

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN KERICHO COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Citizen engagement has become an important element of effective public governance because it promotes accountability, responsiveness, and the alignment of public services with citizens' needs. In devolved governance systems, agricultural service delivery requires active involvement of farmers and other stakeholders in identifying priorities, contributing to agricultural programmes, and providing feedback on services. However, despite the establishment of public participation frameworks in Kenya, concerns remain regarding the extent to which citizen engagement influences agricultural service delivery outcomes. This study examined the effect of citizen engagement on service delivery in the agricultural sector in Kericho County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Stakeholder Theory and New Public Value Theory. A descriptive research design was adopted, targeting agricultural stakeholders including smallholder farmers, agricultural extension officers, farmer cooperative representatives, agriculture committee members, and community-based organization representatives. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that citizen engagement positively and significantly influenced agricultural service delivery. Descriptive results showed that respondents generally agreed that opportunities existed for participation in agricultural forums, consultations with extension officers, and expression of views, with an overall mean score of 3.37 (SD = 1.04). Pearson correlation analysis established a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between citizen engagement and agricultural service delivery ($r = 0.718$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis further demonstrated that citizen engagement had a positive and statistically significant effect on service delivery ($\beta = 0.417$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that citizen engagement is an important factor in agricultural service delivery by enabling farmers and stakeholders to communicate their needs, share local knowledge, and interact with agricultural service providers. The study recommends strengthening citizen engagement platforms, improving communication on stakeholder contributions, and ensuring that recommendations generated through participation forums are appropriately considered in agricultural programmes.

Keywords: Citizen engagement; Agricultural service delivery; Devolved governance; Agricultural extension services; Stakeholder participation

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INTRODUCTION

Service delivery is a fundamental function of public institutions because it determines the extent to which government programmes respond to citizens' needs and contribute to socio-economic development (Mpolweni & Kabange, 2026). In the agricultural sector, service delivery involves the provision of essential services, including agricultural extension, access to agricultural information, input support, infrastructure development, and market-related services aimed at improving farmers' productivity and livelihoods (Marion et al., 2024). Agricultural service delivery does not just entail the provision of resources but also encompasses the efficiency, relevance, accessibility, and responsiveness of services delivered to farmers. The success of agricultural service delivery is determined by the institutional arrangement, decentralization, local capability, and responsiveness of agricultural institutions to farmers' demands (Dahal et al., 2020). Citizen engagement and community-based monitoring could also improve service user-public institution interactions and enhance agricultural service delivery (Mogues et al., 2023). Effective agricultural service delivery requires more than just the provision of services; it requires how accessible, responsive, and relevant the services provided to farmers are.

Globally, there have been increased efforts aimed at improving agricultural service delivery owing to the need for approaches that improve interaction and responsiveness between service providers and users of services. There is evidence from various studies suggesting that agricultural service performance is affected by the level of interaction of farmers with institutions and their participation in agricultural programmes. For example, in France, farmers' participation in collaborative water management programs was affected by institutional arrangements, social networks, and interactions (Amblard et al., 2023). In the same way, the participation of farmers in agri-environmental programmes is dependent on attitude, social norms, institutional and relational trust, legitimacy and perception of the programme design, among other things, including evidence relevant to the Swiss agricultural sector (Sander et al., 2024). Decentralization and restructuring of agriculture governance in Nepal involved changes in institutional responsibility and capacity of local governments to provide agricultural services to farmers (Dahal et al., 2020). The examples above show that improving agricultural service delivery involves institutional approaches to building relationships between agricultural institutions and farming communities.

In Africa, challenges in agricultural service delivery persist, including responsiveness, accountability, and alignment with farmers' needs. Community-based monitoring through citizen forums in Uganda gave chances for citizens to have access to information, interact with service providers and increase accountability, leading to better agricultural public services (Mogues et al., 2023). In Nigeria, agricultural extension service delivery remains a challenge due to poor funding, shortage of extension agents, logistics, and poor facilities to reach the farmers (Tafida et al., 2024). These challenges highlight the importance of citizen engagement as a governance approach that enables farmers to communicate their needs, share local knowledge, and participate in processes aimed at improving agricultural services.

In Kenya, agriculture continues to be one of the most significant sectors in ensuring economic growth and development and the well-being of people in the countryside. The devolved system of government in Kenya creates the organizational structure through which services can be delivered through the participation of citizens as outlined by the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Nonetheless, it is not easy to operationalize the participation structures into participatory governance in the country. In Laikipia County, the linkage between public participation and service delivery has been reported, making it clear that it is necessary to have effective participation channels in the devolved governance of the county (Ekale & Munene, 2024). In addition, findings in the counties of Kiambu and Nairobi City show that decentralization does not necessarily improve the process of delivering services since various organizational arrangements and conditions determine the outcome of service delivery (Mwangi et al., 2023).

