions. Health facilities, including county hospitals, health centers, and dispensaries, are spread across the region, although gaps remain in equipment, staffing, and service delivery, particularly in remote areas.

Socio-Economic Profile of Gusii Region

Regional Demographics

In the Gusii region youth and women make-up significant segments of the population. Based on the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the youth population in Kisii County is estimated at 173,981 while females make up 661,038 out of the total population of 1,266,860. Nyamira County had a projected population of 632,046 in 2018, comprising 303,252 males and 328,783 females (Nyamira County, 2024). The inter-census population growth rate stood at 1.83 percent, indicating a steadily increasing population. Children under the age of one year made up approximately 3 percent of the total population, translating to 20,534 individuals—10,278 males and 10,256 females. The youthful population, defined as those aged between 15 and 29 years, constituted a significant segment of the population at 28 percent, or 178,918 individuals. Women of reproductive age (15–49 years) accounted for 25 percent of the total population, equaling 158,507. The working-age population, also referred to as the labour force (15–64 years), represented 52 percent of the population, approximately 331,433 individuals. Meanwhile, the aged population, those above 65 years, formed a smaller segment of the community, with an estimated 22,153 individuals considered dependent.

Regional Economic Performance

Nyamira County Economic Performance

Nyamira contributes approximately 1.1% to Kenya's National Gross Value Added (GVA), with an average GVA estimated at Ksh 80.78 billion. This translates to a GVA per capita of Ksh 133,398.84, reflecting the economic output relative to its population size (Naeku & Irungu, Assessing Labour Productivity for Nyamira County, 2024). The county has experienced an average annual population growth rate of 2.2%, slightly higher than the earlier inter-census growth estimate, which indicates continued demographic expansion (KNBS, 2019). However, despite this economic activity, overall poverty levels remain relatively high, with 34.7% of the population living below the poverty line. Between 2013 and 2022, Nyamira County recorded a steady increase in GVA, with an average growth rate of 3.64 percent (Naeku & Irungu, Assessing Labour Productivity for Nyamira County, 2024). This growth, while positive, falls below the national average of 4.37 percent over the same period. The county's highest GVA growth was recorded in 2018, whereas the lowest occurred in 2014, pointing to fluctuations influenced by both local and national economic dynamics.

Nyamira County Sectoral Performance

Nyamira County's economy is primarily driven by the agriculture sector, which contributes an average of 48.82 percent to the county's Gross Value Added (GVA). This makes agriculture the dominant economic activity in the region. Following agriculture, the services sector accounts for 40.12 percent of the GVA, while the industry sector contributes the least at 11.59 percent (Naeku & Irungu, 2024). Despite its leading role, the performance of the agriculture sector in Nyamira is slightly below the national standard. Between 2013 and 2022, the average agricultural GVA growth rate in the county stood at 12.58 percent, marginally lower than the national average of 12.71 percent (Naeku & Irungu, 2024). This underperformance occurs despite Nyamira's strong agricultural potential, particularly in crop production.

Since 2015, there has been a notable upward trend in both the area under cultivation and total crop output in the county, indicating growing efficiency and land use. However, livestock production remains less prominent compared to crop farming (Naeku & Irungu, 2024). The most commonly kept livestock include beef cattle, meat goats, and dairy cattle, which are typically

raised on a smaller scale. One notable exception is poultry farming, which has emerged as a significant agricultural activity (Nyamira County, 2024). Indigenous chicken are the most commonly reared poultry, and egg production, in particular, has demonstrated the highest economic value, pointing to the potential for further development in this sub-sector.

In contrast to agriculture, the industrial sector in Nyamira, while contributing only 11.59 percent to the GVA, has shown relatively strong growth. The sector recorded an average growth rate of 10.98 percent over the same period, slightly surpassing the national average of 10.58 percent. This indicates that, although still modest in size, the industrial sector in Nyamira is expanding at a pace that outperforms national trends, suggesting untapped potential that could be harnessed with the right policy interventions and investments (Naeku & Irungu, 2024).

The services sector, which accounts for 40.12 percent of the county's GVA, is the second-largest economic contributor. However, its growth rate lags behind the national average, with Nyamira recording a sectoral growth rate of 8.83 percent compared to the national figure of 11.13 percent. Within the services sector, transportation and storage are the most dominant activities, contributing 22.10 percent. These are followed by public administration and defense services at 19.52 percent and education services at 13.75 percent (Naeku & Irungu, 2024). The prominence of these areas reflects the county's infrastructural and administrative frameworks, though it also reveals limited diversification into higher-growth service areas such as finance, information technology, and hospitality.

Overall, while Nyamira County's economy is anchored in agriculture, its slower-than-average growth rate calls for innovation and modernization within the sector. The industry sector shows encouraging signs of expansion, albeit from a small base, and could benefit from targeted development strategies. Meanwhile, the services sector, although substantial, needs diversification and enhancement to match national performance levels and support broader economic development.

Kisii County Economic Performance

Kisii County contributes an average of 2.0 percent to Kenya's GVA, translating to approximately Ksh. 145.1 billion. While this figure underscores the county's modest role in the national economy, a deeper analysis reveals important structural dynamics. The county's GVA per capita stands at Ksh. 114,555.40, which, when considered alongside an average annual population growth rate of 1.6 percent, indicates moderate economic productivity per individual. However, the relatively high poverty incidence of 37.2 percent suggests that economic output is not equitably translating into improved living standards for a significant portion of the population.

Between 2013 and 2022, Kisii County recorded an average GVA growth rate of 3.89 percent. While this reflects consistent economic expansion, it falls below the national average growth rate of 4.37 percent during the same period. This discrepancy points to a slightly underperforming economy relative to national trends. The county's strongest economic performance was observed in 2016, while 2018 marked its weakest year in terms of GVA growth. These fluctuations could be attributed to sector-specific shocks or broader macroeconomic conditions impacting regional productivity.

Kisii County Sectoral Performance

Kisii County's economy is predominantly service-oriented, with the services sector contributing an average of 50.27 percent to the county's Gross Value Added (GVA). This positions it as the leading economic sector in the county. The agriculture sector follows with a significant contribution of 42.14 percent, while the industry sector remains the smallest, accounting for just 7.78 percent of the total GVA. This economic structure indicates a more advanced transition

toward a service-based economy in Kisii, especially when compared to counties like Nyamira, where agriculture still dominates.

Despite being second in overall contribution, the agriculture sector in Kisii has demonstrated remarkable performance in terms of growth. Between 2013 and 2022, the sector recorded an average GVA growth rate of 13.94 percent, which is notably higher than the national average of 12.71 percent. This suggests that Kisii's agricultural sector is expanding at a faster pace than the rest of the country, likely driven by increased productivity and investment. Maize, the county's main food crop, has seen growth both in terms of the area under cultivation and total production over time, reinforcing the sector's central role in the county's food security and rural livelihoods.

Livestock farming, while less developed than crop production, remains an important part of the agricultural landscape. The most commonly reared animals include beef cattle and meat goats. Additionally, dairy and poultry farming play a significant role in the county's economy. Poultry farming, in particular, has shown strong economic promise, with egg production generating the highest total value among all livestock products. Milk and beef also contribute significantly, indicating that with greater support and modernization, the livestock sub-sector could become a more substantial driver of economic growth in Kisii.

The industrial sector, on the other hand, remains relatively small, contributing only 7.78 percent to the county's GVA. Its average growth rate over the same period stands at 9.90 percent, which is below the national average of 10.58 percent. This suggests a slower pace of industrial development in Kisii compared to other parts of the country. The industry sector is primarily driven by manufacturing and construction. However, there has been a gradual decline in the manufacturing sub-sector's share, while construction has been expanding. This shift reflects growing demand for infrastructure and urban development, but also signals a potential weakening in value-added manufacturing, which is crucial for sustainable job creation and economic resilience.

While the services sector is the dominant contributor to the county's economy, its growth has been relatively subdued. With an average growth rate of 9.44 percent, it lags behind the national average of 11.13 percent. This underperformance indicates that despite its size, the services sector in Kisii is not expanding at the desired pace. Within the sector, transport and storage services contribute the largest share at 27.11 percent, followed by education at 15.79 percent and public administration and defense at 14.99 percent. These figures highlight the importance of infrastructure, human capital development, and government services in the local economy. However, the limited presence of high-growth service industries such as financial services, tourism, and information technology suggests untapped potential that, if developed, could significantly enhance the sector's contribution to economic growth.

Economic Sectors and Value Chains in Gusii Region

Targeted Economic Sectors

The Gusii region, in both rural, urban and peri-urban regions presents a plethora of value chains across different sectors. This study focuses on four main economic sectors that bear the potential for application of principles of circularity. They include: the artisan and handicraft industries, the agribusiness and value addition sector, recycling and waste management and the bio-packing and eco-friendly innovation.

Artisan and Handicraft Industries

The region's most notable craft is soapstone carving, centered in Tabaka, Kisii County. This centuries-old tradition has evolved from producing functional tools to being a centerpiece of

tourism and export. Soapstone carvers extract malleable stone—often pink, cream, or grey—handcrafting household items, souvenirs, and ornamental décor for local and international markets. Research shows Tabaka-based artisans and miners form a community-driven industry that supports livelihoods and domestic tourism. The sector’s strength lies in its rich cultural legacy and global reach, yet formalization and improved market access (e.g., through craft cooperatives and online platforms) could further amplify its economic impact.

