Journal of Business and Management Sciences, 2026, Vol. 14, No. 3, 59-66
Available online at http://pubs.sciepub.com/jbms/14/3/2
Published by Science and Education Publishing
DOI:10.12691/jbms-14-3-2

Strategic Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision for Sustainable Performance of Agribusiness Firms in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Received July 21, 2026; Revised August 23, 2026; Accepted September 01, 2026

Abstract Sustainable performance is still a critical bottleneck in many agricultural ventures. Driven by consumer awareness, it has become a primary benchmark for organizational longevity, compelling modern enterprises to align financial metrics with environmental and social governance. Within Kiambu County, however, the sustainable performance of agribusiness firms remains severely compromised, threatening sector viability due to land fragmentation, shifting regulatory frameworks, market inefficiencies, and increasing operational costs. Such challenges call for appropriate strategic leadership practices that can effectively utilize organizational resources in enhancing sustainable performance. This study focused on the impact of organizational direction, defined as strategic leadership that involves the sharing of organizational vision, on sustainable performance amongst agribusiness companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. Based on the Resource-Based View and supported by the Transformational Leadership, and Contingency theories, the study used an explanatory research design. The target population involved 200 members of management team from 15 purposely selected agribusiness firms in Kiambu County. A sample size of 130 respondents was identified through the Yamane formula, with 122 responses translating to a response rate of 93.8%. The data was collected through the use of structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS which involved descriptive statistics for baseline profiling, alongside correlation and multiple regression analysis for hypothesis testing. The results indicated that the organizational direction has a statistically significant impact on sustainable performance (β = .324, p = .001). The study demonstrated that the strategic leadership role in enhancing sustainable performance is significantly increased through effective vision sharing. Based on these outcomes, this research recommends that the agribusiness organizations should develop internal strategic communication systems to guarantee constant and consistent alignment of vision within the organization.

Keywords: *Strategic leadership, organizational direction, sustainable performance, vision sharing, agribusiness, Kiambu County, strategic alignment*

Cite This Article: Urbanus Mwendwa, and Stephen Makau Muathe, "Strategic Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision for Sustainable Performance of Agribusiness Firms in Kiambu County, Kenya." *Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2026): 59-66. doi: 10.12691/jbms-14-3-2.

1. Introduction

The global business landscape has witnessed a great deal of evolution during the last two decades due to various factors such as increased environmental uncertainty, globalization, technological innovation, regulations, and stakeholders' expectations. Such changes have completely revolutionized the way organizational performance is understood, evaluated, and maintained. Classical performance measurement strategies that were mainly concerned with financial metrics including profitability, ROI (Return on Investment), and market shares are no longer considered sufficient measures of organizational success in the modern context. Modern organizational theory understands that organizational sustainability needs to incorporate considerations related not only to economic prosperity but also to ecological sustainability and social responsibility [1]. As such, contemporary academic discussions concerning strategic management place an emphasis on sustainability, necessitating the reassessment of leadership practices that ensure organizational sustainable performance.

Sustainable performance can be described as an organization's capacity to realize its immediate goals while preserving environmental resources and contributing to social well-being of future generations [2]. The term has become very significant in the case of the agribusiness because of the dependence of the industry on ecological environments, natural resources, and community production systems. Agribusiness operates in environments that are vulnerable to ecological degradation, climatic changes, resource availability and the existing laws. In such a way, sustainability is not only an option but a need for continued operations. The agribusiness organizations should, therefore, adopt sustainability practices that balance productivity with environmental and social sustainability.

There have been increasing demands on organizations globally to align themselves with sustainability standards. Stakeholders in organizations, especially investors and consumers, are becoming concerned about sustainability measures of organizations rather than the financial performance indicators of firms. Such increased demands have become even more significant in agribusiness because of the role played by the sector regarding food security, sustainable use of land and water, biodiversity conservation, and labor policies among others. The integration of sustainability measures in the strategic direction of organizations is, therefore, very important for competitiveness. Strategic leadership has thus emerged as an important factor determining whether organizations can successfully adapt to these changing requirements.

