

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Determinants of youth unemployment in agribusiness employment opportunities in Northern Malawi**

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**Malawi is one of the underdeveloped agriculture economies in Sub-Saharan Africa where youth unemployment is worrisome. This study sought to analyse determinants of youth unemployment in agribusiness employment opportunities in northern Malawi. The study aimed at answering questions related to why youth unemployment when agribusiness employment opportunities were available. The study was descriptive in nature and adopted a phenomenological qualitative approach. Youth in agribusiness were the main participants while veteran farmers and agribusiness officers were engaged in triangulation. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to identify youth agribusiness clubs engaged in different agribusinesses and geographical locations from district agriculture offices. Photovoice, focus group discussions, and oral interviews were used to generate data. Content, textual and thematic approaches were used to analyse data. The study found that despite the presence of agribusiness employment opportunities, unemployment was prevalent due to multiple factors related to challenges with production, marketing agricultural products, proper storage facilities, processing and value addition, and supportive policy among others. The study also found that the youth had poor backgrounds and attitudes in the sector. Based on discussions, the study has recommended policies and practices at different value chain stages for transforming the agricultural sector toward creating youth employment.**

**Key words:** Youth unemployment, phenomenological qualitative approach, agribusiness, triangulation, transformation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Youth unemployment has become an important issue at global, continental, and national levels (United Nations, 2015). ILO (2020) estimated that global youth unemployment was at 17.26%. A study by Ihensekhien et al. (2017) indicates that the average youth unemployment for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was 9.4%. Furthermore,

32.4% of the youths were employed in paid work and 15.6% were employed in unpaid work, and 51.9% were not employed. Unlike in developed countries, in low-income countries, agriculture is their primary sector of occupation. The proportion of the youth employed in salaried agriculture was 5.5 and 20% in manufacturing

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and services. There has been an observed shift that some youth engaged in self-employment, for instance, 43.5% in self-employment and 31% in manufacturing and services.

Malawi's population is youthful and is experiencing an unemployment rate of 18.5% (National Statistical Office, 2018). Agriculture is an important economic sector for Malawi; it contributes 39% to the country's GDP, employs 85% of the country's workforce in food and cash crop products, and accounts for more than 90% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. In Karonga, Salima, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Mangochi, Zomba, Chikwawa, Mzuzu, and Mwanza, 83.2% of the youths were of the view that agriculture remains the main employer directly in production and agribusiness (Zidana et al., 2020).

In Malawi, the youth engaged in self-employment in various agribusiness enterprises such as poultry, vegetables (onions, tomatoes, and potatoes), sheep and goat fattening, cereal production, and daily production (Tarekegn et al., 2022). The youth selected enterprises that were perceived to be profitable.

Motivation is one of the key factors that explain youth engagement in agribusiness. Rigg et al. (2019) indicate that young farmers are hesitant to work on farms because they see little opportunity to increase income. Kafle et al. (2019) argue that agriculture is laborious, but pays less, has low returns, and high-risk enterprise which demotivates youths. Similarly, Adenkule et al. (2009) provide that low-profit margin, and lack of agriculture insurance. Poor public perception about the sector and parental influence to move out of farming as some of such situations that influence participation in agribusiness. Low profitability as demotivating to the youth has also been highlighted by Susilowati (2014). The youth can be motivated to participate in agribusiness in Malawi if the following challenges were resolved: provision of agribusiness management training; availability of agriculture extension services; improved access to land; increased access to capital; provision of agricultural infrastructure; value addition; and positive perception towards agriculture and agribusiness (Zidana et al., 2020). The cited challenges contribute to unemployment.

On-farm and non-farm activities have also been closely related to youth engaged in agribusiness. More rural people are now engaging in different non-farm activities like small-scale businesses, on-farm labour and off-farm wage labour to diversify their livelihood activities (Mangulama and Shengkun, 2016). Due to the decline in incomes through agribusiness, on average 44% of rural African households participate in non-farm wage employment or self-employment (Ackah, 2013; Adjognon et al., 2017).

