



Feeding the nation

Kenyan citizens' experiences and opinions on household agriculture

1. Introduction

Subsistence agriculture has long played an important role in households' livelihoods in Kenya, and agricultural production by households has made up a large part of Kenyan food production. Nevertheless, with an ever-increasing proportion of the population living in urban areas, and more people setting up in business or taking up formal employment, the economy has become highly diversified.

And yet, while household level agriculture may not contribute a large percentage of the country's GDP, it remains a vital part of individual households' livelihoods as well as the wider Kenyan food economy.

Further, the wider context has created a difficult environment for agriculture in 2020. There has been flooding in some areas and widespread locust invasion. And of course the COVID-19 pandemic has affected markets and prices in various ways.

This brief presents data on Kenyan citizens' opinions and experiences on matters relating to households' agricultural practices. What proportion of households engage in some form of agriculture, and what forms do they engage in? Is this their main source of income or a secondary source? Do they own land? And have they experienced any recent land disputes?

Data for this brief come from a special round of Twaweza's *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile-phone panel survey. This was created through random sampling from a database of contacts from previous surveys to establish a new representative panel of the country's population. Statistical weightings have been applied to the panel, to ensure it is fully representative at national level, for rural and urban areas, as well as for Nairobi and Mombasa. For this brief, data were collected

This brief was written and produced by Twaweza East Africa.

P. O. Box 13784-00800, Nairobi, Kenya
t: +254 715 563720, +254 786 563722
e: info@twaweza.org | www.twaweza.org/sauti

Sauti za Wananchi





from 3,000 respondents in the second round of the special *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between 17 August and August 29, 2020.

Key findings include:

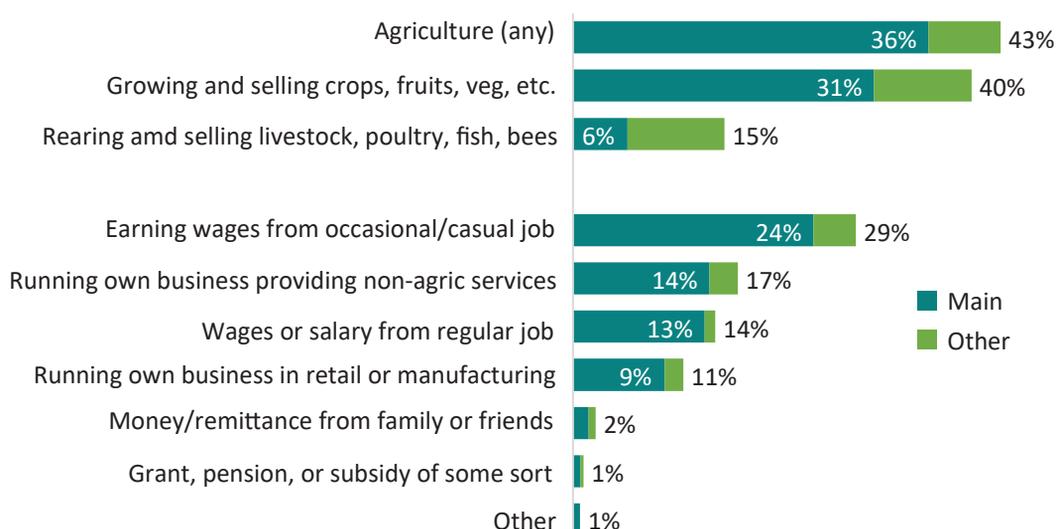
- Close to half of households engage in agriculture to provide a source of income
- 1 out of 3 households grow food crops and 1 out of 5 grow cash crops
- Maize and beans dominate crop production by Kenyan households
- 3 out of 10 households store crops after the harvest
- The most widely reared animals are dairy cattle and indigenous chickens
- 4 out of 10 households hold or own some farmland
- 1 out of 20 households has experienced land conflict in the past year

2. Kenyans' experiences and opinions in agriculture

Insight 1: Close to half of households engage in agriculture to provide a source of income

Close to half of households (43%) engage in some form of agricultural activities as a source of income, including more than one out of three households (36%) where this is the household's main source of income. Four out of ten households (40%) grow and sell crops, fruit and vegetables, etc. including three out of ten (31%) for which this is their main source of income. For one in twenty households (6%) rearing and selling livestock and related products is the main source of income, and a further one out of ten households (9%) do this as a secondary source of income.