In sub-Saharan Africa, agribusiness organizations confront a number of structural problems that make it difficult for them to achieve sustainable growth. Some of these obstacles include limited financing options, fragmented supply chains, poorly developed agricultural extension services, poor infrastructural provisions, inadequate technology, and uneven policy execution [3]. These obstacles reduce organizational flexibility and prevent organizations from implementing sustainability measures through innovation. In some instances, these challenges are worsened by climate unpredictability that affects agricultural production. Agribusiness organizations thus require leadership frameworks that facilitate resilience, adaptation, and strategic orientation. Strategic leadership is therefore essential in allowing organizations to address these structural issues effectively.

Agribusiness is a key driver of economic growth, job creation, poverty reduction, and food security in Kenya. It plays an integral role in shaping the country's gross domestic product and providing jobs for millions of people directly and indirectly. Nonetheless, Kenyan agribusiness organizations continue to experience numerous challenges that hinder their sustainability, such as increasing operating expenses, inefficient markets, environmental destruction, inadequate processing facilities, and technological barriers. Such difficulties are especially acute in areas where urbanization and population increase put further pressure on agricultural resources. Ensuring sustainability performance in such environments requires leadership behaviors that include strategic thinking, flexibility, and teamwork among others. The above highlights the increasing significance of strategic leadership in the sustainable performance of agribusiness organizations.

Kiambu County presents an ideal setting for investigating the relationship between strategic leadership and sustainable performance in agribusiness organizations since the county serves as a strategically important agricultural region within Kenya. The region offers fertile volcanic soil, favorable climatic conditions, nearness to urban centers, and a diverse array of agricultural practices such as horticultural and dairy farming, poultry keeping, and food processing. This explains why the region remains one of the leading agricultural production zones in the country. However, despite the above strengths, agribusiness organizations operating within the region continue to confront various challenges, such as fragmented land ownership, encroaching urban development, unpredictable weather, escalating production costs, and low organizational efficiency. The above difficulties pose severe risks to organizational sustainability and require appropriate leadership interventions.

It is within complex and unpredictable organizational environments that leadership becomes an important factor influencing organizational resilience and performance. The strategic approach to organizational leadership allows organizations to anticipate environmental change, organize their resources, motivate employees, and develop organizational systems that sustain their competitive advantage in the future [4]. As opposed to transactional leadership that only emphasizes short-term effectiveness, strategic leadership is characterized by its long-term nature, adaptability, and organizational learning. The strategic approach to organizational leadership is very important for firms dealing with environmental uncertainty while pursuing sustainable development goals at the same time. In this context, organizational direction gains its strategic importance.

Direction is one of the key components of strategic leadership that implies not only the development of vision but also establishing long-term goals for the organization and setting its priorities. Organizational direction means leading organizational activities to a particular destination through defining clear purposes and understanding by all employees of their responsibilities. It is essential since it helps translate strategic ideas into organizational actions. Vision-sharing creates alignment, reduces ambiguity, and helps to build collective commitment to organizational goals. It is crucial for maintaining coordinated action within various departments within an organization. Organizational direction ensures the coherence required to implement the sustainability strategies within agribusiness companies where operational dependency is high.

Organizational vision-sharing is highly important within the context of agribusiness, especially when effective performance within the firm requires adequate coordination of efforts between managers, supervisors, technical officers, and workers within the organization. Vision-sharing ensures organizational coherence by guaranteeing a common understanding of strategic imperatives and goals within the organization. Vision-sharing increases commitment by fostering a sense of ownership of organizational goals among the members and encouraging participation during implementation. Moreover, organizational vision improves organizational adaptability through collective responses to various changes in the environment. These characteristics of organizational direction make it important in enhancing sustainable performance within the organization. This research therefore, examined organizational direction as a strategic leadership approach within agribusiness firms in Kiambu County.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Sustainable performance is still a critical bottleneck in many agricultural ventures such as the agribusiness firms [5]. It has emerged as a key metric of measuring organizational success owing to the rising demands placed on businesses to balance economic performance with environmental and social governance [1]. In general, organizations are expected to prove that their operations do not merely generate profits but also help preserve the environment and improve people's lives. Within the agribusiness industry, this alignment is vital due to the sector’s crucial role in food security, natural resource preservation, and rural development. Despite this evident compounding pressure, actualization of sustainable performance among agribusiness firms in Kiambu County continues to be heavily compromised, threatening their long-term sustainability.