Kericho County represents an essential area for evaluating the connection between citizen engagement and the delivery of agricultural services. Livelihoods and economic activities in the county are highly reliant on agriculture, with tea, dairy, and horticulture representing some of the agricultural activities carried out in the area. Nevertheless, the delivery of agricultural services in Kericho County remains constrained by various institutional and resource-based factors. Financial challenges for agricultural extension officers have been reported after the devolution process, resulting in constraints in delivering agricultural extension services effectively (Chelule et al., 2022). Additionally, the management of agricultural extension services in the county has been affected by devolution, indicating the significance of adequate institutional, financial, and operational capacity to deliver agricultural extension services (Keino et al., 2022). These factors represent some of the existing gaps in service delivery that necessitate higher levels of engagement between agricultural institutions and farming communities.

The interaction between citizens and county agricultural institutions through forums, consultations, planning, and extension service deliveries forms the essence of citizen engagement. Through citizen engagement, farmers and other agricultural stakeholders will have the chance to express their problems and needs as well as offer their knowledge. However, concerns remain regarding whether existing engagement platforms provide meaningful opportunities for citizens to influence agricultural service delivery outcomes. While public participation structures exist, limited evidence exists on whether citizen engagement translates into improved accessibility, responsiveness, and satisfaction with agricultural services.

Although there has been growing awareness of citizen engagement as a key aspect of responsive governance, there is little empirical evidence on the impact of citizen engagement on the delivery of agricultural services in the context of devolved county systems in Kenya. Existing studies have examined public participation, agricultural extension services, and governance processes; however, limited attention has been given to the specific contribution of citizen engagement in improving agricultural service delivery outcomes. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect of citizen engagement on service delivery in the agricultural sector in Kericho County, Kenya. The study provides empirical evidence that may contribute to strengthening participatory governance approaches and improving agricultural service delivery within devolved county systems.

Statement of the Problem

Effective service delivery is essential in the agricultural sector because it ensures that farmers have timely access to critical services, including extension services, agricultural inputs, infrastructure support, technical information, and market opportunities. In Kericho County, where agriculture, particularly tea, dairy, and horticulture production, contributes significantly to livelihoods and economic activities, concerns persist regarding the accessibility, responsiveness, and efficiency of agricultural services. Agricultural extension personnel in Kericho County have experienced financial-support challenges following devolution, with implications for the capacity to effectively provide extension services to farmers (Chelule et al., 2022). Similarly, despite the devolution of agricultural functions to county governments, the management of agricultural extension services in Kericho County continues to experience institutional and operational challenges that affect effective service provision (Keino et al., 2022).

While service delivery problems in agriculture may be seen in terms of constraints in resources, governance processes are equally significant in deciding the extent to which agricultural services meet the demands of farmers. Citizen engagement is one of the tools that allow citizens such as farmers as well as other stakeholders in agriculture to engage with service providers, engage in agricultural programs, share their experiences and offer information that could help in ensuring that agricultural services become more relevant and responsive to their demands. In Kenya, it is evident that stakeholder engagement in devolved governance systems improves service delivery through interactions and coordination between citizens and government agencies (Karama et al., 2019). However, the extent to which citizen engagement contributes to improved

agricultural service delivery outcomes remains insufficiently understood, particularly within county-level agricultural governance systems.

Although much progress has been made in acknowledging participatory governance as an approach through which public service provision can be enhanced, little empirical research has been done on the effect of citizen engagement on agricultural service provision in Kericho County. Most of the existing research has been devoted to the issues of agricultural production, extension, technology adoption, and general citizen participation, whereas there is little evidence on the relationship between citizen engagement and the delivery of agricultural services. There is little evidence on the contribution of citizen engagement to the accessibility, responsiveness, quality, and satisfaction with agricultural services delivered by county governments.

This knowledge gap limits evidence-based policy formulation and constrains understanding of how citizen engagement can be effectively utilized to strengthen agricultural governance and service delivery under Kenya's devolved governance framework. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect of citizen engagement on service delivery in the agricultural sector in Kericho County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in the Stakeholder Theory and the New Public Value Theory in understanding the relationship between citizen engagement and the delivery of agricultural services in the county of Kericho, Kenya. The Stakeholder Theory recognizes the importance of involving citizens, among other stakeholders, in the delivery of public services. On the other hand, New Public Value Theory offers a framework for understanding how the approach based on a citizen-centred perspective leads to greater success in providing public services.

Stakeholder Theory, proposed by Freeman (1984), provides insights into the fact that organizations can operate effectively only by recognizing the needs and expectations of their stakeholders who are affected by their actions. This theory points at the need to treat stakeholders as active participants and not as bystanders. In the area of agricultural provision, farmers and agricultural stakeholders have both knowledge and experience that can help in the development and improvement of agricultural programs and schemes. Through engaging citizens with the agricultural institutions, one can better meet the needs of farmers, create accountability, as well as increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided.