Since youth unemployment was recognised to be an issue of concern, attention began to grow in the form of stimulating debate and actions. At the global level, the United Nations General Assembly (2015) highlights issues of youth unemployment under Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the continental level,

African Union (2011) highlights youth unemployment in the '*African Youth Decade 2009-2018 plan for action. Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*'. At the national level, Malawi discusses youth unemployment in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, Malawi Government (2017) but also in the National Youth Policy, Malawi Government (2016) among other documents. Youth unemployment discourses and policy formulation at different levels suggest the importance of the subject matter. There has also been growing attention on projects addressing youth unemployment. One of such project is the 'Jobs for Youth'. On the other hand, agribusiness is one of the highly featured terms and practices in rural development, economic empowerment, and the creation of jobs in Africa and Malawi in particular. Agribusiness has been believed to be one of the viable solutions into solving the youth unemployment paradox. Okali and Sumberg (2012a, b) predicted that most African youth in the sub-Saharan region would pursue agricultural livelihoods. Despite scholarly work and projects addressing agribusiness youth employment pointing at unemployment, there has been no evidence that youth unemployment has decreased due to agribusinesses. This article therefore worked on determinants of youth unemployment in agribusiness employment opportunities.

### **Problem statement**

Youth employment opportunities are said to be readily available in agriculture as agreed by African Green Revolution Forum (2017) and Oyekele (2011) who postulate that agriculture can ably employ the youths. As for Malawi, the nation is endowed with several natural resources to support agribusiness. Nkhoma (2011) highlights land and water as some of such endowments which are critical factors in agribusiness production. The government, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders continuously put effort into promoting agribusiness for youth employment. Given these conditions, the ideal situation would have been low unemployment rates as most of the unemployed youths would take up agribusiness employment opportunities. However, despite the efforts in promoting agribusiness, the unemployment rate remained as high as 18.5% as noted by National Statistical Office (2018). This situation presented a pragmatic gap on why the youth continued to suffer unemployment even though agribusiness employment opportunities were available.

Youth unemployment is said to have a number of effects on the society and the economy. Among others, the effects on society at large include increased crime rates, social unrest, social exclusion, poverty, financial hardships, boredom, stigma, stress, shame, and erosion of self-confidence and self-esteem. On the economic side, unemployed youth represent a waste of human capital for economic development. Furthermore,

unemployed youth represent a burden to their families and the government. High youth unemployment also promotes migration from rural to urban areas as well as across borders.

## Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to generate data that would help understand the determinants of youth unemployment in agribusiness employment opportunity situations. Such an understanding would be crucial in crafting solutions such as policies and interventions towards creating agribusiness youth employment and thereby reducing youth unemployment.

## Theoretical framework

The study adopted Victor Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation to help understand youth unemployment in agribusiness employment opportunity nations. This theory was used to understand youth motivation to engage in agribusiness. It helped to answer the variables as follows: Do the youth in agribusiness apply high individual effort to lead to high performance (expectancy)? Does the performance of youth in agribusiness result in desired rewards (instrumentality)? Do the rewards from agribusiness enterprises help the youth to attain their goals (valence)?

The study also used the concept of value chain. Hellin and Meijer (2006) define the value chain as the full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service from conception, through different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services) to the final customers and disposed of after use. The value chain was adopted in order to help analyse the different stages in agribusiness and understand the challenges involved.

The concepts of profits and profitability were used to analyse if youths engaged in agribusiness make profits, which translates to employment. Mitchell (1910) in the article titled '*The Rationality of Economic Activity*' notes that human beings mostly get engaged in economic activities in order to derive some benefits.

## Research question

The study was guided by the main question: "What were the determinants of youth unemployment in agribusiness employment opportunities?"

## METHODOLOGY

The study used a phenomenological qualitative design. According to Ndengu (2012), the design helps to understand the phenomenon from those who experience it. The interpretivist and critical theories as paradigms further guided the study.

The study was carried out in the northern districts of Malawi which included: Mzimba, Nkhatabay, Likoma, Chitipa, Rumphu, and Karonga. Agribusiness youth groups were sampled from district agricultural offices.