Agri-Business and Value Addition

Agriculture in the Gusii region remains eclectic and intensive, shaped by high population density and limited land, with maize, coffee, tea, cassava, beans, tomatoes, bananas, and potatoes forming the sector. While crop yields benefit from increased cultivation, major challenges include soil degradation—often due to overuse of inorganic inputs—and aging coffee trees. However, initiatives like National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP), and are reshaping agri-business dynamics by focusing on select value chains (coffee, avocado, banana, dairy, and local vegetables) and sustainable practices, offering frameworks for byproduct and side stream utilization. The NAVCDP program ongoing in both Nyamira and Kisii Counties continues to reshape the agricultural sectors from basic production to profit oriented agricultural activities. Similarly, promoting circular practices in the region can enhance farm productivity and increase incomes, creating new value streams across various agricultural value chains. For example, in Nyamira County, the Norwegian Government, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is supporting product diversification within the banana value chain. This initiative has successfully introduced a new source of income through the production and sale of banana fiber and related products.

Recycling and Waste Management

Kenya’s ambitious nationwide plastic bag ban adopted serves as a backdrop for efforts in Gusii. While national recycling rates remain low (under 50%), pilot projects and social enterprises are gaining traction. Though specific data for Gusii is limited, regional adaptation can follow national examples: TakaTaka Solutions and the Kenya Plastics Pact are leading plastic return initiatives and promoting recyclable packaging. Though specific data for Gusii is limited, regional adaptation can follow national examples: TakaTaka Solutions and the Kenya Plastics Pact are leading plastic return initiatives and promoting recyclable packaging. TakaTaka Solutions, based in Nairobi, provides integrated waste management services, recycling 95% of collected waste. It operates sorting facilities, public recycling stations, and composting plants. The company diverts over 1,300 tons of waste monthly, creates green jobs, empowers communities, and promotes sustainability through innovation, social impact, and environmental education. Local franchise recycling units or collection hub similar to Nairobi’s effort could be replicate such models in Kisii and Nyamira, fostering both environmental gains and employment.

Bio-Packaging and Eco-Friendly Innovations

At the national level, Kenya’s plastics pact commits major manufacturers to convert all products to recyclable materials, with ambitious recycling targets by 2030. Though Gusii-specific studies are lacking, replication of national frameworks in the region could facilitate the rise of rural eco-enterprises: think natural-fiber packaging (e.g., banana fibre, sisal), fruit-waste bioplastics, or small-scale production of paper- and starch-based packaging. These align with Kenya’s increasing shift toward eco-conscious alternatives, propelled by both policy (plastic bans) and consumer demand.

Methodology

Site Overview

Gusii Region

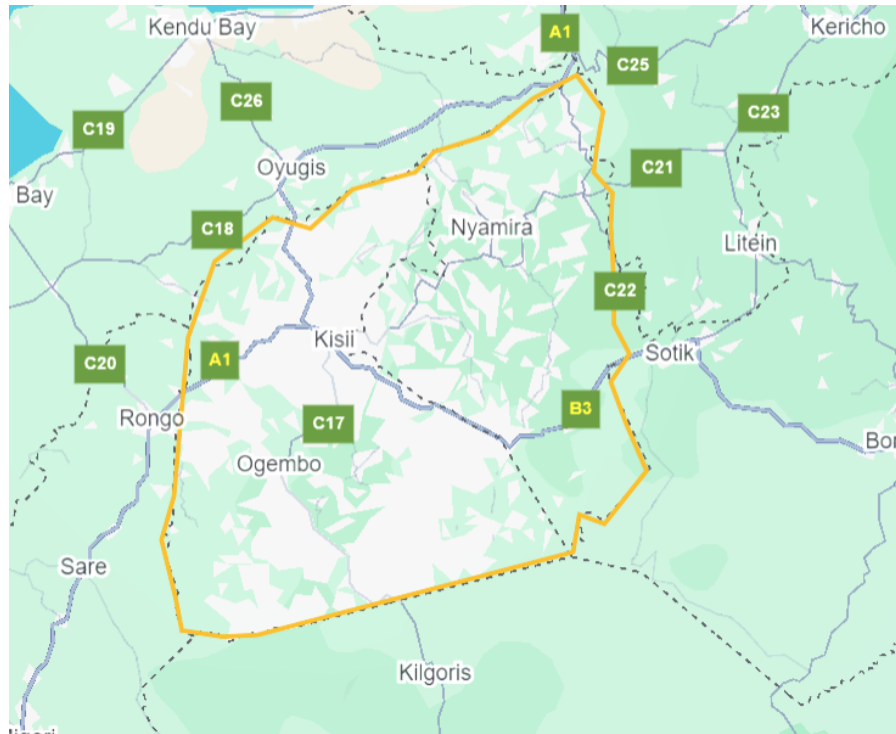


Figure 1 :Map Showing Gusii Region, Western Kenya

The Gusii region, located in southwestern Kenya, comprises Nyamira and Kisii Counties. This region, formerly part of Nyanza Province, is nestled in the western highlands near Lake Victoria and is among the most fertile and densely populated areas in the country. Covering a combined area of approximately 2,400 square kilometers—Nyamira with 912.5 km² and Kisii with 1,317.9 km²—the region lies about 300 kilometers west of Nairobi. Its favorable climate, rich volcanic soils, and high population density contribute to its status as one of Kenya's leading agricultural zones.

Ecologically, the Gusii region falls within the Kenya Highlands agro-ecological zone. The area is characterized by deep, well-drained volcanic soils and receives bimodal rainfall, ranging from 1,500 mm to over 2,200 mm annually. The long rains typically occur between March and June, while the short rains fall between September and November. The terrain is marked by undulating hills and ridges, with elevations ranging between 1,500 and 2,100 meters above sea level. This altitude, combined with the reliable rainfall, supports a wide variety of crops, including tea, bananas, maize, coffee, and horticultural produce, as well as dairy farming.

The region can be further classified into distinct agro-ecological zones based on altitude and rainfall patterns. The highland tea zone, found above 1,800 meters in areas such as Nyansiongo and Manga in Nyamira, and Kenyenyia and Marani in Kisii, is suitable for tea and pyrethrum cultivation. The upper midland zones, between 1,500 and 1,800 meters, are dominated by mixed farming systems, with bananas, maize, coffee, and dairy being common.

Lower midland zones, located between 1,200 and 1,500 meters, experience slightly less reliable rainfall and support subsistence farming and livestock keeping.

Administratively, Nyamira County is divided into five sub-counties: Nyamira North, Nyamira South, Borabu, Manga, and Masaba North. Kisii County, on the other hand, consists of nine sub-counties: Bonchari, South Mugirango, Bobasi, Bomachoge Chache, Bomachoge Borabu, Nyaribari Masaba, Nyaribari Chache, Kitutu Chache North, and Kitutu Chache South. Nyamira borders Kisii County to the west, Kericho County to the east, and Bomet County to the southeast. Kisii is bordered by Homa Bay to the north, Narok to the south, and Migori to the southwest.

The dominant ethnic group in the Gusii region is the Abagusii, known for their strong agricultural traditions and rich cultural heritage. The favorable ecological conditions, combined with a hardworking population, have made the region a significant contributor to Kenya's food security and rural development.

Data Collection

Data Collection Methods

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):

Key Informant Interviews were conducted with strategically selected individuals who possessed deep insights into the value chains under study. These informants included government officers, business leaders, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The purpose of the KIIs was to gather expert perspectives on sectoral dynamics, institutional frameworks, policy influences, and existing support mechanisms. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for both guided inquiry and the exploration of emerging themes based on informants' expertise and experiences. The key informant interviews targeted 120 respondents across the Nyamira and Kisii Counties.

To identify the 120 Key Informant Interviews (KII) required for the value chain scoping and actor mapping in the Gusii region, a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was employed.

Initially, purposive sampling was used to select a diverse group of key stakeholders with direct involvement in various stages of the targeted value chains. These included farmers, aggregators, input suppliers, transporters, processors, traders, extension officers, and local government representatives. The selection was guided by specific criteria such as the actor's level of involvement, knowledge of the value chain, and their role within the local agricultural economy.

Following the initial interviews, snowball sampling was used to expand the respondent pool. Each purposively selected informant was asked to recommend other relevant actors and knowledgeable individuals who played significant roles in the value chain but might not have been initially identified. This approach proved effective in reaching informal actors, small-scale operators, and community-based stakeholders who were otherwise difficult to locate using formal lists or directories.

The combined approach ensured a comprehensive and inclusive mapping of value chain actors across the Gusii region, capturing both formal and informal systems of interaction. Ultimately, 120 respondents were successfully identified and interviewed, providing a rich dataset for value chain analysis.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted first and served as a basis for identifying

individuals with critical insights into value chains across the three target sectors. These insights informed the subsequent Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which were facilitated by Research Assistants under the guidance of the consultant. The FGDs were tailored to reflect the specific value chains present in each location.

In urban and peri-urban centers, such as Nyamira and Kisii towns, Keroka, Keumbu, Kebirigo, and Mwembe, the discussions focused on value chains within the Artisanal and Handicraft Industries, as well as the Recycling and Waste Management sectors. In contrast, FGDs held in rural parts of the Gusii region concentrated on the agribusiness value chain. Across all settings, the discussions emphasized opportunities for integrating circular economy principles and examined the influence of both internal and external environmental factors on the development of the respective value chains.