The New Public Value Theory proposed by Moore (1995) advocates for the need for public organizations to concentrate on supplying citizens with their needs through appropriate, convenient, and efficient services. According to this theory, output from public organizations should not be evaluated in terms of efficiency only, but also in terms of how well it satisfies public needs and increases public well-being. In this study, New Public Value Theory shows how citizen involvement helps agricultural institutions in understanding farmers' expectations and providing relevant services.

The two theories complement each other by explaining that effective agricultural service delivery requires both meaningful engagement between institutions and citizens and the ability of public organizations to transform citizens' input into valuable service outcomes.

Empirical Literature

Citizen engagement has increasingly been recognized as an important mechanism for improving public service delivery by strengthening accountability, responsiveness, and alignment between institutional interventions and citizens' needs. Sonnenfeld et al. (2019), through a mixed-methods systematic review of citizen engagement initiatives in low- and middle-income countries, examined the contribution of participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability mechanisms to public service delivery outcomes.

The review was based on 35 engagement programs in 20 low and middle income countries. It was clear from the findings that interventions encouraging direct engagement between the users and the providers of services would effectively foster active citizen engagement and enhance accessibility and quality of public services especially when citizens engaged with the service providers directly. However, the review focused on public service delivery across different sectors and geographical contexts, providing limited evidence specifically on citizen engagement and agricultural service delivery within devolved county governance systems.

Zulu et al. (2025) examined stakeholder engagement in donor-funded agricultural projects in Zambia using a desk review approach. The study established that stakeholder engagement was important in strengthening local ownership, accountability, coordination, and sustainability in donor-funded agricultural projects. It further emphasized the importance of involving relevant stakeholders throughout project identification, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Although the study provides evidence of the relevance of stakeholder engagement within agricultural contexts, it relied on secondary evidence from Zambia, creating contextual and methodological differences from studies based on primary data within devolved county governance systems in Kenya.

Maluki et al. (2025) studied stakeholder engagement and performance of county government water projects in Sekeb Region, Kenya. The study looked at the link between stakeholder engagement, corporate governance practices, and performance of projects in the county government projects. The results showed that stakeholder engagement is one of the governance tools which can be used to enhance project performance in devolved government structure. But the study did not look at agricultural services since it was based on water projects, creating a gap in sectors regarding how citizen engagement influences service delivery in Kericho County.

Gathumbi (2024) studied public participation and service delivery in Nairobi City County Government, Kenya. The study found out that public participation tools like exchange of information and citizen participation had great influence on public service delivery. The results show the role that effective citizen participation and communication between citizens and government organizations play in enhancing service delivery in devolved governance structures. But the study was done in the urban government setting and did not deal with agricultural services, making it less relevant for the context of Kericho County.

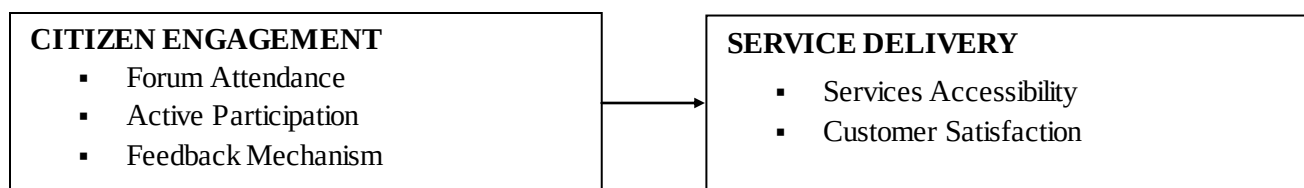
Ekale & Munene (2024) sought to evaluate the impact of public participation in service delivery in Laikipia County in Kenya. The research proved that public participation impacted service delivery and the need for effective means of participation in the process of county governance. The study provided crucial data concerning the relationship between the public involvement and the service delivery within Kenya's devolved form of governance. However, this study evaluated general service delivery in the county and not the agricultural service delivery, hence creating an institutional gap on the role played by citizen involvement in the agricultural service delivery.

Overall, previous literature shows that the citizen or stakeholder involvement could enhance the service delivery through the better communication and interaction between the citizens and the service providers, accountability, responsiveness, information exchange, and participation in the governance process. However, most of the existing literature has mainly focused on public service delivery, services of the county governments within various sectors, urban governance, or agricultural projects outside Kenya. This study addresses this contextual and sectoral gap by examining the effect of citizen engagement on service delivery in the agricultural sector in Kericho County, Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between citizen engagement as the independent variable and service delivery as the dependent variable in Kericho County, Kenya. Citizen engagement is measured

through forum attendance, active participation, and feedback mechanisms, while service delivery is assessed through service accessibility and customer satisfaction.



Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Researcher, 2026)

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was employed in the study. The use of a descriptive research design was deemed appropriate since it enabled the researcher to investigate the nature of citizen engagement and service delivery in the agricultural industry as they exist without manipulating any study variables (Kothari, 2014).

Study Area

The research study took place in Kericho County in Kenya. The total area of the county is estimated to be 2,479 square kilometers, whereas the total population of the county is 901,777 (KNBS, 2019). The major economic activity in the county is agriculture, with tea farming, dairy farming, horticulture, maize farming, and poultry farming among the agricultural activities carried out in the region. Provision of agricultural services in the region is conducted through the County Department of Agriculture, agricultural extension officers, and other social stakeholders. However, the issues of access to and the effectiveness of these services become an important background for understanding the effect of citizen engagement on service delivery outcomes.

Target Population

The target population comprised of 96,019 agricultural stakeholders who utilize agricultural services or benefit from agricultural services within Kericho County (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, 2025). It composed of the County Executive Members for Agriculture, Agricultural Extension Officers, Agriculture Committee Members, Farmer Cooperative Leaders, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and smallholder farmers. This particular population was selected because they are service providers and service users and thus can provide valuable insights on the participation of citizens and the provision of agricultural services. The target population comprises of 1 County Executive Member for Agriculture, 1 Chief Executive Officer for Agriculture, 117 Agricultural Extension Officers, 360 Agriculture Committee Members, 1,400 Farmer Cooperative Leaders, 135 CBO Members, and 94,005 smallholder farmers.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used in the study to make sure that the various agricultural stakeholders were adequately represented. Stratified sampling was used to identify respondents from the selected categories of agricultural stakeholders, and purposive sampling technique was used to identify respondents who had specific knowledge and were directly involved in agricultural service delivery. The number of respondents was calculated based on Yamane's (1967) equation at a 95% confidence level:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

Where: n = sample size, N = population size (1,041), and e = precision level (0.05)

$$n = \frac{96,019}{1+96,019(0.05^2)}$$

Therefore, the study used a sample size of 398 respondents. The sample was proportionately distributed across the stakeholder categories using the proportionate allocation formula:

$$n_i = \left(\frac{N_i}{N} \right) \times n$$

Where:

n_i = Size of sample allocated per each category of stakeholders; N_i = Population of each category of stakeholders; N = Target population (96,019); n = Sample size (398). From the proportional allocation, the sample comprised 388 small-scale farmers, 6 farmer cooperatives, 2 agriculture committee members, 1 agriculture extension officer, and 1 CBO representative. The allocation made sure that each category of stakeholder is represented in the same proportion as in the target population.

Data Collection Instruments

Data for the study was collected using primary methods in the form of semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires comprised both closed and open-ended questions, where the Likert scale was used to measure citizen engagement and service delivery performance. Interviews were carried out with selected agriculture officials and extension officers to get further information on the process of delivering agricultural services. The measurement of citizen engagement was based on factors such as citizen interaction and involvement in agricultural programs, while the service delivery performance was based on the accessibility of services and satisfaction level of customers.

Validity of the research instruments was used to assess whether the instruments measure what they were meant to measure. This was done to ensure that they were fit for use in the study. Validity is defined as the extent to which an instrument is able to measure what it is supposed to measure (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In this study, both content and construct validities were utilized. Content validity was achieved after reviewing the research instruments by the supervisors and experts in agricultural governance to ensure that there was a good coverage of the constructs. Construct validity was achieved through alignment of the questionnaire items to the study conceptual framework.

Reliability of the instruments was achieved through Cronbach Alpha coefficient. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable, indicating that the measurement items were sufficiently reliable for assessing the study variables (Taber, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data was coded, cleaned and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations were utilized in analyzing demographic information and perceptions regarding citizen engagement and service delivery. Inferential statistics was used in determining the relationship between citizen engagement and service delivery. Pearson correlation analysis was performed in order to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the study variables while simple linear regression analysis was performed in establishing the contribution of citizen engagement to service delivery. Qualitative data acquired from interview responses were thematically analyzed by drawing recurrent patterns and themes on citizen engagement and agricultural service delivery. Findings were summarized in tables.