**Figure 1: What are the various sources of income for this household?
Of these, which is the main source?**



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);

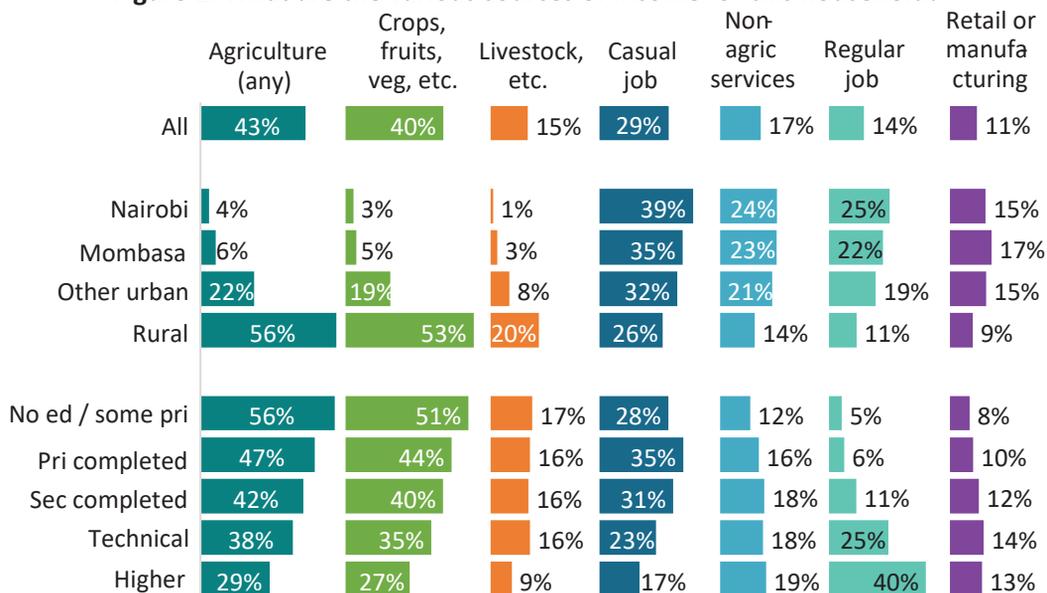
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Agricultural activities as a source of income are, understandably, much higher in rural areas (56%) than in either Nairobi (4%) or Mombasa (6%), though a significant number of households in other urban areas (22%) earn some income in this way.

In rural areas, just under half of households (47%) list agriculture as their main source of household income (not shown in charts).

Agriculture, particularly growing and selling crops, is also more common among households with lower levels of education than among those with high levels.

Figure 2: What are the various sources of income for this household?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);

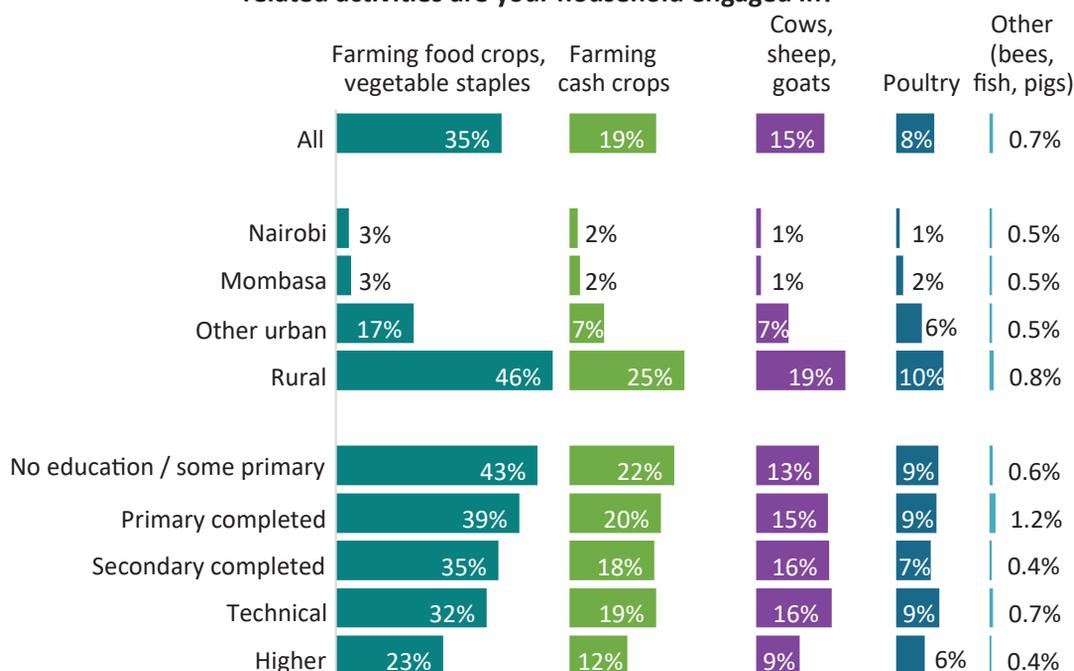
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 2: 1 out of 3 households grow food crops and 1 out of 5 grow cash crops