Each Focus Group Discussion (FGD) typically comprised 10 to 15 participants, the majority of whom were producers. However, other key actors—such as local government extension officers and sector-specific experts—also took part. The discussions were inclusive, actively encouraging the participation of men, women, and youth. FGDs lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted in an open and non-restrictive manner, as the topics were not of a sensitive nature. While guided by structured prompts, participants were encouraged to explore areas of interest in greater depth. Research Assistants facilitated the sessions and took detailed notes to inform subsequent analysis and reporting.



Figure 2: Focus Group Discussion in Nyamaiya Ward, Nyamira County

Workshop

As part of the data collection and validation process, the consultancy convened a one-day stakeholder workshop on 19th June 2025 in Kisii Town. The workshop brought together 12 key actors who had been identified through prior Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) prior completed. The FGDs, held with diverse groups including farmers, traders, processors, and support service providers, played a critical role in surfacing localized insights, mapping preliminary actor networks, and identifying value chain challenges

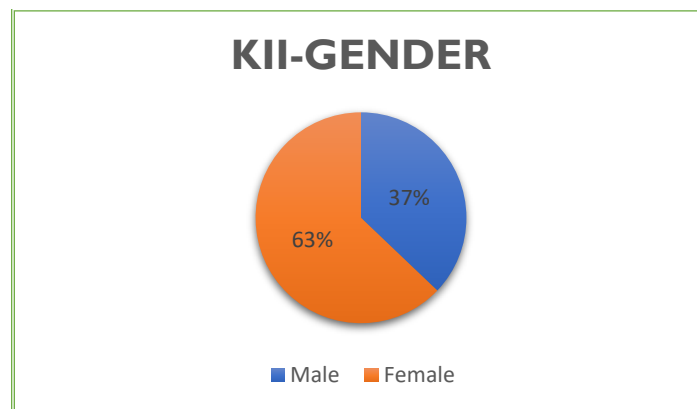
and opportunities from the ground up. These discussions informed the selection of workshop participants, ensuring representation across gender, age, and the dominant value chain roles.

The primary objective of the workshop was to collaboratively validate and build upon findings from the FGDs and KIIs by mapping the five priority value chains; banana, avocado, indigenous vegetables, basketry/weaving, and organic waste. Participants worked to identify key actors, trace input-output flows, examine existing relationships, and highlight both opportunities and systemic bottlenecks. The session also served to fill information gaps and foster a shared understanding of the value chain dynamics critical for inclusive and sustainable economic development in the region.

Findings

Demographics

A total of 132 individuals participated in the key informant interviews, distributed across three age categories: 24–35 years, 35–55 years, and 55 years and above. Of the total respondents, 49 (37%) were male while 83 (63%) were female, indicating a higher female participation rate.

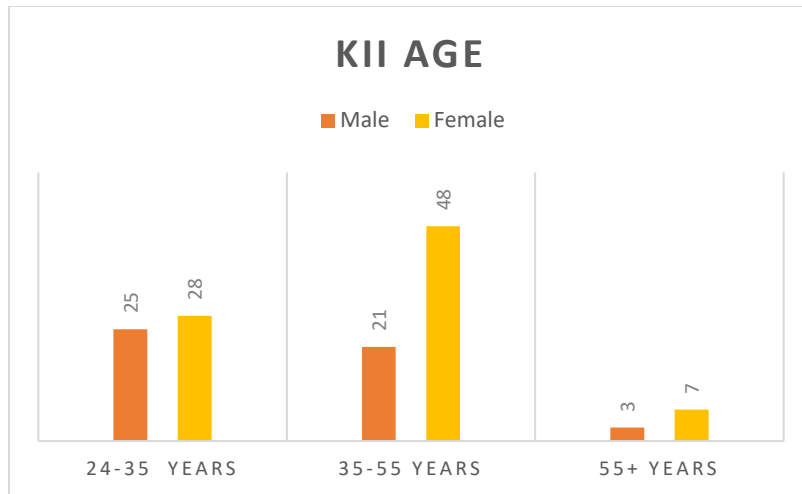


Respondents Age

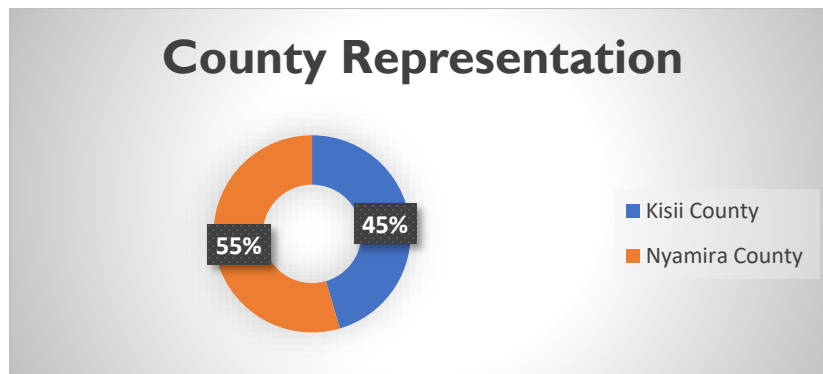
In the **24–35 years** age group, there were 53 participants, comprising 25 males and 28 females. This age category had nearly equal gender representation, with females slightly outnumbering males.

The **35–55 years** age group recorded the highest number of respondents, totaling 69 individuals. Notably, this group showed a significant gender disparity, with 48 females compared to 21 males.

In the **55 years and above** category, the smallest group, only 10 respondents were recorded — 3 males and 7 females.

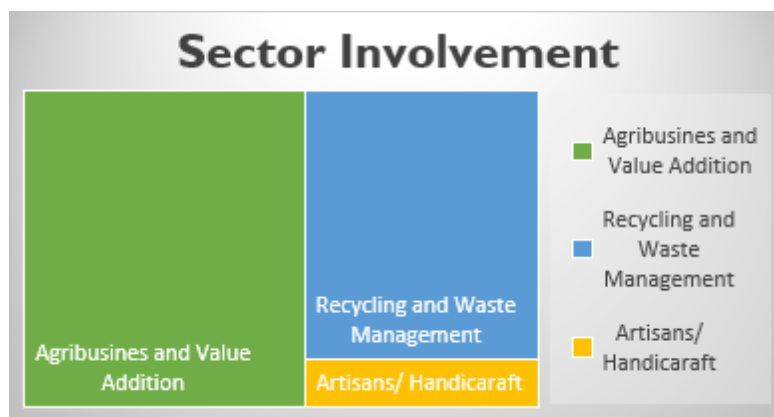


Country Representation



Sector Involvement

Most respondents were engaged in agribusiness and value addition, highlighting it as the dominant livelihood activity. Recycling and waste management followed, indicating a growing interest in circular economy practices. Artisan and handicraft activities were less common, suggesting limited involvement in traditional creative sectors.



Value Chains in Gusii Region

A primary objective of the study is to identify the value chains with potential to generate employment opportunities that may be beneficial to youths and women in the Gusii region. Secondary and primary data collected through the exercise identified a number of high potential value chains across the four sectors that hold considerable potential for economic gain and advantages.

Existing evidence and data collected during the exercise ranks the agribusiness and value addition sector as one of the economic sectors with highest potential in the Gusii region. Both Nyamira and Kisii counties are characterized with agricultural activities. Most of the agricultural activities that take place in Nyamira and Kisii counties are geared towards commercial gain. The table below ranks the value chains in these sectors with the highest involvement of women and youth that provide opportunities for economic growth.

Agribusiness and Value Addition Sector

Level of Youth and Women Involvement							
Value Chain	Input Supply	Production	Processing/Value Addition	Transportation/Distribution	Marketing/Retail	Support services	Waste Reuse/Recycling
Banana	High	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	High
Tea	Low	High	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Dairy	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Avocado	High	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Indigenous Vegetables	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	High	Low
Poultry	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low

Tomato	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	High		
Fish Farming	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Low
Goat Farming	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low

Based on the analysis of youth and women involvement across different agricultural value chains, three stand out as offering the most diverse and inclusive opportunities: banana, indigenous vegetables, and avocado. These value chains show consistently high levels of engagement by women and youth across multiple stages. The banana value chain emerges as the strongest, with high levels of involvement in nearly every stage. The high rates of engagements can be attributed to women. Women are actively engaged in input supply, production, marketing, and waste recycling. Young women, in particular, are drawn to banana farming because it allows innovation in nursery propagation and the sale of planting materials, which do not require land ownership. Women tend to participate in home-based activities such as small-scale processing and marketing, which align with their time and mobility constraints. Production and processing of the banana fiber has also attracted youth into the value chain. For instance, youths are more involved in extraction of banana fiber, making of fiber mats and the marketing of such products.

Indigenous vegetables also offer significant prospects, particularly in production, processing, marketing, and support services. Adult women are more engaged in the production and marketing stages of local vegetables. Over 80% of the market actors engaged in the value chain are women above 35 years. On the other hand, female youth are more engaged in processing (such as drying and packaging) and digital marketing, and are increasingly active in support services like mobile extension or delivery. A small number of male youths participate in the transportation stages of the value chains as it is reflected across the agribusiness and value addition sector.