The study used photovoice, focus group discussions, and oral interviews to gather data. The use of these methods has been supported by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) who indicate that "we call employment of a multiple tools triangulation." Data were generated with 9 focus groups, 18 photovoices, 18 youth farmer oral interviews, 6 veteran farmers, and 6 agriculture officials.

## Data analysis

This study used descriptive analysis of the main variables to answer the research question. Hejase et al. (2012) contend that informed objective decisions are based on facts and numbers, real, realistic, and timely information. Furthermore, according to Hejase and Hejase (2013), "descriptive statistics deals with describing a collection of data by condensing the amounts of data into simple representative numerical quantities or plots that can provide a better understanding of the collected data" (p. 272). Therefore, the frequency and percentage were reported in tables and figures for clarity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study grouped findings into 12 themes as summarized in Table 1.

### Theme 1: Background of participants

The background of participants examined in this article were sex, age, education and marital status. Table 2 shows that the majority of the youth farmers were slightly males. Figure 1 presents age of the youth engaged in agribusiness enterprises. Figure 2 presents education levels of the youth engaged in agribusiness enterprises.

The background of the youth was uncovered to be one of the key determinants of youth unemployment in agribusiness employment opportunities. For instance, issues of sex have an influence on access to land, the age at which one gets involved in agribusiness affects their motivation, the level of education affects understanding and participation in agribusiness as supported by Xhaba and Masusku (2013). Lastly the nature of marriage combining factors of age and education presents a considerable determinant on agribusiness employment. A full discussion on the background of the youth have been covered under the article titled, "*School dropout and early marriage affects youth agribusiness employment*," published in International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJEAPS>.

### Theme 2: Common enterprises for youth in agribusiness

The study found that youth farmers engage in different

**Table 1.** Summary of themes developed in the study.

Theme number	Theme statement	Related corresponding research question
1	Background of participants	General background of participants
2	Common enterprises for youth in agribusiness	What forms of agribusiness are the youth engaged in?
3	Reasons for engaging in agribusiness	What motivates youth into agribusiness?
4	Agribusiness incomes and seasons	
5	Why do the youth shun away agribusiness employment opportunities?	
6	The importance of off-farm and non-farm activities in agribusiness	Which off-farm and non-farm activities do the youth engage in and why such activities?
7	Challenges that youth face in agribusiness	
8	Democratic political leadership and Agric- loans Technology and value addition	
9	Migration and other informal economic activities as youth responses to agribusiness challenges	What do the youth encounter in the value chain of their products in relation to self-employment?
10	Technology and value addition	
11	Impact of Covid 19 as emerging crosscutting issue on agribusiness.	
12	Improving agribusiness for more and dependable youth employment	Which support services would help to create youth employment through agribusiness employment?

Source: PhD-TCD thesis-Komani Tembo- Mzuzu University 2023

**Table 2.** Sex of participants in agribusiness employment.

Sex	Photovoice	FGD	Oral interviews	Number of participants	Percentage
Male	17	76	14	107	50.2
Female	7	89	10	106	49.8
Total	24	165	24	213	100.0

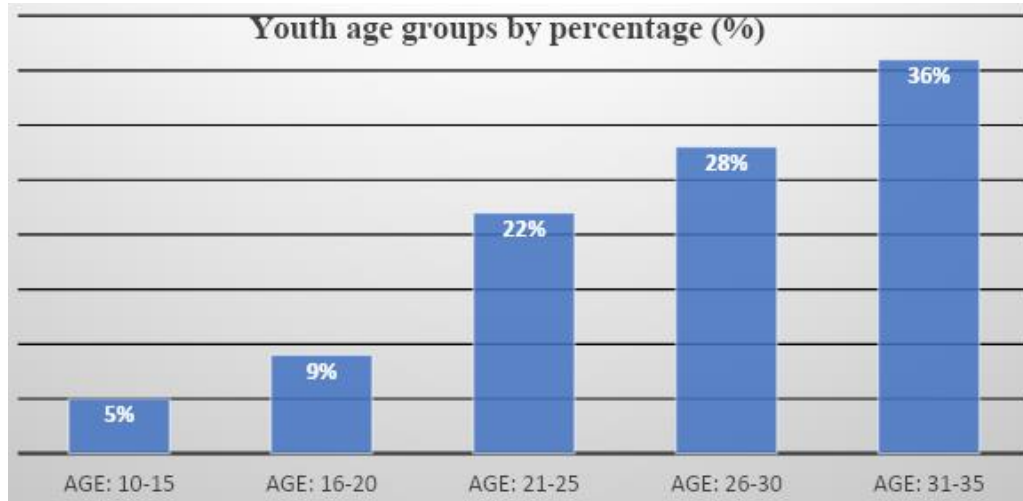
Source: PhD-TCD thesis-Komani Tembo-Mzuzu University 2023