The most widespread agricultural activities that households are engaged in are growing food crops (35%), cash crops (19%), livestock (15%) and poultry (8%).

As before, these are more common in rural areas than in the cities, though still significant in urban Kenya outside Nairobi and Mombasa. These activities are also strongly linked to education, practiced more by households with lower levels of education than by those with higher levels.

Figure 3: Which of these agricultural and farming-related activities are your household engaged in?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

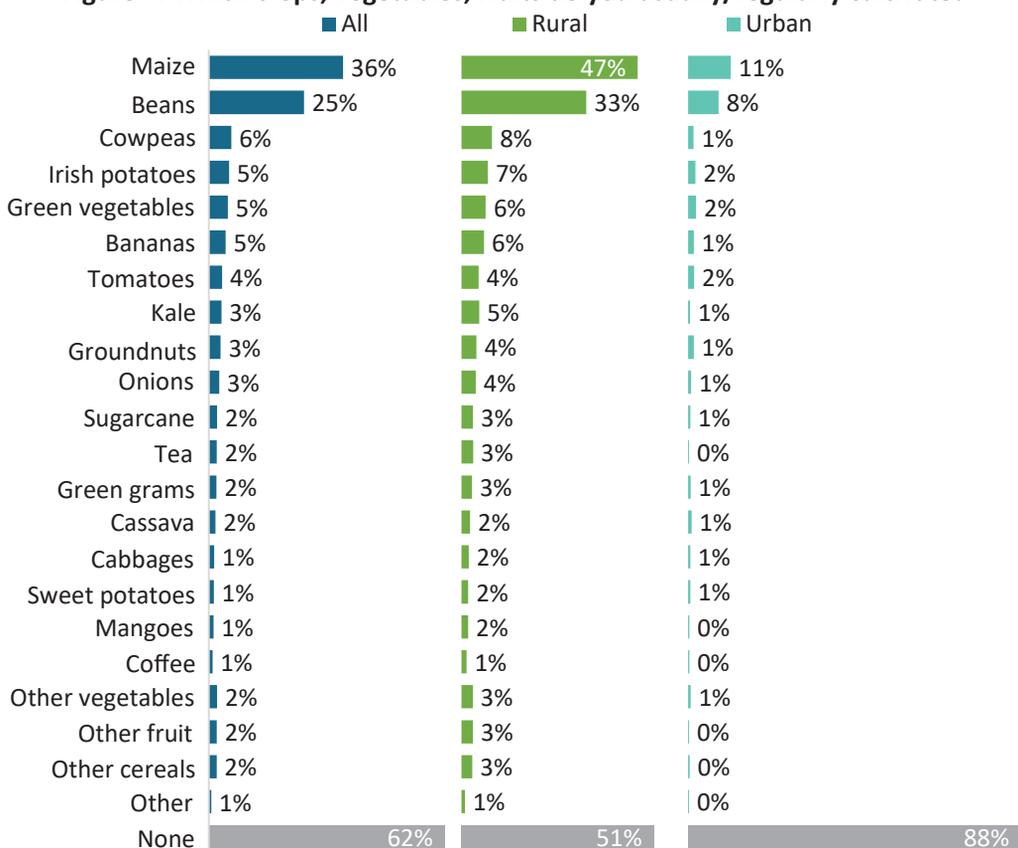
Insight 3: Maize and beans dominate crop production by Kenyan households

One out of three Kenyan households (36%) grows maize, including one out of ten (11%) urban households and rising to half (47%) of rural households.