The avocado value chain shows high involvement in input supply, processing, and marketing. Youth (both male and female) are drawn to the opportunity to engage in nursery operations and logistics, especially for export markets. Women are more involved in small-scale oil processing or producing avocado-based products like cosmetics, where cooperative models provide a strong support system. Kisii Agricultural and Training Centre (ATC) works in collaboration with several women groups in the county to produce avocado oil-based cosmetics. However, such efforts often face marketization challenges, often impeded by the strict product certification and requirement. Despite moderate involvement in production, the value chain's growing commercial potential makes it attractive for both groups if they are supported through training and access to markets. It is also imperative to that small groups are supported with product development for competitive product quality.

Artisanal and Handicraft Industries

Level of Youth and Women Involvement							
Value Chain	Input Supply	Production	Processing/Value Addition	Transportation/Distribution	Marketing/Retail	Support services	Waste Reuse/Recycling
Soapstone Carving	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Basketry and Woven Products	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Beadwork and Jewelry Making	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Decorative Art and Painting	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium

Soapstone carving, basketry and woven products, beadwork and jewelry making, and decorative art and painting, exhibit consistently high levels of youth and women involvement across nearly all stages of the value chain. These value chains present significant opportunities for inclusive economic empowerment due to their accessibility, cultural relevance, and potential for creative expression. In the case of soapstone carving, youth and women are heavily involved in sourcing raw materials, shaping, and carving, and often participate in distribution through local markets or tourist-oriented supply chains. However, waste reuse and recycling in this sector is low, likely due to limited awareness or capacity to repurpose stone dust or fragments into new products. Basketry and woven products also show high engagement across early and mid-stages, and moderate participation in marketing, support services, and recycling. The use of locally available, eco-friendly raw materials (such as sisal and banana fiber) makes this sector highly accessible. Women are particularly active due to cultural knowledge, craftsmanship traditions, and the compatibility of weaving with domestic responsibilities.

Recycling Industry and Waste Management

Value Chain	Level of Youth and Women Involvement						
	Waste Generation	Waste Collection	Transportation	Processing	Distribution	Utilization	Waste Recycling
Organic Waste	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High	High	High
Textile and Clothing Waste	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Plastic Waste	High	High	High	Medium	High	High	High
Scrap Metal	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Tyre and Rubber Waste	High	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium

The table above shows the level of youth and women involvement across various stages of the recycling and waste management value chains, specifically in organic waste, textile and clothing waste, plastic waste, scrap metal, and tire and rubber waste. Analysis reveals consistently high involvement in production, processing/value addition, and input supply across most chains, indicating that women and youth play a substantial role in labor-intensive and entry-level activities. Plastic waste and scrap metal record high participation in these three early stages, due to low entry barriers and accessible collection methods in informal settlements and urban centers.

Organic waste stands out for high engagement in support services and marketing, reflecting opportunities in composting, urban farming, and community-based distribution. This sector receives attention and support with the rising concerns over the effects of inorganic farm inputs towards environmental sustainability. For instance, in Western Kenya, the Circular Economy for Household Organic Waste targets over 61% of the total waste produced in households for the production of manure. The project under practical action as partnered with the largest organic fertilizer producing firm in the country to convert waste into wealth. At the center of these engagement are the youth, a trend that is clearly visible in the Gusii region. Conversely, waste reuse/recycling shows inconsistent participation: textile waste has high engagement in reuse, potentially through tailoring or upcycling, while plastic and scrap metal show low levels, possibly due to health hazards and the need for technical processing. Transportation/distribution across all chains sees moderate involvement, possibly hindered by access to logistics and infrastructure. Overall, youth engagements are strongest where activities are manual, localized,

and less capital-intensive. The adoption of more innovative solutions is bound to attract the youth as they create new and appealing ways for the youth to engage in the value chain.

Value Chain Actor Mapping

The study intended to identify specific value chain actors in Gusii region and the different roles and influence that they bear in different positions of the value chain. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), value chain actor mapping critical to understanding the value chain, pinpoint the most influential actors, analyze the opportunities and bottlenecks that exist in a value chain and to design more sustainable practices for the growth and advancement of the value chain.

Value chains are typically complex. Thus, there is no single approach that can be used to map out the existing actors and the different functions and influence that they bear. For the purpose of this exercise, value chain actors are categorized into three groups: core actors, support actors, regulatory and policy actors.

Value chain core actors, also described as the direct chain actors include individuals and other entities that are directly engaged in main activities of the value chain. For instance, suppliers, producers, traders and aggregators, processors, wholesalers, retailers and consumers. The supporting actors are also described as enabling actors or institutions. They provide support that is crucial towards executing core functions in the value chain. Enabling actors include: financial institutions, extension service providers, training and research institutions to logistics and transport service providers. Value chains also receive regulatory and policy support from other actors. They include, county governments, national government, standardization boards and similar agencies. It is critical to point out that, value chain actors may serve more than one category of roles and thus different levels of function and influence on the value chain. This section maps out value chain actors from the selected value chains.

Banana Value Chain Actor Mapping

Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence
Core	Agro-dealers, seed suppliers	Input Supply	Supply banana seedlings, fertilizers, tools, pesticides	Linked to farmers.	High
	Smallholder farmers	Production	Plant, manage and harvest banana crops	Linked to all stakeholders	High
	Local traders, brokers,	Aggregation / Collection	Collect bananas from	Influence all stakeholders	Medium

Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence	
	farmer groups		farms, bulk them for market			
	Motorcycle (boda boda), pickup operators	Transport	Move bananas to markets or processors		Medium	
	Small-scale processors, Common Interest Groups (CIGs) groups, community-based organizations (CBOs), Farmer Producers Organizations,		Banana flour, chips, puree, or animal feed			
	Market vendors, supermarkets, hawkers	Wholesale & Retail	Sell bananas to consumers			
	Local consumers, schools, hotels	Market	Final users of the bananas or banana products			
Supporting / Enabling Institutions	SACCOs (e.g., Nyamira Farmers SACCO), banks	Financial			Medium	
	County Agriculture Officers, NGOs (e.g.,	Extension Services			High	

Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence	
	World Vision)					
	Learning institutions (Kisii University, Gusii Institute	Research & Training				
	Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI)	Research & Training			Medium	
	Banana Farmers Cooperatives, Producer Organizations, Common Interest Groups.	Farmer Organizations			High	
	Boda boda associations, Taxi and transport service providers- Nyamira and Kisii Town	Transport & Logistics			Medium	
	Dept of Agriculture Nyamira County, State Dept of Agriculture- National Government, KEPHIS, KEBS.	Government & Regulation			High	

Avocado Value Chain Actors Mapping

Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence
Core	Agro-dealers, certified nurseries	Input Supply	Supply grafted avocado seedlings, tools, manure, and agrochemicals	Linked to farmers and cooperatives	High
	Smallholder farmers	Production	Plant, manage, and harvest avocado fruits	Linked to all stakeholders	High
	Local traders, brokers, farmer cooperatives	Aggregation/Collection	Collect avocados from farms, sort and grade for market	Influence producers and connect with buyers	High
	Boda boda riders, pickup owners	Transport	Move avocados to aggregation centers, markets, or processors	Hired by traders, farmers	Medium
	Small-scale processors, CIGs, FPOs, women/CBO groups	Processing	Produce avocado oil, cosmetics, dried fruit, animal feed	Linked to cooperatives, NGOs, markets	Medium
	Market vendors, supermarkets, exporters	Wholesale & Retail	Sell fresh or processed avocado products	Linked to traders, cooperatives	High
	Households, schools, hotels, cosmetic firms	Market	End consumers of fresh and value-added avocado products	Demand drives supply	Medium

Local Vegetables Value Chain Actor Mapping

Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence
Core	Agro-dealers, local seed suppliers	Input Supply	Supply vegetable seeds (e.g., amaranth, spider plant), fertilizers, tools	Linked to smallholder farmers and cooperatives	High
	Smallholder farmers	Production	Plant, manage, and harvest local vegetables	Linked to all stakeholders	High
	Village aggregators, brokers, market women groups	Aggregation/Collection	Bulk vegetables for local markets and nearby towns	Influence market access and pricing	High
	Boda boda riders, handcart operators	Transport	Transport vegetables to market centers or aggregation points	Hired by traders and farmers	Medium
	Women CBOs, youth groups, farmer organizations	Processing	Drying, packaging, and value addition of leafy vegetables	Work with NGOs and cooperatives	Medium
	Retail vendors, supermarkets, open market traders	Wholesale & Retail	Sell fresh and processed vegetables	Interface with consumers and brokers	High
	Local households, institutions (schools, hospitals)	Market	Ultimate consumers of local vegetables	Drive demand	Medium

	Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence
Supporting Actors	Financial	SACCOs, table banking groups, MFIs	All stages	Provide small loans for seeds, transport, and tools	Serve farmers, traders, processors	Medium
	Extension Service	County Agriculture Officers, NGOs (e.g., SNV, World Vision)	Production & Post-harvest	Train on organic production, Post-harvest handling	Support farmers and processors	High
	Research & Training	KALRO, Kisii University, Gusii Institute	Production	Develop improved local vegetable varieties, pest control methods	Work with extension agents and farmers	Medium
	Farmer Organizations	Vegetable growers' associations, women/youth groups	All stages	Coordinate production and marketing	Support collective action	Medium–High
	Transport & Logistics	Local boda boda associations	Transport	Facilitate first-mile market access	Linked to farmers and traders	Medium
	Government & Regulation	Nyamira Dept. of Agriculture, Public Health Dept.	All stages	Ensure quality, hygiene, and safety standards	Oversee compliance and provide support	High

