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The **Notebook #2** Agripreneur's

AGRICULTURE'S NEW GOLD RUSH
**WHY AGRICULTURE IS ATTRACTING BOTH
INNOVATORS AND OPPORTUNISTS**

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Editor's Note

Imagine investing your savings into a farming season with optimism. You purchase seed from what appears to be a reputable agrovet. You apply fertilizer carrying the branding of a trusted manufacturer. You follow advice from someone introduced as an agricultural expert. You prepare your land carefully, confident that your investment will reward months of hard work.

Then the rains come.

The seed fails to germinate as expected.

The fertilizer delivers little of the nutrients promised on the label. The "expert" who confidently prescribed a crop protection program suddenly becomes unreachable.

By the time you discover what went wrong, an entire season—and the income that depended on it—is already lost.

For many farmers, this scenario is no longer difficult to imagine. As agriculture becomes more commercial, technology-driven, and attractive to investors, the opportunities within the sector are expanding rapidly. Unfortunately, so too are the opportunities for those seeking to exploit farmers through counterfeit inputs, misleading advice, fraudulent contracts, and deceptive investment schemes. Agriculture is experiencing a modern gold rush.

Across Africa, governments are investing in food security, young people are entering agribusiness, financial institutions are developing agricultural products, and innovations such as artificial intelligence, precision farming, biotechnology, and digital advisory platforms are transforming the way food is produced.

Yet history teaches us that every gold rush attracts two kinds of people. Those determined to create value.

And those determined to exploit opportunity.

The challenge before us is not simply to accelerate agricultural innovation, but to ensure that trust grows alongside it.

Because when confidence in the agricultural system begins to erode, the consequences reach far beyond individual farmers. Investment slows. Innovation is questioned. Legitimate businesses suffer. Entire communities become reluctant to embrace new technologies after experiencing fraud or poor advice.

In the end, the greatest casualty is not only a failed harvest. It is trust.

This Special Commentary explores why trust has become the most valuable currency in modern agriculture, examines the growing risks threatening that trust, and considers what governments, institutions, agribusinesses, professionals, and farmers can do to protect the integrity of Africa's agricultural future.

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About This Publication

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This Month at a Glance

Current Issue

How AI and digital technologies are changing agriculture.

Focus

Preparing the next generation of farmers.

Key Insight

Technology is transforming agriculture—but people and skills remain at the heart of that transformation.

Takeaway

Africa's agricultural future depends on investing in young agripreneurs.

When Opportunity Becomes a Target



Trust Has Become an Economic Asset

Perhaps the greatest lesson from this transformation is that agriculture no longer depends solely on productive land, improved genetics, or favourable weather.

It increasingly depends on confidence.

Confidence that products meet quality standards.

Confidence that professional advice is evidence-based.

Confidence that contracts will be honoured.

Confidence that institutions responsible for regulation and certification can be relied upon.



When trust declines, innovation slows.

Farmers become hesitant to adopt new technologies.
Businesses face growing skepticism.

Investors become cautious.

The entire agricultural value chain pays the price.
For this reason, protecting trust is no longer simply a matter of consumer protection.

It has become an economic imperative.

Why Every Agricultural Boom Attracts More Than Innovation

Throughout history, every rapidly growing industry has experienced a similar pattern.

Periods of transformation create extraordinary opportunities for genuine innovators. They also create fertile ground for individuals seeking to exploit uncertainty, information gaps, and the optimism of those eager to participate. From the internet revolution to cryptocurrency, renewable energy, real estate, and artificial intelligence, each wave of innovation has attracted visionary entrepreneurs alongside fraudsters, counterfeit products, and self-proclaimed experts.

Agriculture is proving to be no exception.

Across Kenya and much of Africa, agriculture is undergoing a profound transformation. Governments are prioritizing food security, financial institutions are expanding agricultural lending, private investors are financing agribusinesses, and young entrepreneurs are entering the sector in unprecedented numbers. Technologies such as precision farming, greenhouse production, hydroponics, drone mapping, digital marketplaces, and artificial intelligence are reshaping how food is produced, marketed, and consumed.