agribusiness enterprises for several reasons. Key among the reasons included perceived profits from the enterprise and climate suitability. This reasoning is related to the concept of decision-making guided by the theoretical lens of profits and profitability where it is deemed ‘rational’ to engage in a profitable enterprise. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the choice of enterprises by the youth relate to Mitchell (1910) who articulated

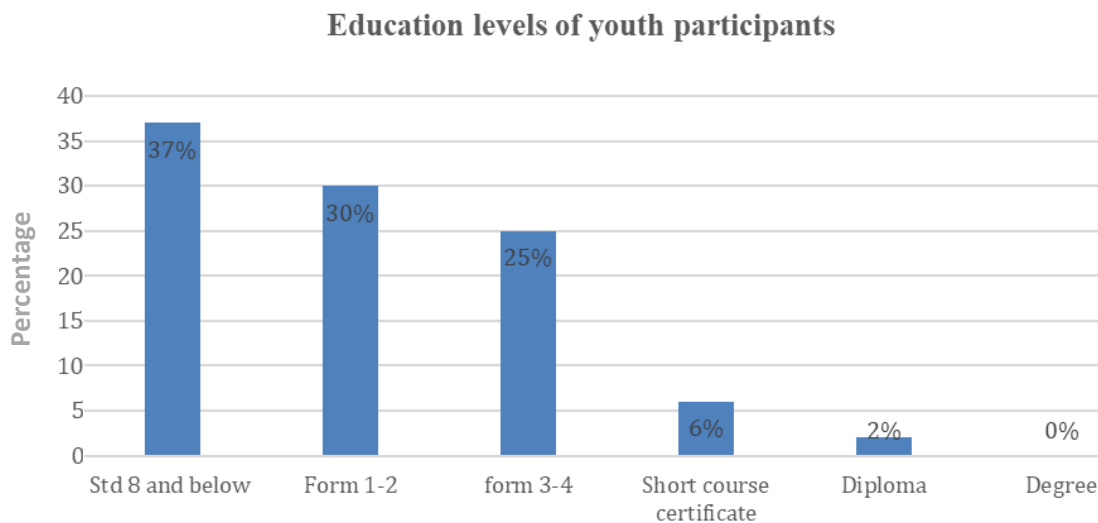
the basis of such decisions in her book titled ‘*The Rationality of Economic Activity*’. The second one was dictations of the geographical area where specific areas favour certain crops, such as rice, palm trees, and sesame seeds in Karonga. Lastly, the issue of demand for farm inputs such as fertilizer was another factor determining the type of enterprise. For instance, participant AYF-PV 15 in his photovoice indicated that he chose sesame

seed because it does not require fertilizer. This was also reported by a soya bean farmer in a different geographical location.

The study noted that even though ‘rational choices’ and other factors were considered to bring maximum benefits over the choice of an enterprise, marketing the produce was a key issue as it was reported that in some cases the youth would sell out the produce to vendors at very low



**Figure 1.** Age of the youth in agribusiness employment.  
 Source: PhD-TCD thesis-Komani Tembo- Mzuzu University 2023



**Figure 2.** Summary of education levels of youth participants.  
 Source: PhD-TCD thesis-Komani Tembo- Mzuzu University 2023

prices.