In agricultural industry, sustainable performance is extremely pertinent due to the fact that such ventures tend to operate at the delicate intersection between agricultural efficiency, vulnerable ecosystems, and socio-economic processes in rural areas. However, while there is significant evidence indicating the value of sustainability, the vast majority of agribusiness companies opt out of adopting sustainable solutions for the sake of achieving short-term objectives that require less effort in terms of implementation. Therefore, in order to bridge these two types of goals, it becomes crucial for businesses to adopt new strategic leadership paradigms that will enable them to achieve sustainable success.

Importantly, although the need for effective strategic leadership as a requirement for organization resilience is well-documented, a considerable number of agribusiness organizations fail to have internal means to facilitate an efficient transfer and alignment of their strategy throughout the organization. Specifically, such an organizational design results in disorganized decision-making practices, ineffective coordination between departments, poor resource allocation, and an absence of strategic flexibility. Without any explicit strategic direction, front-line workers will not be aligned with the organization's overall developmental directions, negatively impacting the efficiency of the implementation process and preventing sustainable workflows.

Furthermore, while empirical studies have investigated the link between strategic leadership and performance outcomes within highly formalized industries (e.g., manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and public corporations), there is very limited knowledge about how organizational direction can influence the performance outcomes in Kenyan agribusiness organizations. Therefore, current research suffers from three key deficiencies. First, there is a contextual deficiency as the strategic management mainly focuses on non-agricultural industries. Moreover, there is a gap on the conceptual aspect where organizational direction directly influences multidimensional sustainable performance along the lines of economic, environment, and social facets. This study directly addresses these shortcomings through an empirical analysis of organizational direction as a structure that influences sustainable performance in agribusinesses within Kiambu County.

1.2. Objective of the Study

i. To examine the influence of organizational direction on the sustainable performance of agribusiness firms.
ii. To assess the effect of human capital on the sustainable performance of agribusiness firms.
iii. To investigate how organizational culture contributes to the sustainable performance of agribusiness firms.
iv. To evaluate the role of ethical practices in the sustainable performance of agribusiness firms.

2. Review of Literature

The review of literature offers the theoretical and empirical framework upon which this study is based. This review explores academic viewpoints about strategic leadership and sustainable performance, focusing especially on organizational direction as one of the vital aspects of strategic leadership.

2.1. Theoretical Review

In this research paper, three theories will form the foundation for understanding the role played by organizational direction in determining sustainable performance in agribusiness organizations in Kiambu County. They include Resource-Based View theory, Contingency Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory.

2.1.1. Resource-Based View Theory

The Resource-Based View, initially introduced by Penrose [6] and further developed by Barney [7], states that companies gain sustainable competitive advantage by using resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. In other words, according to the Resource-Based View, companies succeed only when they have sustainable sources of advantage within themselves rather than in the environment. Contrary to the market perspective, which is primarily oriented towards external factors, the Resource-Based View emphasizes the importance of internal organizational resources and capabilities as the main drivers of performance and strategy implementation. As a consequence, the theory offers an effective framework for discussing organizational direction as an intangible strategic capability.

For instance, in the context of this research, organizational direction emerges as a vital intangible organizational resource due to its contribution to strategic consistency and the coordination of organizational capabilities. In essence, organizational direction allows leaders to outline a coherent strategic vision that can be used to coordinate all employees' activities and resource allocation to ensure long-term sustainability. Through vision sharing, organizations can foster strategic consistency that will facilitate the coordination of actions and prevent disorganization. It therefore means that organizational direction can be seen as an asset in terms of valuable capability which is also difficult to imitate and adds value to organizational performance.

In the context of agribusiness organizations in Kiambu county, the theory indicates that the organizational direction can be viewed as an organizational capability that assists companies to adapt to the uncertain environment and coordinate efforts towards achieving sustainable development goals. As a result, managers will have the possibility to make sound decisions that contribute to sustainable performance and success of the company. From this perspective, the theory justifies the use of the assumption that sharing the vision positively impacts agribusiness performance.

2.1.2. Contingency Theory

The concept of Contingency Theory came up following studies of organizations which showed that there were no universal principles of managing organizations. Researchers like Fiedler [8] contended that there was no one-size-fits-all approach in leading an organization. Rather, leadership success depended on the extent of compatibility among the leadership style, organizational attributes, and the environment. Thus, adaptability and situational responsiveness were critical elements to successful leadership and organizational success. The contingency model can be applied to any industry with a high level of change in the environment due to the need to adjust strategies accordingly.