Beans are also widely cultivated, by one out of four households (25%), rising to one out of three (33%) households in rural areas.

A wide variety of other crops are also cultivated, including cowpeas (6%), Irish potatoes (5%), green vegetables (5%), bananas (5%), tomatoes (4%), kales (3%), groundnuts (3%) and onions (3%).

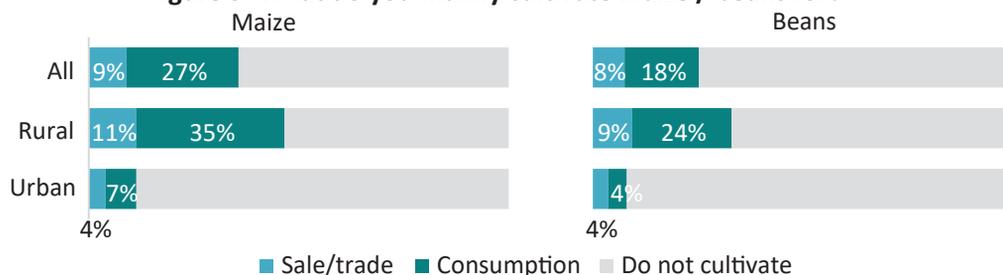
Figure 4: Which crops, vegetables, fruits do you usually/regularly cultivate?



Source: Sauti za Wananchi special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Both maize and beans are cultivated primarily for consumption rather than for sale, though in each case around one out of ten households cultivates these crops mainly for sale (11% for maize, 9% for beans).

Figure 5: What do you mainly cultivate maize / beans for?



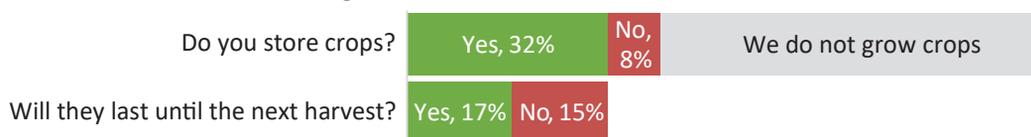
Source: Sauti za Wananchi special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 4: 3 out of 10 households store crops after the harvest

Three out of ten households (32%) store some of their crops after the harvest, while one out of ten (8%) cultivate crops but do not store any of the produce.

Among those who store crops, around half say what they store is sufficient to last until the next harvest, and half say it does not last that long. This means just under two out of ten households across the whole country (17%) produce and store enough crops to last all year.

Figure 6: Do you currently store any of your crops after the harvest? If so, is this enough to feed the household until the next harvest?

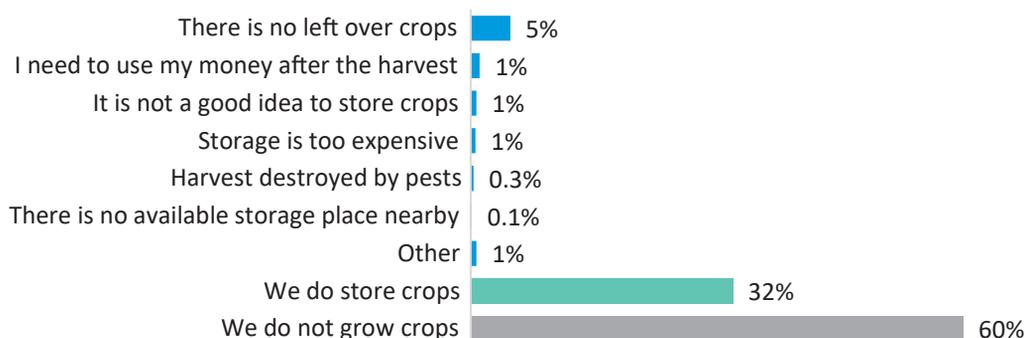


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);

Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

The main reason given for not storing crops after the harvest is that there is nothing left over (after selling the produce, for example). Other reasons include a need for money, and problems with storage.