For the first time in decades, agriculture is no longer viewed simply as a traditional occupation.

It is increasingly seen as an investment opportunity.

And wherever investment flows, opportunists inevitably follow.

A New Market for Exploitation

The modern farmer no longer purchases only seed and fertilizer.

Today's agricultural entrepreneur invests in technology, advisory services, machinery, digital platforms, financial products, carbon markets, crop insurance, certification schemes, irrigation systems, contract farming arrangements, and specialized training.

Each new opportunity expands the agricultural economy. Unfortunately, it also expands the number of ways dishonest actors can exploit farmers.

This shift has transformed agricultural fraud from isolated incidents into a sophisticated ecosystem of deception.

Counterfeit inputs imitate trusted brands with remarkable accuracy. Fake consultants market themselves through social media with little or no scientific training.

Fraudulent buyers promise premium prices before disappearing at harvest.

Online investment schemes target aspiring agripreneurs with unrealistic returns.

Even legitimate technologies can become harmful when promoted irresponsibly or without adequate technical understanding.

The challenge is no longer simply identifying bad products.

It is navigating an increasingly complex marketplace where credibility can be manufactured as easily as packaging.



THE NEW FACES OF AGRICULTURAL FRAUD

How Africa's Agricultural Boom Is Creating New Risks for Farmers and Entrepreneurs

Every economic transformation creates winners.

Unfortunately, it also creates opportunities for those seeking to profit through deception rather than innovation.

As agriculture becomes more profitable, technologically advanced, and investment-driven, the methods used to exploit farmers and agribusinesses are also evolving. Today's threats are no longer limited to stolen livestock or dishonest traders at local markets. They are increasingly sophisticated, digitally enabled, and often difficult to distinguish from legitimate businesses.

Understanding these emerging risks is not about creating fear.

It is about protecting confidence in one of Africa's most important economic sectors.

COUNTERFEIT INPUTS: A HARVEST LOST BEFORE IT BEGINS

Few investments are as important to a farmer as quality seed, fertilizer, crop protection products, and veterinary medicines.

Yet across many African markets, counterfeit agricultural inputs continue to infiltrate legitimate supply chains. Fraudulent products often imitate trusted brands through convincing packaging and labels, making them difficult to identify before they are used.

- **The consequences can be devastating.**
- **Poor germination.**
- **Reduced yields.**
- **Crop failure.**
- **Soil degradation.**

Financial losses that may take several seasons to recover from.

For many farmers, the greatest tragedy is not simply losing a harvest—it is losing confidence in genuine agricultural innovations that could have improved their productivity.

2. THE RISE OF THE "INSTANT AGRONOMIST"

The digital age has made agricultural information more accessible than ever before.

Unfortunately, it has also made it easier for individuals with limited technical knowledge to present themselves as agricultural experts. Social media platforms are increasingly filled with self-proclaimed consultants offering universal farming solutions, often without understanding local soils, climate conditions, crop physiology, pest dynamics, or production systems.

Agronomy is not simply the ability to grow crops.

It is a scientific discipline built upon soil science, plant nutrition, ecology, genetics, pathology, entomology, and years of practical experience.

When complex agricultural decisions are reduced to generic online advice, farmers often pay the price.

CONTRACTS THAT DISAPPEAR AT HARVEST

Contract farming has become an important pathway for improving market access and reducing production risks.

When managed responsibly, it provides farmers with predictable markets, technical support, and stable incomes.

Unfortunately, dishonest intermediaries have exploited this model.

Some promise premium prices before planting only to disappear when crops are ready for delivery.

Others introduce unexpected quality requirements after production has been completed, forcing farmers to accept lower prices or watch their produce go to waste.

Such experiences discourage participation in structured markets and weaken confidence in commercial agriculture.

DIGITAL AGRICULTURE, DIGITAL FRAUD

Technology has expanded opportunities for farmers like never before.

Digital finance.

Online marketplaces.

Virtual training.

Agricultural investment platforms.

Input delivery applications

But technology has also created new opportunities for deception.

Fraudulent online investment schemes promise unrealistic returns.