**Theme 3: Reasons for engaging in agribusiness**

The study found that several reasons accounted for engaging in specific agribusinesses. The study noted that some other enterprises were opted because they were deemed as sustainable ways and sales were non-seasonal. Such types of enterprises included dairy farming as reported by AYF PV 16 who said that “I am not interested in getting employed because we earn the same amount of money with those employed and I earn

even more”.

Some farmers also engaged in agribusiness because that was the only option available for them to earn income in their locality. This suggests that agribusiness was not their first choice. For instance, AYF PV 19 indicated that they resorted to fishing because that is what the environment offers.

AYF OI 12 indicated that they grow maize because it is staple food for most people in their area. Rice was also mentioned as a staple food for some communities in Karonga. Discussions revealed that staple food crops were easy to sell because they have large market. This sentiment agrees with African Green Revolution (2017)

**Table 3.** Farmgate prices versa actual selling prices

No.	Crop/Commodity	Minimum farmgate price (MK/kg)- Government policy	Actual selling price (Mk/ kg)-Study findings	Comments/Observations
1	Maize	200	70-110	Far below Farmgate price
2	Rice (Polished)	600	300	Far below Farmgate price
3	Rice (Unpolished)	280	175	Far below Farmgate price
4	Soya Beans	300	230	Far below Farmgate price
6	Mixed Beans	350	350	Break-even
7	Groundnuts (Shelled)	480	350	Below Farmgate price
9	Sesame	550	500-550	Slightly below Farmgate price and break even
10	Cotton (Grade A)	389	309	Below Farmgate price

Source: Ministry of Agriculture (2019 -2020) farmgate prices.

postulating that markets for agricultural products are guaranteed as the growing population need food. Furthermore, the findings are agreeing with NEPAD (2013) that estimate tripled market demand for food for African by 2030.

#### **Theme 4: Agribusiness incomes and seasons**

The study noted that incomes were seasonal because most of the crop enterprises were rainfed hence similar harvesting and selling season. The harvesting was immediately followed by selling season. For instance, most maize was sold starting from May to August and this was also the harvesting season. It was noted that the selling prices for maize and other crops during main selling season were generally low. Prices were increasing as we move out of the selling season and highest prices were said to be during production time. One participant, AYF OI 18 indicated that even though farmers know that good prices were sometime after the main selling season, it was difficult for the farmers to hold on the produce till such time. This was attributed to lack of other means of income and whenever crops mature, they sell instantly so that they can have some money.

Apart from seasonal incomes, youth farmers also complained of low prices. For instance, photovoice, AYF-PV 4, indicated that depending on time of harvest (season), the income from the same quantity of onions varies from MK25,000.00 to MK600,000.00. Another onion farmer, AYF OI 11 indicated that prices of onions range from MK20,000 to MK400,000. When one sells the produce during peak harvesting season, they were likely to sell at low prices as at that time, supply becomes higher than demand.

On the other hand, a tomato farmer, AYF OI 10 indicated that during peak harvesting season a basin which is used as a unit of measurement is sold at as low as MK2,000.00 and as far as MK40,000.00 during lean

periods. The next photovoice explains about the seasonality of onions.

#### **Theme 5: Why do the youth shun away agribusiness employment opportunities?**

One key factor that demotivated youth in agribusiness was the low selling prices of agribusiness products. This study noted that most products were being sold at lower prices than government-stipulated farm gate prices. This resulted in making little or no profits. Such experiences were promoting youth to shun away from such farming. Table 3 summarises selling prices against farm gate prices.

The study noted that shunning agribusiness on the basis of low prices is not new in the country. A historical review of low prices and farmers' motivation to produce more shows that there have been several similar occasions in the past. For instance, as reported by Terry (1961), MCB which evolved to now ADMARC fixed low prices on maize when buying and later sold it at double the price and farmers were discouraged to produce maize commercially.