Agribusinesses run in highly volatile business environments due to variable cost levels, environmental uncertainties, government policies, unpredictable markets, and emerging technologies. Under these conditions, it becomes difficult for managers to keep up with changes and maintain appropriate strategies. As a result, leaders must always be ready to adapt to changing circumstances to guarantee success. However, rigid strategies do not suit agribusiness organizations since they are subject to numerous changes from the environment. Consequently, leaders have to be ready to adapt their organizational visions accordingly for sustainability.

In respect of agribusiness organizations in Kiambu County, it is clear that Contingency Theory helps explain the rationale behind why strategic leadership needs to remain dynamic in line with environmental changes. The difficulties faced by these organizations are such that they call for leaders who can effectively align organizational strategy to environmental dynamics. In this way, Contingency Theory adds credence to the notion that vision-sharing cannot be effective without environmental contingency and strategic responsiveness.

2.1.3. Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory, proposed by Burns [9] and further developed by Bass [10], revolves around the capability of leaders to motivate their followers through articulation of vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. According to this theory, transformational leaders instigate meaningful changes within organizations by raising followers' commitment to common goals. Contrary to transactional leadership, which is characterized by exchanges, the former places emphasis on long-term commitment and intrinsic motivation. One of its key components is vision communication, which renders the theory very relevant to research on organizational orientation.

One of the core hypotheses underlying Transformational Leadership Theory is that the leaders attain better organizational results through the communication of appealing visions of the future. Through vision sharing, leaders stimulate employees to put aside their selfish goals and focus on organization-wide ones. This contributes to building a sense of trust and motivating and emotionally engaging employees in the process, thus ensuring the effectiveness of implementation. Moreover, vision sharing fosters the development of shared identities and sense of purpose necessary for collective action. Leaders need to motivate their employees to adopt sustainability as a goal of an organization. By sharing vision, they can inspire employees to act in accordance with organizational goals.

2.2. Empirical Review

Different scholars have investigated the area of sustainable performance and how it is influenced by strategic leadership practices in diverse fields. This section explores the focus of previous studies, the methods they employed, and the findings they established.

2.2.1. Organization Direction and Sustainable Performance

Several empirical investigations show that organizational direction positively impacts on organizational performance and sustainability outcomes. According to Omuka and Miroga [11], organizational direction positively impacted performance of avocado export firms through effective technological responsiveness and efficient resource allocation strategies. Also, according to Korir [12], organizational strategic vision, goal clarification, and effective communication among other variables accounted for more than 60% of variability in climate-smart technologies' adoption in Uasin Gishu County. The results suggest that organizational direction improves adaptability and helps in implementing sustainability-related initiatives. Moreover, Ngaruiya, K'Aol, and Njenga [13] revealed statistically significant associations between organizational direction and organizational performance of pharmaceutical companies operating in Kenya.

However, existing literature suffers from certain contextual and conceptual limitations. Most studies are limited to large corporations, export businesses, or organizations outside agribusiness industry. Besides, previous literature has focused on either operational efficiency or technology adoption and not sustainable performance that involves multiple dimensions including economic, environmental, and social aspects. As such, there is limited research on how organizational direction impacts on sustainable performance within agribusiness small-medium sized businesses. In light of this situation, this study will try to fill the existing literature gap by investigating organizational direction as an antecedent of sustainable performance.

2.2.2. Human Capital and Sustainable Performance

The role of human capital as an essential factor influencing sustainable organizational performance has received wide recognition. According to Delery and Roumpi [14], human capital can be defined as the knowledge, competences, skills, and learning potential of employees necessary for organizations to realize their strategic goals. As illustrated by the empirical study of

Korir [12], training, coaching, and extension accounted for 72% of the variation in the adoption of solar photovoltaic systems in agricultural enterprises. Such results suggest that employee capability building has a positive effect on the implementation of sustainable practices.

Still, most of the current studies concentrate on technology adoption without considering other practices, including resource conservation, waste management, and environmental activities. In addition, many authors discuss human capital as something that relates to formal training programs ignoring informal learning approaches, including mentoring and knowledge sharing. Thus, there is a lack of studies investigating the relationship between strategic leadership, human capital, and sustainable performance in agribusiness SMEs. It means that the research gap associated with this topic is still substantial.