Fake suppliers advertise machinery and inputs that never arrive.

Unverified social media accounts promote miracle farming solutions without evidence.

In the digital age, misinformation can travel much faster than scientific knowledge.

Every thriving market depends on trust. Every fraudulent practice weakens it. Protecting agriculture therefore requires more than improving productivity—it requires protecting confidence in the systems that make innovation possible.



FINAL REFLECTION

The Gold Rush We Cannot Afford to Lose

The Gold Rush We Cannot Afford to Lose
Every generation experiences its defining economic opportunity.

For some, it was the Industrial Revolution.
For others, it was the rise of the internet.
Today, agriculture stands at a similar crossroads.

Across Africa, a quiet transformation is taking place. Young entrepreneurs are building agribusinesses, researchers are developing climate-resilient technologies, investors are financing agricultural innovation, and governments are recognising that food systems are central to economic resilience.

This is more than an agricultural revolution.
It is an economic one.

Yet history teaches us that every period of rapid growth comes with a choice.

We can build markets founded on innovation, professionalism and integrity.

Or we can allow misinformation, counterfeit products and short-term profiteering to undermine confidence in one of the continent's greatest opportunities.

The future will depend on which path we choose.
Agriculture does not simply require more investment.
It requires more leadership.
More professionalism.

More ethical entrepreneurs.
More competent advisors.
More institutions worthy of public trust.
Because when trust grows, markets grow.
When markets grow, businesses grow.

When businesses grow, communities prosper.
And when communities prosper, nations become more resilient.

Perhaps the greatest lesson from this issue is this:

Agriculture's greatest asset has never been fertile land alone.

It has always been people with the courage to innovate, the discipline to build, and the integrity to earn the trust of those they serve.

The next gold rush has already begun.

It is not beneath our feet.

It is growing in our fields.

The question is no longer whether agriculture will shape Africa's future.

The question is whether we will shape the future of agriculture.

Editor's Closing Note

Thank you for reading this edition of **The Agripreneur's Notebook**.

At Kilimo Corps Africa, we believe that meaningful agricultural transformation begins with informed conversations, evidence-based ideas, and practical action. Through this publication, we aim to explore the opportunities, challenges, and innovations shaping the future of African agriculture while inspiring a new generation of agripreneurs to build enterprises that create lasting value.

We invite you to continue this conversation with us.

Because the future of agriculture will not be written by spectators. It will be written by those who choose to lead.

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The ABOUT THE PUBLICATION Agripreneur's



ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

The Agripreneur's Notebook

The Agripreneur's Notebook is the flagship monthly publication of Kilimo Corps Africa. It examines the most important issues shaping agriculture in Kenya and across Africa, connecting current events with enterprise, innovation, technology, policy, and youth development.

Our mission is to inspire informed conversations and practical action that advance agripreneurship and strengthen Africa's food systems.

Every edition seeks to answer three simple questions:

- **What is happening?**
- **Why does it matter?**
- **What should we do next?**

ABOUT KILIMO CORPS AFRICA

Kilimo Corps Africa is a youth-led **think-and-do tank** dedicated to advancing agripreneurship, agricultural innovation, enterprise development, and sustainable food systems across Africa. Through research, capacity building, partnerships, and practical training, we empower young people to transform agriculture into a driver of economic opportunity and community development.

Our Work

- Thought Leadership & Research
- Agripreneurship Training
- Webinars & Masterclasses
- Podcast & Media
- Youth Enterprise Development
- Partnerships & Innovation

Coming Next Month

The Agripreneur's Notebook #3

Can Artificial Intelligence Solve Africa's Agricultural Extension Crisis?

As AI-powered advisory platforms become more common across Africa, can technology bridge the gap left by limited extension services—or are we overlooking the importance of human expertise?

Join the Conversation

We believe the future of African agriculture will be shaped through collaboration. We welcome ideas, feedback, research contributions, partnerships, and conversations from students, farmers, entrepreneurs, researchers, educators, policymakers, and development practitioners.

Let's build the future of African agriculture—together.

Connect With Us



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