The relationship between citizen engagement and service delivery was established through the application of simple linear regression analysis as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots [Equation 1]$$

Where: Y = Service Delivery; X_1 = Citizen Engagement; β_0 = Constant; β_1 = Regression coefficient; ϵ = Error term

The model was used in determining the degree to which citizen engagement predicts service delivery outcomes in the agricultural sector. The model is consistent with the conceptual framework because it focused on the relationship between the study variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis of Citizen Engagement

The descriptive analysis investigated how active citizens were engaged in the provision of agricultural services in Kericho County. The level of citizen engagement was measured by the use of indicators such as participation opportunities, attendance at agricultural forums, interaction with agricultural officers, and participation in agricultural forums. Respondents provided their answers in a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation values were determined.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Professional Development

Statement	SD F (%)	D F (%)	N F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Opportunities to attend agricultural public forums are available	10 (2.6)	34 (8.7)	78 (20.0)	205 (52.6)	63 (16.2)	3.71	0.92
Forum schedules are communicated in advance	14 (3.6)	52 (13.3)	101 (25.9)	173 (44.4)	50 (12.8)	3.45	1.01
Agricultural forums are held regularly	20 (5.1)	68 (17.4)	108 (27.7)	151 (38.7)	43 (11.0)	3.33	1.09
Citizens are encouraged to express their views	11 (2.8)	39 (10.0)	83 (21.3)	199 (51.0)	58 (14.9)	3.65	0.95
Adequate time is provided for participation during meetings	16 (4.1)	59 (15.1)	101 (25.9)	166 (42.6)	48 (12.3)	3.44	1.03
Participation in agricultural forums is meaningful	24 (6.2)	81 (20.8)	116 (29.7)	133 (34.1)	36 (9.2)	3.19	1.11
Opportunities exist to contribute during planning processes	19 (4.9)	67 (17.2)	108 (27.7)	153 (39.2)	43 (11.0)	3.34	1.06
Citizens' contributions influence agricultural programs	28 (7.2)	88 (22.6)	121 (31.0)	121 (31.0)	32 (8.2)	3.10	1.12
Recommendations from previous forums are implemented	31 (7.9)	96 (24.6)	123 (31.5)	112 (28.7)	28 (7.2)	3.03	1.13
Agricultural extension officers are accessible for consultation	15 (3.8)	58 (14.9)	96 (24.6)	170 (43.6)	51 (13.1)	3.47	1.03
Overall						3.37	1.04

Source: Researcher, 2026

From Table 1, it can be noted that the overall mean score for citizen engagement was 3.37 (SD = 1.04). From the above score, the respondents' perception was positive but neutral towards citizen engagement in agricultural service delivery. It means that the opportunity for citizen engagement existed; however, respondents were uncertain as far as their participation was concerned in terms of its effect on the agricultural decisions made. The above finding concurs with that of Álvarez-Mingote & McNamara (2018) in their studies where they found that a participatory agricultural extension approach provided an opportunity for citizens' engagement and responsiveness to citizens' expressed needs, although there were still some problems relating to participation and influence.

Opportunities to participate in agricultural public forums had the highest mean score of 3.71 (SD = 0.92). A total of 205 respondents (52.6%) agreed, 63 (16.2%) strongly agreed that opportunities to participate in public forums were available, 78 (20.0%) were neutral, 34 (8.7%) disagreed, and 10 (2.6%) strongly disagreed. The finding demonstrates that farmers and other agricultural stakeholders had opportunities to interact with county agricultural authorities and participate in agricultural governance through public forums. This finding agrees with Kansime et al. (2020), who established that farmers participated in demand-driven agricultural advisory mechanisms and that continued participation was associated with the perceived usefulness of the agricultural advice received.

Schedule of forums was mostly communicated beforehand, with a mean score of 3.45 (SD = 1.01). In total, 173 (44.4%) of the respondents agreed and 50 (12.8%) strongly agreed, whereas 101 (25.9%) were neutral, 52 (13.3%) disagreed, and 14 (3.6%) strongly disagreed. The result shows that stakeholders were mostly informed about the participation beforehand, thus enabling them to prepare for the meeting. However, the difference in responses shows that the communication did not reach stakeholders equally effectively at different locations. The result highlights the importance of communication as a component of citizen participation since farmers require enough information on participation opportunities to engage effectively with agricultural organizations.

The agricultural forums were mostly conducted on a moderate basis, with a mean score of 3.33 (SD = 1.09). While 151 respondents (38.7%) agreed and 43 (11.0%) strongly agreed that forums were conducted regularly, 108 (27.7%) of the participants were neutral, 68 (17.4%) disagreed, and 20 (5.1%) strongly disagreed. The result shows that even if the forums for participation exist, their frequency may not always be adequate enough to solve agricultural issues. The result agrees with Álvarez-Mingote et al. (2020) who found that stakeholder platforms help in identifying agricultural issues since they provide means of interaction and coordination.