Other factors that influenced the youth to shun away agribusiness employment opportunities include a mindset that agribusiness is dirt work, seasonality of incomes, lack of capital, unpredictability on levels of incomes, effects of child labour mindset whereby after getting out of the childhood age, little is done to engage them into farming. Findings on the lack of capital were supported by Tschering (2002).

#### **Theme 6: The importance of off-farm and non-farm activities in agribusiness**

The seasonality of incomes also persuaded other youth farmers to engage in both off-farm and non-farm activities

such as oxcart transport, bicycle taxi, motorcycle taxi, and grocery units. Such activities were reported to be supporting agribusiness such as paying for labour and procuring inputs. Motorcycle transportation was reported by AYF OI 10 and AYF PV 6 in transporting goods and people as their non-farm activity. As highlighted in AYF-PV 6 (Figure 3), this bicycle was bought using the proceeds of tomato agribusiness. He also built a house and bought some more land for construction of other houses. This relates to the fact that agriculture is the engine of the economy and preciously, social economic development especially in rural areas in Malawi as noted by Francis and David (2012) and Sabola (2020).

Off-farm and non-farm activities were also considered important as they were a means of income diversification and resilience building as noted by Mangulama and Shengkun (2016). Income diversification has been discussed further by Gordon and Craig (2001) who contend that livelihood diversification is often characterized as being driven by two processes; distress pushes where the poor are driven to seek non-farm employment or want adequate non-farm opportunities; and demand pull, where rural people are able to respond to rural opportunities.

This study established that most agribusiness enterprises that youth engaged in were seasonal. As such, incomes were also seasonal. It was proposed that in order to make use of time when off-season, the youth could be engaged in Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) for income generation. For instance, rice growers proposed to undergo courses like bricklaying so that during the dry season when they have little activities in rice fields, they could be earning some money from constructing houses in their communities. The introduction of TEVET among youth farmers was also noted by Kambombe (2009) and Nasser et al. (2022).

### **Theme 7: Challenges that youth face in agribusiness**

The land was one key challenge discussed in this study. As reported by AYF OI 15, women had challenges to access land in patrilineal tribes. This challenge was much felt in crops such as rice as they require specific land conditions. Land scarcity was said to be fueled by the growing population. Youth farmers also faced the challenge of farm implements. Most of the tools were hand tools and these inhibited quantities of production as noted by Trieneken (2011) and Sabola (2020). Other related challenges included: inputs, management, and care, lack of organised markets, vendor-dictated low prices and fake units of measurement as noted by Mukhwana et al. (2005), storage and marketing of perishable products, lack of organised markets such as Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) in rural areas where much agricultural

production is done, challenges related to agriculture extension services support due to high vacancy rate on the agriculture front line staff and pests and diseases. The study also noted challenges related to natural causes such as poor rainfall patterns.

In-depth discussions revealed that it was possible to solve most of the challenges provided that all stakeholders take part. For instance, one of the participants, an agriculture officer highlighted that there was need to introduce upland rice farming.

### **Theme 8: Democratic political leadership and agriculture loans**

The study noted that national and local politics has an impact on agribusiness. Political leaders such as presidents and members of parliament make loan promises to farmers. Repayment of such loans becomes difficult as recipients tend to understand it as free in exchange for their political support. Examples of such loans include Malawi Enterprise Development Fund (MEDF) and Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDEF). Political interference in loans was also noted by Mkweu (2020). Political influence on loans has corrupted the minds of most people thereby making it difficult for players in financial loans to assist farmers. The study also noted that there have been similar initiatives by different governments. For instance, Agriculture Productivity Input Program (APIP) to Farm Inputs Subsidy Program (FISP) and later Affordable Inputs Program (AIP). These findings were in agreement with FAO (2014) which indicate that youth dedicated funds have been initiated by the country's respective government and get stopped with change of government. The study therefore concluded that politics and political support is another determinant for youth employment in agribusiness

### **Theme 9: Technology and value addition**

Technology for storing, processing, and value addition to agricultural produce was found to be one of the issues affecting youth in agribusiness. The study found that there was a lack of storage facilities, processing plants, and challenges to manage the available processing plants.