2.2.3. Organizational Culture and Sustainable Performance

Organizational culture affects the translation of organizational values, norms, and strategic focus into practice. According to Driskill [15], organizational culture affects organizational attitude, innovativeness, flexibility, and alignment to organizational goals. Furthermore, Korir [12] showed that organizational culture explains 66.8% of variance in the use of solar photovoltaic technologies, thus cultures that foster innovation and sustainability promote rapid adoption of eco-friendly practices. On a similar note, Ngaruiya, K'Aol, and Njenga [13] identified that innovative and proactive cultures had positive impacts on profitability, growth, and organizational learning among pharmaceutical firms in Kenya.

Despite the importance of organizational culture highlighted by the above scholars, the majority of literature comes from regulated industries that have nothing to do with agribusinesses SMEs. In an agribusiness environment, the organization's culture could manifest itself in form of cooperation, eco-consciousness, and practices based on family/community systems. Nevertheless, not much research exists on the effects of such organizational culture on sustainable performance of agribusiness SMEs. Besides, there is no much information regarding the effects of interactions between organizational culture and human capital and leadership on sustainability outcomes. This paper seeks to bridge the existing knowledge gap.

2.2.4. Ethical Practices and Sustainable Performance

Practices related to ethical leadership include those such as transparency, accountability, integrity, and fairness. According to Lapatoura [16], ethical leadership increases organizational trust, legitimacy, and resilience. In addition, according to Korir, Ouma, and Okech [11], ethical leadership was positively correlated with the adoption of solar photovoltaic systems because of increased stakeholder trust and legitimacy. In addition, according to Roba *et al.* [11], increased trust and commitment between stakeholders led to better social sustainability performances among agribusiness in Kiambu County.

Nonetheless, existing empirical literature on ethical practices is rather scattered and largely disconnected from strategic leadership concepts. Research works tend to analyze ethical practices in conjunction with the adoption of technology or supply chain management but fail to incorporate ethical practices into strategic orientation, corporate culture, and people management in their analysis. It means that there is a lack of empirical knowledge about the impact of different dimensions of ethical leadership on sustainable performance at agribusiness SMEs. It is crucially important due to the fact that ethical practices affect resource management and organizational legitimacy that are key to sustainable performance at agribusiness firms.

3. Research Methodology

An explanatory research design was utilized to establish a cause-and-effect link between organizational direction and sustainable performance in agribusinesses. This research design is ideal for hypothesis testing and explanation of relationship between variables [17]. In this case, the research design was ideal for testing the effect of learning to share organizational direction on sustainable performance. The use of the research design was justified by the fact that it helped in integrating quantifiable techniques to measure the degree of the relationship between variables. Additionally, the research design made it possible to generalize results statistically within the context of agribusiness firms in Kiambu County.

The study's target population was made up of 200 management staff from purposively chosen agribusiness companies operating in Kiambu County. The organizations were chosen based on their involvement in extensive agribusiness practices such as horticulture production, adding value to goods, and agricultural marketing. It was necessary to focus on management staff since they play an important role in decision making and executing organizational policies.

Yamane's [18] formula was employed in estimation of the sample size leading to a total of 130 respondents spread throughout the strata proportionately. The formula assumed the 95% confidence level and 5% precision.

$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$

Where:

- $N = 200$
- $e = 0.05$

This gave a sample size of 133, which was adjusted to 130 respondents to account for pragmatism in administration.

Further, proportionate stratified random sampling was used in this study to make sure that there was sufficient coverage of the respondents from various management categories: Top management, Middle management and Supervisory level as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Target Population & Sample Size

No.	Employment level	Target population	Sample size	Percent
1.	Top management	22	14	10.8%
2.	Middle management	65	42	32.3%
3.	Supervisory	113	74	56.9%
	Total	200	130	100%

The primary data was collected using structured questionnaires based on the five-point Likert scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" at one end to "strongly agree" at five points. The questionnaire included dimensions such as vision clarity, strategic goal communication, employee participation, and organizational activities related to sustainability goals.

Further, the validity of the construct was verified through its alignment to previous literature in strategic leadership and sustainable performance. Additionally, content validity was attained through acquiring expert review from the university supervisor as well as strategic leadership and agribusiness specialists to verify the items of the questionnaire. On the other hand, the reliability test involved the use of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The organizational direction measure was reliable at $\alpha = 0.824$ which exceeded traditional cutoff point of 0.70 as presented by Nunnally [19].