In general, citizens were encouraged to air their opinions at agricultural forums with a mean score of 3.65 (SD = 0.95). In total, 199 respondents (51.0%) agreed and 58 (14.9%) strongly agreed, while 83 (21.3%) were neutral, 39 (10.0%) disagreed and 11 (2.8%) strongly disagreed. This finding indicates that there was a space where participants in agricultural participation forums were allowed to voice their opinions concerning agricultural programs. This is in line with the findings of Rop et al. (2022), who established that multi-stakeholder platforms offered interactions among actors in agricultural innovation systems to share information on the agricultural development process.

In relation to the adequacy of time allocated for participation at forums, a mean score of 3.44 (SD = 1.03) was recorded. In total, 166 respondents (42.6%) agreed and 48 (12.3%) strongly agreed, while 101 (25.9%) were neutral, 59 (15.1%) disagreed and 16 (4.1%) strongly disagreed. The finding indicates that in most cases the time allocated for participation was found to be adequate. The finding highlights that citizen participation should not be limited to merely attending forums but also expressing their views and exchanging information.

The participation in agricultural forums was relatively low in terms of meaningfulness, having a mean of 3.19 (SD = 1.11). There were 133 respondents (34.1%) agreeing and 36 (9.2%) strongly agreeing that participation was meaningful. Meanwhile, 116 respondents (29.7%) were neutral, 81 respondents (20.8%) disagreed, and 24 respondents (6.2%) strongly disagreed. This implies that the participants had uncertainties in regards to whether there were meaningful results in participation. The above conclusion is consistent with Shumeta and D'Haese (2022), who established that meaningful participation entails increased efforts in involving members of agricultural organizations.

The opportunities for contributing to agricultural planning processes scored a mean of 3.34 (SD = 1.06). Out of the participants, 153 respondents (39.2%) agreed and 43 (11.0%) strongly agreed, while 108 respondents (27.7%) were neutral, 67 respondents (17.2%) disagreed, and 19 respondents (4.9%) strongly disagreed. This

is indicative of neutral attitudes towards opportunities for citizen participation in agricultural planning. Although the opportunities for participation were present, all participants did not necessarily participate at the same level in the planning processes. Thus, this shows that the participation structure was present but its efficiency would depend on how the opportunities were provided to the farmers to contribute to decisions about agricultural programmes. This finding is consistent with Mbithi et al. (2019), who established that public participation in Kenya's county governments is influenced by factors such as access to information, citizens' ability to influence decision-making, and responsiveness of county institutions.

Citizen contribution in shaping agricultural programmes achieved an average score of 3.10 (SD = 1.12). A total of 121 respondents (31.0%) agreed and 32 (8.2%) strongly agreed, while 121 (31.0%) were neutral, 88 (22.6%) disagreed, and 28 (7.2%) strongly disagreed. The results indicate uncertainty on whether there was any change due to citizens' contribution to agricultural programmes. This means that although farmers participated in agriculture, they were uncertain whether they influenced the final decision. This result is similar to the findings of Moguees et al. (2023) that citizen participation through community-based monitoring facilitates better information sharing, accountability, and interaction between service providers and users.

Implementation of recommendations made in previous forums was among the lowest average score (M = 3.03, SD = 1.13). A total of 112 respondents (28.7%) agreed and 28 (7.2%) strongly agreed that recommendations have been implemented, while 123 (31.5%) were neutral, 96 (24.6%) disagreed, and 31 (7.9%) strongly disagreed. The results indicate uncertainty on whether recommendations from agricultural forums have led to practical solutions. This finding is supported by Waddington et al. (2019), who found that the efforts to engage citizens can positively affect the performance of public services if there are mechanisms of accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to citizens' grievances.

Access to agricultural extension officers for consultations had an average score of 3.47 (SD = 1.03). A total of 170 respondents (43.6%) agreed and 51 (13.1%) strongly agreed about the accessibility of extension officers, whereas 96 (24.6%) were neutral, 58 (14.9%) disagreed, and 15 (3.8%) strongly disagreed. It was found that extension officers were still very crucial in linking farmers and agricultural institutions since they provided technical advice and consultation. This finding implies that interaction of farmers and agricultural officers directly enables farmers' access to agricultural information and facilitates communication between service providers and consumers. This finding supports the findings by Mungai et al. (2024), who showed that agricultural extension is an important part of connecting farmers to technical knowledge.

The qualitative findings provided further explanation of the quantitative results. Respondents indicated that public participation forums, training forums, cooperatives, and ward-level consultation meetings provided opportunities for farmers to interact with agricultural officers and communicate issues affecting agricultural production. Respondent R092 stated that *"the forums offer farmers a chance to air out their problems and propose solutions to the problems in discussion directly to the agricultural officers."* Similarly, R148 explained that *"in such meetings, we are given an opportunity to voice our opinions about issues affecting farming, and our opinions are taken into account when planning such programs."* These responses demonstrate that engagement forums created opportunities for interaction between farmers and agricultural institutions, enabling farmers to communicate their needs and experiences. This finding agrees with Mganga et al. (2023), who established that multi-stakeholder participation strengthens collaboration among agricultural actors by creating opportunities for interaction, knowledge exchange, and joint decision-making during agricultural development initiatives.