It was discussed that lack of factories had negative impacts on agribusiness. This study discussed two amongst the several ways in which absence of factories affect agribusiness.

The first one was that the absence itself makes farmers to become desperate and experience undersells. This was noted in perishable products. For instance, it was revealed in AYF FGD 4 that during peak harvesting season, the price for tomato fluctuates down from

**AYF-PV 4: Onion farmer: "We sell an oxcart full of onion at K600,000.00.....  
We sell an Oxcart full of onions at MK25, 000.00**



ULIMI WA HATHI (Onion)  
Ulimi wahanyezi ni ulimi uwemi chomeni.  
Nangauli una uwemi na uheni wake.  
UNEMI WA ULIMI UNU  
Pala walimi walima wachoko waka pakusa-  
ngika phindu litulu chomeni chyezgerero.  
Pala pachigawa walima wantha usachoko  
waka. hanyezi zitugulika pa ngolo. Apo  
ngolo yimatza yitugulika pamitanga waka  
kwana ndalama nga MK600,000.00

UHANI WA ULIMI UNU  
Pala walimi walima wanandi chomeni.  
pakusangika masuzgo wakulu chomeni nga  
ni agha. Ngolo yimatza yitugulika  
kwakuyana na zakukwana MK25,000.00

MASUZGO  
1 pakusangika matenda nga nyinda.  
2 pala ngwi ghachepa.  
3 Alakugala wachepa.

KALITIRO KUTI, AURIE  
PANTANZI  
Tili Alakupempha Boma kuli watsangire  
msika. Kweniso Capital nga ni feleja  
kuli pala Boma lingalipatsa ngongole.  
mbwe ndikuli masuzgo withu wangaolepe  
ko.

### ONION FARMING

Onion farming is very good. It has its own advantages and disadvantages.

#### Advantages of onion farming

When you cultivate a small plot, you earn more money. For example, when few people have engaged in this farming, we sell an oxcart full of onions at MK600, 00

#### Disadvantages of onion farming

When many farmers have engaged in onion production, we sell an oxcart full of onions as low as MK25, 000.00

#### Challenges

1. Pests and diseases
2. Lack of water
3. Few customers

#### How onion farming could be improved

We request the government to find a market for us. We also need capital such as fertilizer. If the government can offer us a loan, it means our problems can be reduced.

**Figure 3.** Photovoice for an onion agribusiness farmer.

Source: PhD-TCD thesis-Komani Tembo- Mzuzu University 2023.

MK40,000.00 per 40 L bucket to MK2,000.00 and sometimes no sales at all because the supply becomes

too much compared to the demand. These sentiments were also reflected in AYF-OI 25. One participant in that



group indicated that ‘when you find tomato thrown and rotting by the road side, just know that there is much supply than demand.’ It was discussed that such experiences discourage some farmers from producing more in the next season. Two suggestions were put forward by the members to avoid such losses.

It was suggested that there was need for cold rooms to keep tomatoes for some time while waiting for vendors. At the time of the study there were no cold rooms. As such tomatoes that were not sold during designated sells day would go bad and thrown away few days later before the next sales day which were set to be once in a week. The need for cold rooms was also reported in AYF FGD 2. This group needed a cold room for storing milk. According to the group, most of the milk is wasted because they do not have a cold room.

It was noted that stakeholders such as Non-Governmental Organisations and the government do not work in collaboration. This was discussed when participants indicated that they had worked with a number of organisations and most of them were in production only when they now needed storage facilities and processing plants. The only organisation that started a processing plant never finished it. It was discussed that the absence of a processing plant was limiting levels of production by youth farmers. The other organisations were coming in which support related to production instead of completing the processing plant, which was abandoned over eight years ago. Participants indicated that if they were consulted, they were going to choose completion of the processing plant and storage facility unlike going back to production.

The study noted sustainability challenges in managing processing plants left to community management teams alone. Experience had shown that processing plants were functional for a few months or years and later the community was back to the same problems. For instance, AO 2 reported a multi-million-kwacha Agri-produce processing plant which functioned for few months because the community could not repair minor faults. Lack of processing plants discouraged production.