Table 2. Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational Direction	0.824

Finally, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted on the data collected from the participants. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were applied in describing respondents' attitudes, whereas inferential statistics were employed in determining the relationships among variables. The analysis was conducted using SPSS.

The regression model adopted was:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$

Where:

- Y = Sustainable performance
- X_1 = Organizational direction
- β_0 = Constant
- β_1 = Coefficient of organizational direction
- ε = Error term

4. Research Findings and Discussion

Inferential statistics demonstrated that organizational direction had a significant and positive relationship with sustainable performance of agribusiness firms in Kiambu County. The results are presented below:

Table 3. Pearson Correlation

Variables	Organizational Direction	Sustainable Performance
Organizational Direction	1.000	.534***
Sustainable Performance	.534***	1.000
N	122	122

Pearson correlation analysis showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between organizational direction and sustainable performance ($r = 0.534$, $p < 0.001$, $n = 122$). The positive relationship means that agribusiness organizations that are able to share and institutionalize organizational vision tend to attain high sustainability in performance. Thus, the statistically significant positive relationship proves that vision-sharing leads to enhanced organizational alignment, which facilitates proper coordination of activities related to sustainability goals. In the case of agribusiness organizations that have characteristics such as operational interdependence, complex value chains, and environmental uncertainty, shared organizational direction is a critical strategy needed in performance management [11]. It proves that organizational direction is an organizational mechanism of leadership that affects sustainable performance of organizations.

From the regression analysis obtained, it is clear that organizational direction is a significant predictor of sustainable performance (beta = 0.324, t = 3.489, p = 0.001). Enhanced sharing of strategic vision leads to better performance, which has been confirmed by other regional studies on agribusiness performance [11].

Table 4. Regression Analysis

Model statistic	Value
R	0.608
R^2	0.370
Adjusted R^2	0.349
F	17.189
β – Organizational Direction	0.324
t	3.489
p	0.001

As per the analysis done on the various dimensions of strategic leadership, the regression model came up with explanatory power of adjusted R^2 of 0.349, which shows the contributions of the dimensions of strategic leadership towards sustainable performance. In addition to that, it was found out from the analysis that the organizational direction dimension had statistical significance to sustainable performance in alignment with Omuka and Miroga, 2024 [11]. This result provides robust evidence for the significant effect of organizational direction on sustainable performance regardless of other strategic leadership dimensions considered. The findings show that vision-sharing is not only supportive but directly responsible for organizational sustainable performance.

The findings are also consistent with the Resource-Based View, which emphasizes the importance of valuable internal organizational capabilities in achieving sustainable performance [7]. In this context, organizational direction can be regarded as an intangible capability that enables firms to coordinate internal resources and align organizational priorities towards sustainable performance.

The findings further provide support for Contingency Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. Contingency Theory emphasizes the need for strategic responsiveness to changing environmental conditions, while Transformational Leadership Theory highlights the importance of vision communication in creating employee alignment and commitment. These perspectives are particularly relevant to agribusiness firms operating in dynamic climatic and market environments.

Lastly, the results agree with previous empirical research conducted in the regional agricultural context. Korir [12] discovered that strategic direction accounted for a significant amount of variance in climate-smart technologies used in agricultural organizations, indicating the importance of strategic organization vision. Omuka & Miroga [11] also found that strategic direction was positively correlated with organizational performance in avocado export companies due to increased technological responsiveness and coordinated resources management. Furthermore, Ngaruiya *et al.* [13] found statistically significant correlations between strategic organizational direction and sustainable performance. These consistent results show that organizational direction is a cross-cutting strategic capability that has important performance-related outcomes. This research adds to the current literature by proving that strategic direction's effect is particular for multidimensional sustainable performance in agribusiness organizations in Kiambu County.

5. Conclusion

The empirical findings of this study establish that navigating an unpredictable macro environment and securing sustainable performance within agribusiness firms demands robust strategic leadership. The results confirm that long-term organizational sustainable performance does not rely solely on technical efficiencies or the availability of financial resources. Instead, it is heavily dependent on deliberate leadership structures and institutional mechanisms that directly shape corporate culture and operational activities. By continuously creating and communicating a clear strategic vision, effective leaders cultivate a shared sense of purpose among employees. This continuous communication motivates and inspires the workforce to embrace sustainability objectives, effectively translating abstract organizational targets into daily operational practices.