Handicraft Value Chain Actor Mapping

Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence
Core	Agro-dealers, fibre and dye suppliers	Input Supply	Provide raw materials like sisal, papyrus, reeds, natural dyes, weaving tools	Linked to artisans and producer groups	High
	Women artisans, youth weavers, individual producers	Production	Craft baskets, mats, and decorative items using traditional techniques	Linked to input suppliers, cooperatives, and markets	High
	Local traders, cooperatives, cultural enterprises	Aggregation/Collection	Collect and bulk craft items for sale to urban or export markets	Link producers to larger markets	High
	Boda boda riders, small transporters	Transport	Move raw materials and finished baskets to and from markets	Hired by producers and traders	Medium
	Small-scale processors, CBOs, CIGs	Processing/Finishing	Clean, dye, and finish basketry products for sale	Collaborate with producers and marketers	Medium
	Craft vendors, tourist shops, supermarkets	Wholesale & Retail	Sell handmade products to local, tourist, and urban markets	Interface with consumers and traders	High
	Households, tourists, exporters	Market	Final buyers of baskets and woven goods	Drive demand for traditional crafts	Medium

Supporting Actors

Supporting Actors	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence
Financial	SACCOs, microfinance institutions, table banking groups	All stages	Provide credit for materials, transport, and expansion	Support women groups and youth artisans	Medium
Extension Services	County Culture and Trade Offices, NGOs (e.g., SNV, World Vision)	Production & Marketing	Capacity building on design, marketing, and product quality	Train and mentor artisans	High
Research & Training	Kisii University, Gusii Institute of Technology	Production & Design	Train artisans in improved weaving, product innovation	Partner with local producers and NGOs	Medium
Technology & Innovation	KIRDI, Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI)	Processing	Support in product finishing, design protection	Link with producer groups and entrepreneurs	Medium
Artisan/Producer Organizations	Women's groups, weaving cooperatives, youth CIGs	All stages	Coordinate production, quality control, and joint marketing	Unite and empower producers	High
	Local transport associations, boda boda unions	Transport	Enable access to distant markets	Support mobility of goods	Medium
	Dept. of Trade and Culture, County	All stages	Promote cultural heritage, standardize	Provide policy and technical support	High

		Government, KEBS		product quality		
Actor Type	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence	
Core Actors	Household farms, markets, institutions	Waste Generation	Generate organic waste (e.g., food scraps, peels)	Primary source of raw material	High	
	Youth groups, community waste collectors	Collection	Collect and sort organic waste	Linked to households, composters, transporters	High	
	Boda boda riders, small transporters	Transport	Move organic waste to composting/biogas sites	Hired by collectors or processors	Medium	
	Small-scale composters, CBOs, youth/farmer groups	Processing	Convert waste into compost, fertilizer, or biogas	Connect with farmers, markets, and regulators	High	
	Agro-dealers, input vendors, local traders	Distribution	Sell compost, bio-fertilizer, or energy products	Interface between producers and users	Medium	
	Farmers, gardeners, institutions (e.g., schools)	Utilization	Use compost or biogas in agriculture or cooking	Drive demand for recycled products	High	
Supporting/Enabling Actors	Specific Actor	Stage	Role	Relationship	Influence	
	SACCOs, microfinance institutions, green/environmental funds	All stages	Provide loans for compost units,	Support youth and CBOs	Medium	

			transport, and tools		
	County Environment & Agriculture Officers, NGOs (e.g., Practical Action)	Training & Awareness	Train on waste sorting, composting, and biogas technology	Work with community, youth, and institutions	High
	Kisii University, KALRO, Gusii Institute of Technology	Processing	Research compost quality, train in organic waste technologies	Collaborate with processors and regulators	Medium
	KIRDI, private green startups	Processing	Provide biogas units, composting tech, waste recycling tools	Innovate with local processors and artisans	Medium
	Youth eco-groups, recycling CBOs, green entrepreneur networks	Collection to Market	Organize waste collection, processing, and marketing	Connect actors within the circular economy	High
	NEMA, County Governments, Ministry of Environment	All stages	Regulate waste management, enforce standards, issue permits	Provide legal framework and technical support	High

Organic Waste Value Chain Mapping

Value Chain Actor Roles

Banana

Actor	Value Chain Stage	Functions
Igwe Youth Group	Production	Field production of bananas
	Processing	Sorting and selection of bananas for local market.
	Value addition	Extraction of banana fiber from banana pseudo stems.
Monyaki Adventist shg	Production	Maintenance and management of banana plantation fields
	Value addition	Banana ripening. Banana peels drying and crushing. Banana flour making.
Motembe joryas women group	Production	Field production of banana.
	Value addition	Banana fiber extraction. Making of basketry from banana fiber
Nyakegogi booster widows and widowers		
Wefhason Cooperative	Production	Harvesting of banana fruits from members' farms.
	Transportation	Aggregation and storage of banana.
	Processing	Sorting and selection of bananas for different destination markets.
	Value Addition	Banana flour making. Banana fiber extraction. Banana crisps making. Banana basketry.
	Marketing	Online and mortal and store marketing of banana, banana fiber and other products from the crop.
Nyakembo women group	Production	Production of banana fruits.
	Processing	Extraction of banana fiber from banana pseudo stems. Extraction of banana sap for foliar fertilizer and fertilizer making.
Nelson Amenity Farm	Input supply.	Supply of propagation materials to farmers in Nyamira and Kisii counties.
	Production	Field production of banana and banana pseudo-stems.
Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) – Kisii	Research and Development	Development and promotion of improved banana varieties

Actor	Value Chain Stage	Functions
	Capacity Building and Extension Services	Training farmers, extension officers, and agribusinesses on good agricultural practices. Dissemination of new knowledge and technologies on banana production.
	Input supply	Production and certification of clean banana planting materials through tissue culture or macro-propagation technique
	Value Chain linkages and partnerships.	Collaborates with counties, NGOs, and private sector actors in scaling innovations and supporting agribusiness incubation in the Gusii region.
Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) – Kisii	Product Development and Processing	Training and support on banana value-added products such as banana flour, crisps, puree, wine, and baked goods. Testing and development of banana processing technologies to meet local needs.
	Value Addition	Local fabrication or adaptation of banana processing equipment for peeling, slicing, drying, or milling
	Value Chain Linkages and Partnerships	Business planning and technical support for processors to access markets and financial services.
	Quality assurance and other supporting services.	Assisting processors in meeting regulatory standards (KEBS, public health) through food safety training and quality monitoring
Dept of Agriculture-Nyamira and Kisii Counties	Policy Implementation and Coordination	Formulate and implement county-level agricultural policies in line with national goals. Coordinate banana-related programs with national institutions (e.g., KALRO, KEPHIS), NGOs, and development partners. Promote banana as a strategic value chain under the County Integrated Development Plans
	Extension Services and Farmer Support	Disseminate agronomic practices and pest/disease management advice to banana farmers. Train farmers on post-harvest handling, value addition, and climate-smart farming.

Actor	Value Chain Stage	Functions
		Support formation and capacity building of farmer groups, cooperatives, and youth/women agribusinesses.
	Input-supply	Facilitate access to quality planting materials through linkages with certified nurseries and KALRO. Support input subsidy programs.
	Processing and value addition.	The County Aggregation and Industrial Parks (CAIPs) providing aggregation and processing facilities and value addition technologies.
	Market Access and Agribusiness Promotion	Facilitate market linkage programs, local and trade fairs. Promote aggregation centers or rural collection hubs to improve access to wholesale markets. Support farmers and processors in meeting market standards through training and certification.
Kisii Smart Community	Transportation and Distribution	Aggregation of bananas from farmers and transporting them to collection centers.
	Value chain actors training and capacity building.	Offers training to farmers on orchard management and other good agricultural practices.
	Market Access	Collectively bargaining for sale of bananas locally and internationally.
		Facilitate pricing of bananas: sales per weight.

Local Vegetables

Actor	Value Chain Stage	Functions
Bokerera Women Group	Production	Field cultivation of indigenous vegetables (e.g., nightshade, amaranth, spider plant). Use of traditional and organic farming methods.
	Processing	Cleaning, trimming, blanching and packaging of fresh vegetables for urban markets.
	Value Addition	Solar drying of vegetables for preservation and sale during off-seasons. Fermentation and pickling of traditional vegetables.
Tumainis Women Group	Production	Maintenance and weeding of vegetable plots. Use of compost manure and integrated pest management.

	Marketing	Open-air market selling and informal retail of leafy vegetables in local centres.
	Transportation	Use of motorcycles and baskets for short-distance delivery to aggregation centres and retail stalls.
Nyamira Rural Women Cooperative Society	Production	Bulk cultivation of local vegetables on members' farms.
	Aggregation & Storage	Collection of produce from members and cold storage at cooperative facility.
	Processing	Sorting and bundling of vegetables for different buyers (hotels, markets, traders).
	Value Addition	Production of dried vegetable packs (e.g., dried managu).
	Marketing	Direct sales to retailers and institutional buyers (schools, hospitals, hotels). Participation in trade fairs.
Nyanderama Youth Group	Production	Small-scale organic vegetable farming, often integrated with banana or maize plots.
	Value Addition	Production of herbal-infused vegetable sauces and pastes.
	Waste Management	Composting of trimmings and damaged vegetables into organic manure.
Nyamira Mashambani Stores and Agrovet	Input Supply	Supply of certified vegetable seeds (indigenous and exotic) to farmers. Training on seed selection and planting practices.
	Production	Demonstration farm showcasing best practices in vegetable farming.
KALRO – Kisii	Research & Development	Development of improved indigenous vegetable varieties. Research on soil health, irrigation methods and pest management.
	Capacity Building	Training farmers and extension officers on proper vegetable husbandry practices.
	Input Supply	Distribution of clean and high-quality vegetable seeds and seedlings.
	Partnerships	Collaboration with counties and NGOs to scale up vegetable production for nutrition and income generation.
KIRDI – Kisii	Processing Technology	Development of low-cost vegetable drying and packaging technologies. Training of women and youth in value addition techniques.
	Value Addition	Fabrication of solar dryers and slicing machines for vegetable processors.
	Support Services	Food safety training for vegetable product certification. Guidance on packaging and branding.