#### **Theme 10: Migration and other informal economic activities as youth responses to agribusiness challenges**

This study found that there was a correlation between migration and informal economic activities. The correlation was either successful agribusiness leading to controlling emigration or unsuccessful agribusiness leading to emigration to urban centers or abroad. For instance, when the youth were able to run successful agribusinesses, they found no reasons to migrate as reported in photovoice AYF-PV 6. Migration from rural communities to urban centers and migration from Malawi to foreign nations especially South Africa were the two destinations of rural emigration that the study uncovered.

For instance, photovoice AYF PV 12, highlighted that her husband went to South Africa out of frustration with agribusiness sales. She narrated that during that year they cultivated tobacco, Soya beans and maize and none of these crops managed to break even with the inputs. Findings on youth migration to South Africa agree with Niboye (2018) who attributes rural migration to a lack of employment opportunities in rural areas.

#### **Theme 11: Impact of covid 19 as an emerging crosscutting issue on agribusiness**

Enforcement of measures to prevent the spread of Covid 19 impacted agribusiness. After the presidential order to close schools, and restrictions on travel and gatherings reported by Kamlomo (2020), farmers had difficulties accessing markets. Some cities such as Mzuzu, Zomba, Lilongwe, and Blantyre announced further measures of banning vending. Farm produce would rot in farms.

Similar impacts were also felt among farmers due to blood-sacking myths. Communities were suspecting any foreign persons as bloodsuckers. Several people were wounded and others killed on allegations of blood-sucking according to Gausi (2020). This led to agribusiness product buyers being afraid to travel to different rural places.

#### **Theme 12 Improving agribusiness for more and dependable youth employment**

The study found that agribusiness would be improved on several topical issues affecting employment. Land ownership and the shrinking size of farms due to population growth were discovered to be pressing issues under the land. Instead of relying on rainfed crops, discussions in AYG FGD 3 proposed construction of new irrigation schemes and maintenance of the existing ones. This discussion also proposed solar irrigation that tap water from underground as the second method.

Participants also highlighted access to inputs as an area that require improvements towards increasing access to all. The study also noted that many youths had negative mindset and lacked motivation to engage in agriculture. Participants had also indicated that poor extension services were available, which affected productivity. Marketing was another area that participants proposed improvements on. Lastly, it was discussed that current policies on agribusiness do not protect local farmers from exploitation by buyers.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the study drew the following recommendations:

(1) Recommendations regarding land ownership and limited sizes

(a) Government needed to expedite the review of land ownership so that both sexes would claim ownership, which is critical in production.

(b) Expanding land under irrigation through solar irrigation that would tap water from underground for fields far from water bodies.

(2) Land reclamation through building strong pillars along rivers so that flooding is prevented

(a) Introducing upland rice farming to make use of idle upland.

(b) Strengthen laws, enforcement, and new approaches to curbing early marriages.

(3) Introduce practical agribusiness in primary and secondary school to introduce learners to some of their future means of employment.

(4) There is a need to create a sustainable means of financing agribusiness free from political interference.

(5) Promote TEVET among the youth as an alternative form of employment to agribusiness.

(6) There is a need to assist farmers with proper storage facilities, especially for perishable products.

(7) There is a need for a special government unit to plant and support management of some small to medium processing plants.

(8) The government and other stakeholders need to assist farmers affected by unforeseeable circumstances such as Covid 19 pandemic

(9) The government and other stakeholders need to promote simple technologies such as egg-hatching machines to boost the production of local chickens instead of relying on natural methods.

(10) Government and other stakeholders need to work in collaboration by supporting farmers at different value chain stages as revealed by a study.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study sought to uncover determinants of youth unemployment in the presence of agribusiness employment opportunities. The study adopted a phenomenological approach in order to gain in-depth contributions from those affected, the youth. Findings and discussion imply that the status of the youth being unemployed in the presence of agribusiness employment opportunities could be corrected by transforming agriculture through supporting youth farmers in all stages of the value chain.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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