Figure 7: Do you store any of your crops after the harvest? If not, why not?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);

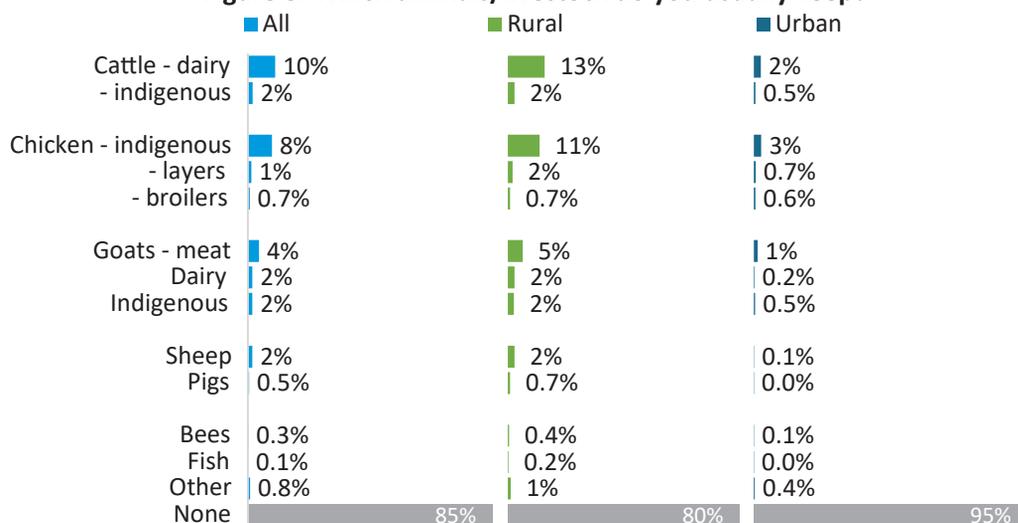
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 5: The most commonly reared animals are dairy cattle and indigenous chickens

One out of ten households (10%), rising a little in rural areas (13%) keep dairy cattle, more than any other type of animal. This is followed by indigenous chickens, kept by 8% of Kenyan households and 11% in rural areas.

Significant numbers of households also keep goats and sheep, or other types of chickens.

Figure 8: Which animals/livestock do you usually keep?



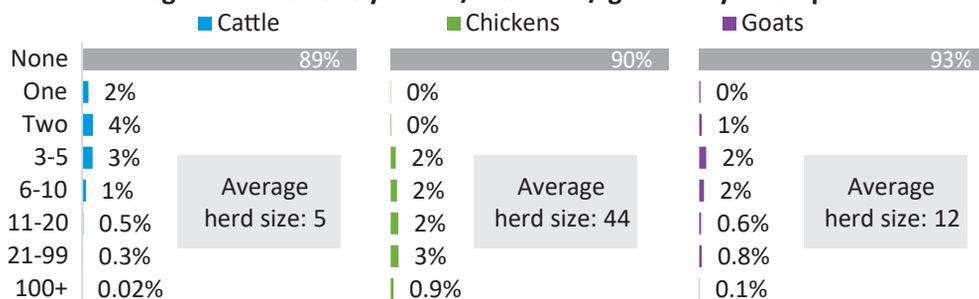
Source: Sauti za Wananchi special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);

Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Most households keep no more than ten cattle and no more than ten goats, though it is not uncommon for households to keep a large number of chickens. One out of a hundred households (1%) keeps more than one hundred chickens.

Among those who keep cattle, the average herd size is five animals, while for goats it is 12. Among those who keep chickens, the average flock size is 44 birds.

Figure 9: How many cattle / chickens / goats do you keep?