Department of Agriculture – Kisii & Nyamira Counties	Policy & Coordination	Identification of local vegetables as priority crops in CIDPs and food security strategies.
	Extension Services	Deployment of agricultural officers to support smallholders in vegetable production and marketing.
	Input Support	Provision of subsidized seeds, irrigation kits and organic inputs to vegetable farmers.
	Infrastructure Support	Support for small-scale irrigation projects and aggregation centers for perishable vegetables.
	Market Development	Facilitation of linkages between farmer groups and local institutional markets. Promotion of kitchen gardens and home nutrition gardens.

Avocado

Actor	Stage in Value Chain	Function
Borabu Avocado Farmers' Cooperative Society	Input supply	Supply of avocado seedling to member farmers.
	Production.	Individual members grow and harvest avocado.
	Capacity building.	Offering extension knowledge to member farmers.
	Aggregation and processing.	Members collect avocados and sort them according to market needs.
	Transportation and marketing.	Engage in transport logistics to supply avocado to export markets.
Riamisiani Self Help Group	Production	Growing of avocado.
	Marketing	Sale and resale of avocado locally.
Kamama Youth Group	Production	Growing of avocado.

	Marketing	Sale and resale of avocado in the local market.
	Manure making	Utilization of avocado, leaves and seedling to prepare compost manure.
National and Local Governments (Nyamira and Kisii County)	Agricultural Training and Extension Providers	<p>Train on production, pest management, and post-harvest handling</p> <p>Promote improved varieties and sustainable practices</p> <p>Provide demonstration plots and extension support</p>
	Policy and regulatory services	Regulate the trade and transportation of avocado within the Gusii region.
County Aggregation and Industrial Parks (CAIPs)	Aggregation and storage.	<p>Providing avocado aggregation services that reduce post-harvest losses.</p> <p>Ideal conditions for storage of avocado.</p>
Agriculture Training and Research Center.	Capacity Building and Farmer Training	Educating farmers on avocado field management.
	Input supply	Supply of clean and certified propagation material.
	Extension services	<p>Regular field visit and conducting farmer field schools to promote production.</p> <p>Promotion of climate smart agriculture.</p>

	Value addition	Offers training on basic value addition methods such as avocado oil extraction, drying, and packaging.
Abaminto Boda Boda Youth Group	Transport and distribution.	
Daraja mbili <i>mama mboga</i> women group.	Marketing and distribution	Sales and distribution of avocado locally.
Nyamira Township Women Group	Marketing and distribution	Local marketing and distribution of avocado.

Organic Waste

Actor	Stage in Value Chain	Function
Hope and Development CBO	Waste Collection And processing	Collection of wastes, sorting and grading of waste, cleaning of waste.
	Training and awareness services	Training individuals on management of waste and conversion of organic waste. Climate justice/ advocacy, innovation development. Gender mainstreaming in community-based projects.
Nyakobi super women group	Waste Collection	Collects household and market organic waste for reuse.
	Composting & Manure Making	Converts organic waste (food scraps, market waste) into organic manure.
	Training & Demonstration	Hosts demonstration sites for organic composting methods.
Ritibo Self-Help Group	Waste Sorting	Segregates biodegradable waste from non-organic material.
	Value Addition	Produces compost and organic pest repellents from kitchen and farm waste.
	Local Marketing	Sells compost manure to smallholder farmers and households.
Nyamatuta Church Self Help Group	Transport and Distribution	Provides motorbike transport services for collected organic

		waste to composting sites and for distributing compost to farms.
National and County Governments (Kisii & Nyamira)	Policy and Regulatory Framework	Formulates policies and provides guidelines on waste management and reuse.
	Technical Support & Training	Trains youth and women groups on waste reuse, composting techniques, and environmental health.
	Infrastructure Support	Facilitates construction of composting sites and local reuse infrastructure.
County Aggregation and Industrial Parks (CAIPs)	Waste Aggregation	Offers centralized collection and processing of organic waste from markets, institutions, and urban centers.
	Processing and Storage	Supports production of large-scale organic compost and manages temporary waste storage.
Agriculture Training and Research Center	Capacity Building and Research	Provides research-based training on composting processes, soil health, and bio-fertilizer usage.
	Promotion of Climate-Smart Practices	Promotes adoption of compost as a climate-resilient alternative to synthetic fertilizers.
Nyakimiya Self Help Group.	Local Distribution & Retail	Distributes compost products through local markets and community-based retailers.
	Awareness and Marketing	Sensitizes local market vendors and buyers on the benefits of compost and organic farming.
	Waste Collection	Collects vegetable waste from markets for composting purposes.

Handicraft Value Chain

Actor	Stage in Value Chain	Function
Rigena Women Weavers Group	Input Supply	Sourcing of raw materials such as sisal, banana fiber, and dyes.
	Production	Hand weaving of baskets, mats, and other artisanal products.
Geteni Youth Crafts Collective	Production	Engaged in carving, weaving, and assembling of handicraft products.

	Value Addition	Decorating and enhancing items with cultural patterns and finishes.
Nyaboke Basketry CBO	Aggregation and Processing	Collects individual crafts for sorting, quality control, and packaging.
	Marketing	Participates in local markets and trade fairs to sell products.
Egetonto Cultural Artisans	Design & Innovation	Introduces modern and aesthetic designs into traditional crafts.
	Training & Capacity Building	Trains youth and women on craft production techniques and entrepreneurship.
Bogichora Handcraft Makers	Distribution	Supplies handicrafts to retail shops, cultural centers, and tourist outlets.
	Online Marketing	Markets and sells handicrafts through social media and e-commerce platforms.
Bokeira Women Artists	Local Retail	Operates small stalls in local markets selling handmade items.
	Waste Reuse	Reuses offcuts and materials to make eco-friendly jewelry and home decor.
Nyamira County Government	Policy and Support Services	Provides grants, facilitates artisan registration, and supports exhibitions.
	Skills Development	Supports vocational training programs for young artisans.
Kisii Creative Network	Promotion & Branding	Promotes the Gusii region's handicraft heritage through branding and cultural events.

Reasons for Value Chain Selection (Opportunities and Challenges)

Across Kisii and Nyamira counties, several value chains present significant opportunities for economic growth, sustainable development, and social inclusion. The banana and avocado sectors benefit from expanding acreage, rising demand, and increasing support from government and development programs, with ongoing efforts in value addition and circular practices enhancing their potential. Local vegetables offer quick returns due to short production

cycles and low capital requirements, while also empowering women through active participation. Traditional crafts such as basketry and weaving are gaining renewed interest, driven by cultural heritage, global demand for eco-friendly products, and support from empowerment funds and artisan networks. Meanwhile, the organic waste sector offers untapped potential through composting, biogas generation, and climate-smart practices, aligning well with green economy strategies. Collectively, these value chains provide entry points for improving livelihoods, and promoting environmentally responsible economic activities among youth and women in the region.

Value Chain	Opportunities	Challenges
Banana Value Chain	<p>Considerable acreage of banana grown and produced in the Gusii region.</p> <p>Existing support for the value chain through projects like NARIGP and NAVCDP.</p> <p>Ongoing adoption of principles of circularity in the value chain.</p> <p>Growing demand for banana products.</p> <p>Value addition initiatives to reduce wastage.</p> <p>Formal organization of farmers into cooperatives and other groups.</p>	<p>Poor regulatory and policies in the free markets.</p> <p>Unstable pricing, with interference from brokers.</p> <p>Climate change and erratic weather patterns undermining production.</p> <p>High rate of post-harvest losses.</p> <p>Limited access to land and limited land ownership among women that are highly involved in the value chain.</p>
Avocado Value Chain	<p>Growing demand especially in the foreign market.</p> <p>Value addition hence reduction in post-harvest losses.</p> <p>Adoption of new avocado varieties in the region that are demanded in the export market.</p> <p>Existence of nurseries supplying high quality seedlings for avocado growers.</p> <p>Industrial parks in both counties to facilitate aggregation, storage and processing of avocado produce.</p> <p>Adoption of principles of circularity with the use of organic manure.</p>	<p>Poor quality planting materials.</p> <p>Extreme weather patterns increasing vulnerability to pests and diseases.</p> <p>Market access barriers as farmers do not meet market specific standards.</p> <p>Post harvest losses during storage, transportation and processing.</p> <p>Dominance of local varieties that are not recognized in export market.</p> <p>Limited research in avocado growing.</p>
Local Vegetables	<p>Rising demand for fresh and dried indigenous leafy vegetables.</p>	<p>Seasonality affecting demand and supply due to overreliance on rainfed agricultural systems.</p>