The qualitative findings further showed that participation was affected by practical considerations such as distance, timing of meetings, and competing farming activities. Respondent R201 indicated that participation was higher when meetings addressed issues directly affecting farmers' livelihoods, including agricultural inputs, markets, and farming challenges. Similarly, R267 explained that some farmers did not participate because *"meetings are being held away from them or during the period when farming is taking place."* These

responses demonstrate that citizen engagement depends not only on the existence of participation platforms but also on their accessibility and compatibility with farmers' daily activities. This finding is consistent with Lee et al. (2023), who established that geographical and accessibility factors influence farmers' ability to access agricultural extension services and participate effectively in agricultural support systems.

The respondents also emphasized the accessibility of agricultural officers and the opportunities provided for consultation. Respondent R173 stated that *"when we have issues regarding farming that need clarification, the extension officers are usually available during consultation and field visit days."* Similarly, R295 noted that *"the extension officers encourage farmers to ask questions and seek any guidance that they may require in any agriculture consultation."* These responses reinforce the quantitative finding that agricultural extension officers were relatively accessible to farmers. They demonstrate that interaction between farmers and extension personnel provides an important channel through which agricultural information, technical advice, and clarification of farming challenges can be provided. Ogola et al. (2023) established that access to agricultural extension services influences farmers' ability to obtain technical information and improve agricultural practices, demonstrating the importance of accessible and responsive agricultural advisory services.

Despite the availability of engagement opportunities, respondents raised concerns regarding whether their contributions were reflected in agricultural decisions and programmes. Respondent R361 stated that *"we give our ideas at consultations, but sometimes we do not see them in the final plans."* Similarly, R168 observed that *"people participate actively in decision making, but there is an impression that some decisions are already taken prior to consultation process."* These responses provide further explanation for the quantitative finding that citizens were uncertain about whether their contributions affected agricultural programmes. The findings suggest that while participation mechanisms existed, some farmers perceived a gap between expressing their views and seeing those views incorporated into final decisions. This finding agrees with Brown et al. (2021), who established that feedback processes within agricultural systems may experience disconnects between farmers' experiences, extension recommendations, and institutional decision-making processes.

Respondents further identified the need to strengthen citizen engagement through more frequent meetings, improved communication, and implementation of recommendations arising from participation forums. R226 suggested that *"there is a need to hold more meetings in the villages so that more farmers can attend them,"* while R347 indicated that more people would participate if they were confident that their views would shape agricultural projects and programmes. These responses reinforce the quantitative finding that implementation of recommendations from previous forums received the lowest rating among citizen engagement indicators. The finding demonstrates that farmers are more likely to perceive engagement as meaningful when institutions provide feedback and demonstrate that citizens' contributions influence subsequent actions. This finding is consistent with Abdullah et al. (2023), who established that effective participatory governance requires communication, feedback mechanisms, and institutional responsiveness to sustain citizens' confidence in engagement processes.

The key informant interviews further confirmed the importance of citizen engagement in agricultural service delivery. KII-05 stated that *"we conduct forums at various levels in order to give an opportunity to the farmers to air their challenges and suggest those areas that require support."* The finding demonstrates that agricultural institutions recognize engagement forums as mechanisms for identifying farmers' challenges and improving the relevance of agricultural interventions. This finding is consistent with Klerkx and Begemann (2020), who established that participatory approaches within agricultural innovation systems support collaboration among stakeholders and enhance the ability of agricultural institutions to respond to changing needs.

Similarly, KII-07 explained that involving farmers enables agricultural officers to identify specific challenges affecting different areas and plan interventions that address those challenges. However, the key informants also identified poor awareness, competing economic activities, and logistical challenges as constraints affecting participation. These findings suggest that although citizen engagement can improve the responsiveness of agricultural programmes, practical barriers continue to affect farmers' ability to participate consistently. This finding agrees with Ndzombane et al. (2024), who established that communication limitations, institutional challenges, and resource constraints affect farmers' access to agricultural support services.

Generally, the research findings reveal that the citizen engagement strategy allowed farmers the chance to engage in conversations on agriculture, share experiences, get the services of extension officers and engage with agricultural service providers. Nonetheless, participation was limited due to access issues, timing of the meetings, livelihood concerns and lack of information about whether the recommendations of the citizens were being adopted. The findings have revealed that for citizen engagement to play a positive role in agricultural service delivery, there must be consideration of more factors other than just having opportunities for participation.