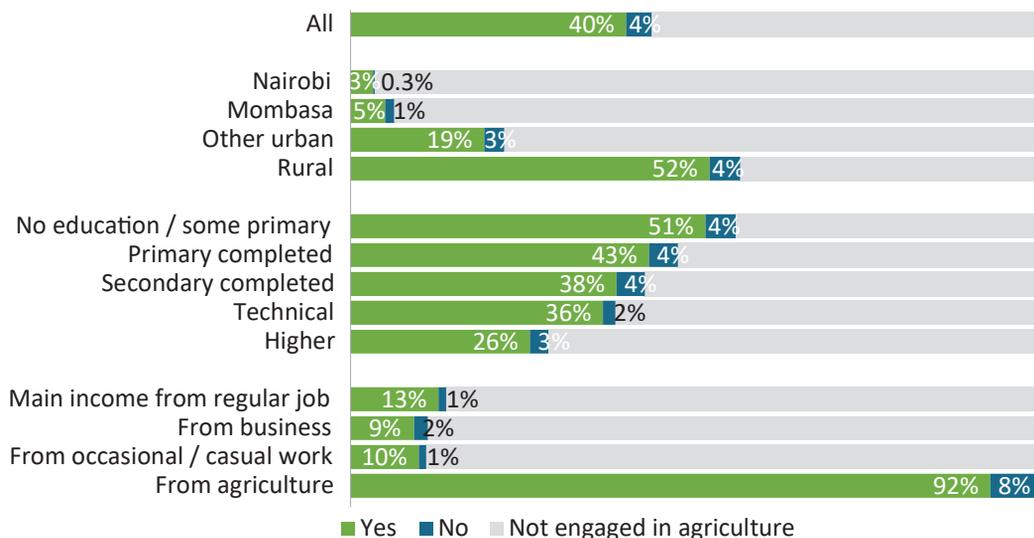
Source: Sauti za Wananchi special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);

Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 6: 4 out of 10 households hold or own some farmland

Four out of ten households (40%) hold or own some farmland. This rises to five out of ten (52%) in rural areas while falling to one out of twenty in Nairobi (3%) and Mombasa (5%). Two out of ten households (19%) in other urban areas have some farmland.

Figure 10: Do you or your household hold/own a piece/parcel of farmland?

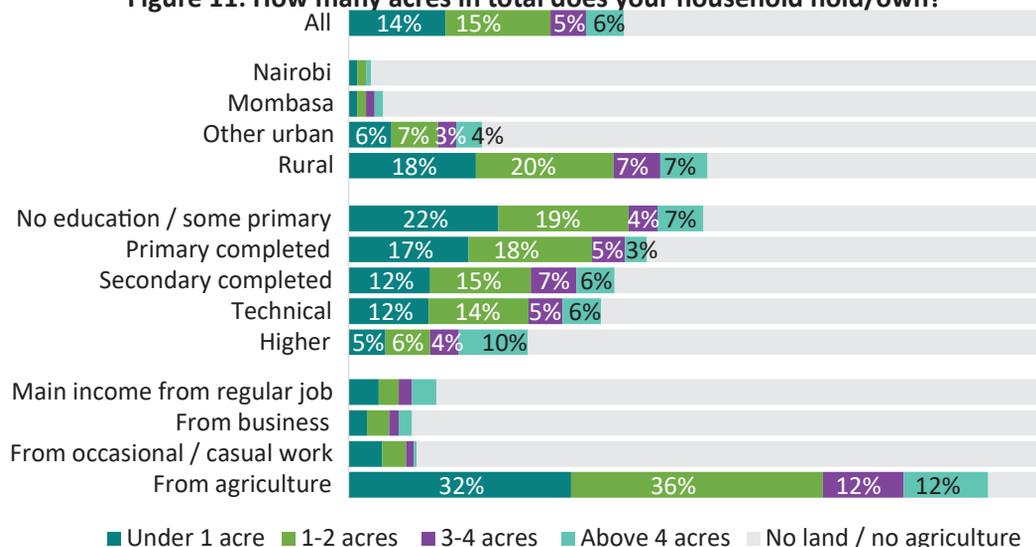


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Most households hold only a small acreage of farmland: three out of ten households (29%) hold two acres or less, while one out of ten (11%) hold more than two acres.

Although better educated households are less likely to engage in agriculture, they are more likely than poorly-educated households to hold more than four acres of farmland. One out of ten households with higher education (10%) holds more than four acres, while just 3% of those with primary education hold this much.

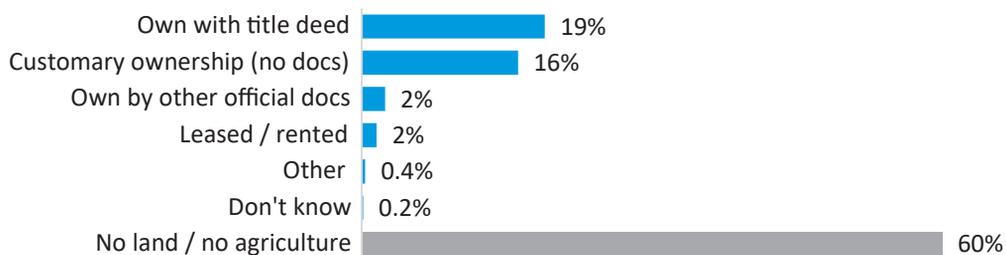
Figure 11: How many acres in total does your household hold/own?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Those who hold land are split evenly between those who own the land with a title deed (19%) and those who hold ownership through customary law with no documents (16%). Small numbers own or hold their land in other ways, including 2% who lease or rent their farmland.