Value Chain	Opportunities	Challenges
	<p>Short production cycle thus high productivity.</p> <p>Women dominated value chain thus gender inclusive.</p> <p>Current support from National and County government initiatives like NAVCDP and NARIGP, as well as NGOs like ISF.</p> <p>Low capital requirements.</p>	<p>Poor post-harvest handling during packaging and transportation.</p> <p>Farmers face low prices due to overreliance on middlemen and weak collective marketing systems.</p> <p>Scarcity of certified seeds for indigenous varieties, leading to inconsistent quality and yield.</p> <p>Women tend to lack ownership or control over land despite being primary cultivators.</p> <p>Absence of quality standards leads to market rejection by institutions or higher-end retailers.</p> <p>Export market limits demand to only dried and packaged vegetables.</p>
Basketry and Weaving Value Chain	<p>Rich cultural heritage in Gusii region, promoting appreciation for products in the value chain.</p> <p>Availability of raw material, as well as the application of principles of circularity with the use of banana fiber.</p> <p>Increasing global demand for handmade, eco-friendly, and fair-trade crafts, including decorative and functional baskets.</p> <p>Basketry is traditionally women-led, offering opportunities for gender-inclusive livelihoods.</p> <p>Potential for product diversification</p> <p>Existing support from youth and women empowerment programs, artisan associations, and devolution funds (Uwezo, Youth Fund, NGAAF).</p> <p>Potential inclusion in county cottage industry and creative economy policies.</p>	<p>Most artisans rely on local markets, facing low and seasonal demand.</p> <p>Weak penetration into urban or export markets due to lack of branding and certification.</p> <p>Most weavers are informally trained, leading to limited product diversity.</p> <p>Lack of exposure to modern designs, color trends, and consumer preferences.</p> <p>Few products have labels, barcodes, packaging, or eco-certification.</p> <p>Artisans lack skills in e-commerce, storytelling, and social media marketing.</p>
Organic Waste Value Chain	<p>High volumes of agricultural waste (banana stems, avocado peels, vegetable</p>	<p>Most households and farmers lack awareness on waste segregation, composting techniques, or benefits of organic fertilizer.</p>

Value Chain	Opportunities	Challenges
	<p>leftovers), market waste, and household organic refuse. Potential to convert organic waste into high-quality compost and bio-fertilizer, reducing reliance on synthetic inputs.</p> <p>Organic waste from households, farms, and institutions can be used for biogas generation, supporting clean cooking energy and electricity for rural areas. Supports low-carbon development, waste reduction, and climate-smart agriculture.</p> <p>Aligns with county green economy strategies and SDGs.</p> <p>Compost can be sold to banana, avocado, and vegetable farmers.</p> <p>Waste from markets and schools can be turned into energy or soil enhancers, closing local loops.</p>	<p>Inadequate waste sorting at source and lack of organized collection systems.</p> <p>Dumping of mixed waste leads to contamination and lost value.</p> <p>Absence of clear county regulations or incentives for waste recovery enterprises.</p> <p>No subsidies or policy frameworks to promote green waste businesses.</p>

Market Access

The majority of respondents reported accessing markets primarily at the local level, with 86% operating within their county. Regional market engagement across the wider Gusii area was also significant at 61%, while national reach stood at 48%. Only a small fraction (9%) reported selling to international markets, often limited to niche products such as banana fiber crafts, indicating a heavy reliance on local and regional trade.

In terms of market access methods, most participants sold their products directly to consumers (77%), while 59% utilized online platforms. However, online market expansion remains constrained by limited digital literacy and poor infrastructure. A smaller proportion (23%) relied on brokers to reach their markets.

Several challenges hinder effective market access. Poor infrastructure, especially in rural areas, was frequently cited, with 40% highlighting inadequate road networks as a major obstacle. Financial barriers were also prominent, including high taxes, escalating transport costs, and expensive inputs such as animal feed and packaging materials. Additionally, market information gaps are a concern, with many respondents reporting exploitation by brokers and a general lack of pricing transparency.

Circular Economy Practices

Over half of the respondents indicated that they reuse waste, with common practices including the use of banana peels for animal feed and poultry waste for compost. However, only a third reported formally engaging in structured circular economy methods, suggesting limited adoption of more advanced waste reuse practices.

Despite the abundance of organic waste such as banana stems and coffee husks, these resources remain largely untapped for higher-value innovations like biogas production and bioplastics. There is notable interest in emerging circular solutions, with biogas, Black Soldier Fly (BSF) farming, and biodegradable packaging identified as the most in-demand innovations. Nonetheless, widespread adoption is hindered by barriers such as lack of appropriate machinery, insufficient funding, and limited technical expertise.

Challenges for Youth and Women

Young people and women encounter numerous obstacles to entry and success within value chains. Financial limitations pose a significant obstacle, as the majority of respondents identified insufficient seed funding as a primary constraint. The challenges are compounded by cultural norms—predominantly male land ownership patterns and a youth preference for formal sector employment over agribusiness.

Insufficient training is another issue, with limited exposure to digital marketing, circular economy practices, and modern farming techniques. Obstacles also exist that are specific to gender. Women frequently experience constraints on their movement, finances, and influence in both homes and businesses. Youth struggle with unrealistic expectations of fast profits and a lack of awareness regarding value chain opportunities.

Challenges notwithstanding, youth are innovating, for example, with integrated poultry and Black Soldier Fly systems and turning plastic waste into sellable goods. These examples demonstrate inclusive growth's potential when obstacles are overcome.

Policy and Support Gaps

Several policy and support gaps continue to hinder the growth of eco-innovation and circular value chains. Regulatory hurdles are particularly pronounced, with high certification costs from agencies like KEBS and KRA making it difficult for small producers to meet organic standards. The registration process for cooperatives remains overly complex, further discouraging formal organization among producers. Notably, there is a lack of county-level policies specifically geared toward supporting banana-based and eco-innovation value chains.

While a number of NGO and government programs such as Biovision, FAO, Practical Action, and NAVCD are active in the two counties, they often fall short in addressing the specific needs of youth and women. These programs typically lack targeted funding mechanisms and fail to provide localized, practical training.

Stakeholders have identified key policy priorities to bridge these gaps. These include providing subsidies for eco-innovation machinery like biodegradable packaging tools, simplifying taxation for small-scale enterprises, and integrating circular economy concepts into Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula. Such interventions are seen as essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable value chain development.

Opportunities for partnership and collaboration with key enabler institutions

I. County Agro-Industrial Parks (CAIPs)

County Agro-Industrial Parks are part of Kenya's broader strategy to promote agricultural transformation, industrialization, and rural economic development. Key areas of collaboration would include;

- a. Value Addition interventions to facilitate processing of raw agricultural produce to add value and reduce post-harvest losses and; Promote production of high-quality, market-ready agricultural goods
- b. Promote local job creation and employability in agro-processing, logistics, packaging, marketing, and related sectors and through agro-enterprise development.
- c. Market Access and Linkages - Leverage on structured platforms to link farmers to markets, both domestic and export and; Improve aggregation, grading, and distribution systems.
- d. Innovation and Technology Transfer by leveraging the CAIPS extension services for agro-processing innovation, research, and training as well as access to their modern processing, packaging, and waste recycling technologies that are being set up.

Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI)

ISF can partner with the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) in several impactful ways to enhance technology transfer in the Gusii region, particularly for agri-business, eco-innovation, and circular economy initiatives. Some of the strategies for collaboration can include;

- I. Joint Innovation and Demonstration Projects
 - Collaborative pilots on banana, avocado, vegetable processing, composting, biogas, and banana fibre applications.
 - Set up technology demonstration hubs within communities (e.g., small-scale dryers, oil extractors, bio-packaging units).
- II. Capacity Building and Technical Training
 - Organize training/workshops facilitated by KIRDI experts targeting women/youth groups.
 - Focus areas: food processing, post-harvest handling, quality control, machine use/maintenance, packaging, etc.
- III. Support for Localized R&D
 - Research through KIRDI to adapt technologies for Gusii's specific crops (e.g., banana, vegetables).

- Promote community-based innovation by linking local artisans and producers to KIRDI's R&D resources.
- IV. Technology Incubation and Start-Up Support
- Partner with KIRDI to host incubators or innovation hubs in Kisii or Nyamira (e.g., within CAIPs or TVETs).
- V. Quality Assurance and Product Certification
- Support certification of processed products (e.g., banana flour, dried vegetables, herbal teas) to help small producers meet KEBS or export standards.
 - Leverage KIRDI's labs for product testing and formulation (e.g., shelf life, safety, labelling).
- VI. Circular Economy and Green Tech Collaborations
- Promote composting units, biogas digesters, or waste valorization technologies through joint awareness campaigns and installations.
 - Use KIRDI's expertise in converting agro-waste (banana stems, avocado peels, coffee husks) into eco-products.
- VII. Resource Sharing and Infrastructure Co-Investment
- Ideal for CAIPs, cottage industries, or satellite processing centers in underserved sub-counties.

National and County Government Departments and Agencies

ISF (International Solidarity Foundation) can form strategic partnerships with the county governments of Kisii and Nyamira, as well as relevant national government agencies, to scale up and sustain the recommended and selected value chains (banana, avocado, indigenous vegetables, basketry, organic waste or other). Below are proposed approaches for each level of government across priority areas:

I. Policy Alignment and Program Integration

How ISF Can Partner:

- Align interventions with CIDPs (County Integrated Development Plans), Agriculture Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP), and Green Economy Strategies.
- Participate in county value chain steering committees or sectoral working groups (Agriculture, Trade, Youth, Gender).