For citizen engagement to be strengthened, it should involve more than just offering chances to engage. It requires ensuring that engagement activities take place in platforms that are accessible and inclusive, held regularly and linked to decision making and implementation process. When farmers believe that what they say matters and is being acted upon, then the citizen engagement can be said to make contribution to agricultural service delivery in Kericho County.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation between Citizen Engagement and Service Delivery

Variables	Citizen Engagement	Service Delivery
Citizen Engagement	1.000	0.718**
Service Delivery	0.718**	1.000

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As presented in Table 2, there was a significant positive correlation between citizen engagement and service delivery in the agricultural sector ($r = 0.718$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that increased levels of citizen engagement through agricultural forums, stakeholder consultations, and agricultural extension officers had a direct impact on the effectiveness of agricultural service delivery. This implies that citizen engagement serves as a channel where farmers can voice their concerns, impart local knowledge, highlight shortcomings in service delivery, and engage with service providers.

This study finding is in line with that by Sonnenfeld et al. (2024), who indicated that mechanisms of citizen engagement lead to better development outcomes through enhancing participation, accountability, and relations between citizens and service providers. The strong positive correlation further indicates that citizen engagement is an important factor associated with agricultural service delivery in Kericho County. However, correlation does not establish causation; therefore, the subsequent regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of citizen engagement on agricultural service delivery.

Regression Analysis

The model summary illustrates how much citizen engagement is likely to predict service delivery, with R^2 referring to the explained variance while adjusted R^2 refers to the generalizability of the model.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.718	0.516	0.514	0.371

Predictor: Citizen Engagement

The regression result shows an R^2 of 0.516, meaning that citizen engagement accounts for 51.6% of the variance in service delivery. This means that citizen engagement is a predictor of service delivery. The adjusted R^2 is 0.514, indicating little shrinkage of R^2 and suggesting that the model has good explanatory capability. The remaining 48.4% of the variance in service delivery is accounted for by other variables not included in the model.

Regression Coefficients

Regression Coefficients are used to show how professional development influences teacher welfare.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.438	0.196	–	2.235	0.026
Citizen Engagement	0.391	0.061	0.417	6.410	0.000

Source: Researcher, 2026

The finding in Table 4 shows that there is a positive and statistically significant effect of citizen engagement on service delivery ($\beta = 0.417$, $p = 0.000$). This means that the higher the level of citizen engagement, the higher the level of agricultural service delivery. More specifically, an increase by one unit of citizen engagement results in an increase in service delivery by 0.391 units, holding other factors constant. The finding indicates that increased opportunities for citizens to engage with agricultural service providers are associated with improved agricultural service delivery in Kericho County. The positive coefficient further indicates that citizen engagement contributes positively to variations in service delivery. Overall, the regression analysis indicates that citizen engagement has a positive and statistically significant effect on service delivery in the agricultural sector in Kericho County.

Summary of Findings

The findings from the research have demonstrated that there is a statistically significant positive association between citizen engagement and service delivery in the agricultural sector in Kericho County. According to the descriptive findings, citizen engagement had a moderately positive perception by the respondents ($\bar{x} = 3.37$, $SD = 1.04$). This indicates that there was an existence of participation, views expression, and interaction opportunities between citizens and agricultural extension officers.

However, in addition to that, qualitative findings have supported the above findings by demonstrating that citizen engagement provided farmers with the opportunity to air their views, interact with agricultural officers, and participate in agricultural programs. However, limitations in terms of accessibility, time for meeting, engagement with farm-related activities, and uncertainties about implementation of recommendations hindered the process of engagement.

Correlation analysis revealed a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship between citizen engagement and service delivery ($r = 0.718$, $p < 0.001$). In regression analysis, it has been shown that citizen engagement is a significant predictor of service delivery ($\beta = 0.417$, $p < 0.001$). It means that one unit increase in citizen engagement increases service delivery by 0.391 units. The model has accounted for 51.6% of the variance in service delivery ($R^2 = 0.516$).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study finds out that citizen participation is a significant predictor of service delivery in the agricultural sector in Kericho County. This was evident through the results obtained from the analysis of the data collected. The study finds out that citizen participation is significant in service delivery but is influenced by certain things like access to participation, time of participation, other farming activities and implementation of recommendations among others. Limited access to participation and lack of proper follow-ups might limit the impact of citizen participation in service delivery. Citizen participation has a positive and statistically significant impact on agricultural service delivery in Kericho County.

The following recommendations are proposed based on the findings and conclusions from the research.

The Kericho County government ought to enhance citizen participation in the agriculture sector through more frequent forums on agriculture and making these forums accessible to farmers and other agricultural participants. Information about forum dates should also be provided in good time and farmers' participation in the forums ensured. Agricultural extension officers should also be enabled to interact with farmers. The officials in the county should also clarify to the citizens how their opinions and recommendations are considered when developing agricultural programs.

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