Figure 12: Which kind of holding/ownership does your household have?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 7: 1 out of 20 households has experienced land conflict in the past year

One out of twenty households (5%) has experienced some form of conflict or similar issue over the farmland they hold or own in the past year. This is equivalent to one out of eight land-holding households (13%).

Figure 13: In the past year, has your household experienced any conflict/ issues over the land you hold/own?

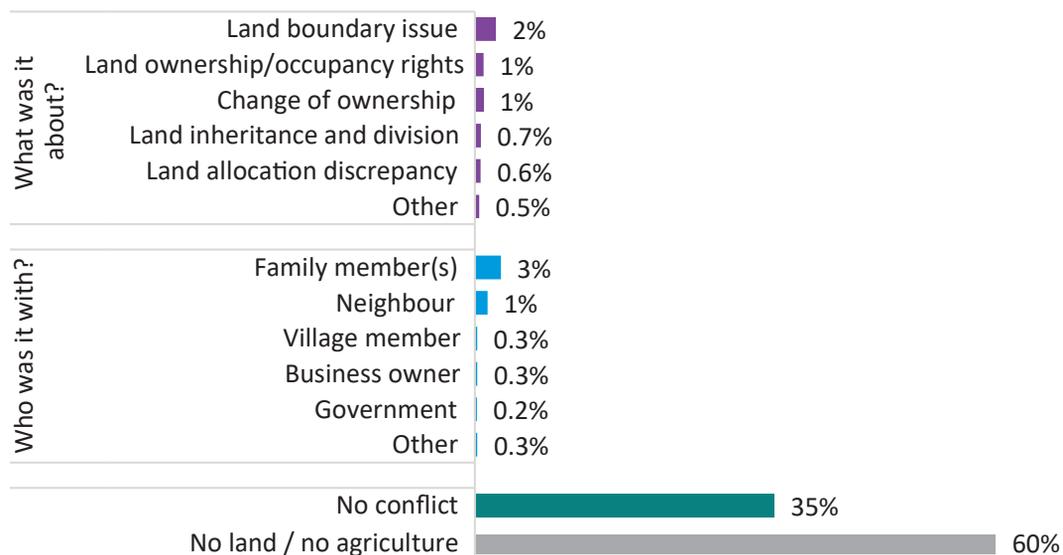


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

The most common form of such conflict is land boundary disputes (2%), though others also experienced disputes over occupancy or ownership rights (1%) or related to a change of ownership (1%).

In most cases, the dispute was with (an)other family member(s) (3%) or a neighbour (1%).

Figure 14: What was the conflict about? And who was it with?
(multiple responses permitted)



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* special panel round 2 (17 Aug - 29 Aug, 2020);
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

3. Conclusions

Household-level agriculture continues to play a major role in Kenyans' livelihoods. Just under half of households engage in some form of agriculture, and for more than one third of households, this is their main source of income.

Unsurprisingly, rural households are far more likely to engage in agricultural activities than those in the cities of Nairobi and Mombasa. However, this should not lead us to conclude that everyone in rural areas is a farmer and that all farmers are in rural areas, for two reasons.

First, even in rural areas, fewer than half of households (47%) list any form of agriculture as their main source of income – and close to half (44%) say agriculture does not form any part of their income. And second, in urban areas beyond Nairobi and Mombasa, a significant number of households (22%) list agriculture as one of their sources of income, most of whom say this is their main source of income.

It is also the case – and unsurprising – that agriculture is much more common among households with lower levels of education than those with higher levels. But again, we should avoid the obvious conclusion, because even among households with higher education, three out of ten engage in agriculture, and such households are more likely than others to hold large plots of farmland.

Finally, and perhaps surprisingly, only a small number of households – fewer than one out of five across the country – store a sufficient amount of their harvest to last until the next harvest. As such, it would be misleading to describe Kenya, even rural Kenya, as a subsistence economy.