Relevant Partners:

- Kisii & Nyamira Departments of Agriculture, Trade, Youth, Environment
- State Department for Crop Development
- Council of Governors (CoG) Agriculture Committee

II. Banana and Avocado Value Chains

Potential Partnerships:

- CAIPs (County Agro-Industrial Parks): Co-invest in processing units, post-harvest infrastructure (e.g., cold storage, ripening chambers).
- Extension Services: Joint training for farmer groups on GAP, pest management, and value addition (banana flour, crisps, oil extraction).
- Seedling/Varietal Support: Support certified nurseries and agro-dealer networks via KALRO or county programs. National Link:
- KEPHIS (seedling certification), AFA (horticulture promotion), KALRO (banana and avocado R&D)

III. Indigenous Vegetables

How ISF Can Partner:

- Joint training on agroecology, solar drying, and packaging via TVETs or ward-level demo plots.

National Link:

- KALRO and MOA for local seed systems

IV. Handcrafts e.g., Basketry and Weaving

County Collaboration:

- Co-develop community creative hubs (artisan parks, eco-craft villages).
- Integrate products into county cultural tourism strategies, trade expos, and online platforms.
- Partner on training for design, branding, and market linkages via County Trade or Gender Departments. National Link:
- Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA)
- Kenya Cultural Centre, State Department for Culture and Heritage

V. Waste Management

County-Level Engagement:

- Support model composting/biogas units at markets, schools, or CAIPs.
- Co-develop waste segregation policies and community sensitization with County Environment Departments.
- Integrate youth and women groups into county clean-up, waste collection and recycling programs.

National Link:

- NEMA (regulatory support)
- Ministry of Environment & Forestry
- Kenya Climate Innovation Center (KCIC)

- VI. Financing and Enterprise Support
 - Establish youth agri-business incubators or innovation hubs in partnership with county ICT or Youth offices.
 - Collaborate on market infrastructure: stalls, digital platforms, storage units.
- VII. Monitoring, Research & Knowledge Sharing
 - Conduct joint M&E, impact studies, and learning forums with county governments.
 - Share data with national planning units for replication/scaling in other counties.
 - Use evidence to influence budget allocations for circular economy initiatives.

Summary Table

Value Chain	ISF-County Collaboration	ISF-National Linkage
Banana & Avocado	CAIPs, extension, aggregation	KALRO, AFA, KEPHIS
Indigenous Vegetables	Kitchen gardens, school nutrition markets	MOH, KALRO, ASDSP
Handcrafts e.g., Basketry & Weaving	Creative hubs, branding & trade fairs	KEPROBA, Culture Ministry
Organic Waste	Composting/biogas pilots, waste policy	NEMA, Ministry of Environment, KCIC
Cross-cutting (Youth)	Agri-hubs, startup grants, digital skills	Ministry of Youth, TVET Authority

Sector Projects E.G., NAVCDP

To collaborate effectively with NAVCDP (National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project) and other development partner projects in the Gusii region (Kisii and Nyamira counties), ISF can adopt a strategic, structured approach that ensures alignment, synergy, and impact through;

Understanding the Scope and Focus of NAVCDP & Related Projects

- a) NAVCDP Key Features (in Kisii and Nyamira):
 - Funded by the World Bank & GoK under MoALFC.
 - Targets banana, avocado, dairy, poultry, and indigenous vegetables.
 - Focuses on:
 - Farmer aggregation and cooperatives
 - Post-harvest handling and value addition
 - Climate-smart agriculture
 - Youth and women inclusion

Other Projects Active in the Region:

- NARIGP (National Agricultural and Rural Inclusive Growth Project)
- ASDSP II (Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme)
- Bio-vision Africa Trust (organic agriculture and training)
- SNV Kenya (horticulture, youth agri-jobs)
- FAO, Practical Action, ISF (food systems, eco-innovation)

II. Ways to Collaborate with NAVCDP and Other Partners

A. Participate in County-Level Coordination Platforms

- Join the County Project Coordination Units (CPCUs) and County Steering Groups (CSGs) that oversee NAVCDP, NARIGP, ASDSP II.
- Contribute to Annual Work Plans (AWPs) and share your value chain priorities.

B. Align Interventions with NAVCDP-Supported Value Chains

- Implement complementary activities (e.g., digital marketing training, eco-processing, composting) for NAVCDP-targeted crops like banana and avocado.

C. Support Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and Producer Organizations

- Provide soft support (training, branding, product design, circular practices) to CIGs and VMGs (vulnerable & marginalized groups) formed under NAVCDP/NARIGP.
- Support women-led banana flour or avocado oil processors already in the NAVCDP pipeline.

D. Co-Invest in Infrastructure and Innovation

- Collaborate in the County Aggregation and Industrial Parks (CAIPs) by equipping or managing banana/vegetable processing units or renewable energy pilots.
- Bring in green technologies (e.g., solar dryers, bio-packaging, composters) not covered by existing donor budgets.

III. Types of Collaborative Activities

Activity Type	ISF Role	Development Partner Project Role
Joint Training & Demo Plots	Mobilize women/youth groups, deliver soft skills	Provide inputs, extension, and facilities
Co-Funding or Grant Matching	Contribute tech, training, or branding	Provide cash grants to CIGs and cooperatives

Market Linkage Facilitation	Host buyer-seller forums, digital platforms	Fund aggregation, transport, cold chain
Circular Economy Pilots	Provide composters, dryers, eco-pack kits	Mainstream in NAVCDP CIGs and CAIP sites
Knowledge Management & Learning	Document success stories, host exchange visits	Share through national KM platforms

Conclusion

The value chain scoping and actor mapping exercise conducted in the Gusii Region, covering highlighted five value chains with strong potential to contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic development. These include banana, avocado, indigenous vegetables, basketry and weaving, and organic waste management. Each of these value chains exhibits varying degrees of participation by women and youth, reflects existing market demand, and offers opportunities for circular economy integration. Within the agribusiness sector, women continue to play a significant role across several stages of the value chains. For example, adult women are particularly active in the production and marketing of bananas and indigenous vegetables. Youth engagement is also evident, with younger individuals often involved in logistical and transport-related activities that support value chain operations. The avocado value chain, in particular, is gaining interest among young people under the age of 35, due in part to its growing market appeal and relatively lower labor demands compared to other agricultural enterprises.

The scoping exercise also noted emerging potential in two additional value chains: handicrafts and organic waste management. The handicrafts value chain, deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Gusii people, is increasingly attracting women and youth, especially as materials such as banana fiber become more available and product visibility improves. For many, it also serves as a complementary source of income in response to rising living costs. Meanwhile, the organic waste value chain presents an opportunity to support the agribusiness sector more broadly. Given that post-harvest losses in the region exceed 40%, interest is growing in waste reduction strategies that can generate both environmental and economic benefits. Despite these opportunities, several challenges persist—particularly in terms of access to finance, training, and adequate market infrastructure. The findings underscore the need for more targeted support toward youth- and women-led initiatives, as well as the importance of grounding interventions within local structures such as cooperatives and producer groups.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Introduction

- Welcome and thank participants for attending.
- Introduce yourself, the organization (ISF), and the purpose of the discussion.
- Explain the objectives of the project in simple terms.
- Emphasize that their views and experiences are critical to shaping future interventions.
- Clarify confidentiality and voluntary participation.
- Obtain verbal consent to participate.

2. Warm-Up and Context

- What are the main livelihood activities in this area?
- What are the key agricultural or artisanal products produced here?
- How have these activities changed over the past few years?

3. Mapping Viable Value Chains.

Objective: Identify value chains with income and employment potential

- What products or activities in your community generate the most income or jobs?
- Are there emerging products or services that you think have high potential but are not yet fully developed?
- Who benefits most from these value chains

4. Actor and Institutional Mapping.

Objective: Understand actors, roles, and relationships

- Who are the key actors involved in the value chain (input suppliers, producers, processors, marketers, transporters, aggregators, regulators, etc.)?
- What are their roles and responsibilities?
- How do these actors interact with each other
- Are there any institutions (government, NGOs, cooperatives) that support these value chains?

5. SWOT Analysis.

Objective: Identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Facilitate an open discussion around the following areas for each prioritized value chain:

- **Strengths:** What works well in this value chain?
- **Weaknesses:** What challenges do actors face?
- **Opportunities:** What trends or developments could be leveraged to grow or improve the chain?
- **Threats:** What external risks could hinder success?

6. Circular Economy and Sustainability.

Objective: Understand practices and potential in circular economy

- Are there any practices in place to reuse or recycle waste from production or processing?
- Are there opportunities to add value through eco-friendly or sustainable methods?
- What local knowledge or practices could support sustainability?

7. Recommendations and Future Aspirations.

Objective: Generate actionable insights for planning and partnerships

- What support do you need to improve your work in the value chain?
- What changes would make it easier for more youth and women to participate?
- What partnerships or infrastructure would help your group or business grow?

8. Wrap-Up and closing.

- Thank participants again for their time and contributions.
- Summarize key issues raised (briefly).
- Share what will happen with the information collected.
- Invite any final thoughts or questions.