Furthermore, the institutionalization of organizational direction serves as a critical strategic capability that facilitates institutional adaptability. Agribusiness firms that exhibit a strong strategic vision possess the structural flexibility required to remain agile, responsive, and ready for action when emerging operational challenges arise. These dynamics validate the core premises of Transformational Leadership and the Resource-Based View theories, which position strategic vision-sharing and internal alignment as foundational sources of sustainable competitive advantage. Consequently, establishing a clear organizational direction eliminates operational ambiguity, improves strategy consistency, and ensures that all individual actions are synchronized toward shared economic, environmental, and social performance outcomes.

The descriptive and inferential analysis collectively confirm that organizational direction is a powerful and statistically meaningful predictor of sustainable performance. Agribusiness firms in Kiambu County face intense, compounding pressures from both environmental shifts and complex value-chain operations. In this specific context, conscious investments in leadership alignment and vision communication are indispensable for organizational continuity. Agribusinesses that successfully embed strategic vision-sharing within their cultural fabric exhibit enhanced capacity for innovation, seamless functional coordination, and heightened employee motivation. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that achieving balanced, long-term performance across economic, ecological, and social dimensions requires agribusiness organizations to formalize strategic direction as an irreplaceable, central pillar of the executive leadership process.

5.1. Policy Recommendations

The research results indicating that organizational direction is statistically significant in predicting sustainable performance have major consequences for institutional policymakers, macro regulators, and regional line ministries. National and county governments, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives, as well as the Kiambu County Department of Agriculture, need to plan a strategy to move away from the conventional approach of intervention policies aimed at addressing only technical inputs, financial credits, and production subsidies. Though resource allocation cannot be overlooked in the strategy, there is a need for policymakers to initiate and promote strategic management strategies and leadership training programs. Institutional capacity building initiatives need to concentrate on the systematic strengthening of agribusiness executive's and cooperative managers' ability to formulate and align their visions and goals. Strategic orientation needs to be viewed as a key resource in the agricultural sector.

Moreover, regional regulators and agricultural sector networks need to develop standards and incentives that encourage agribusiness enterprises to integrate sustainability goals into their mission and visions. Through the development of templates that clearly define an appropriate strategic direction and one that is in compliance with legal stipulations, the decision-makers can formulate a clear plan that guides local agribusiness firms. This will assist in avoiding uncertainties that characterize organizational functioning. Such a process will enable fragile firms to coordinate internal resources, achieve institutional consistency, and strategically shield supply chain activities from disruptive macro-environmental changes emanating from variations in climatic conditions and market performance.

Lastly, government development banks, aid agencies, and state-sponsored financial bodies need to change compliance standards in such a way that loans and grants are tied to how strategic an organization is. Sectoral policies will be designed to encourage agribusiness organizations that have internal strategic consistency, adopt participatory systems of goal setting involving line employees, and document cross-functional vision communication. The modification of structural incentives to favor strategically-focused firms and not just technically efficient companies will lead to sustainable competitiveness.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the contributions made by this research both empirically and theoretically, there are several important methodological constraints that are noteworthy to contextualize the results produced. First, the sample was constrained geographically to firms engaged in large and medium agribusiness in Kiambu County. This limits the direct applicability of results to other organizations operating under different socio-economic, climatic, and geographic environments. Agro-ecological zones and agricultural market dynamics vary substantially across different regions due to micro-climatic variations, infrastructure variations, and differing levels of market access. Therefore, while these results provide strategic insights for intensive agribusiness, cautious interpretation is required when applying the results widely to other counties. Second, this research used self-reporting method and was thus subject to possible problems of common method variance and social desirability biases. Although strict measures were put in place to assure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, dependence on perceptual data cannot fully eliminate the effects of subjective bias on leadership performance.

These limitations provide useful directions for future academic work that will help to build up research on strategic leadership and sustainability in agribusiness. First, future research should expand its geographical scope by involving several Kenyan counties, thus making it possible to study differences in strategic leadership practices between different regions. In terms of methodology, conducting longitudinal research will add to the existing knowledge by investigating how time influences strategic direction and its outcomes at different stages of organizational development. Additionally, it will be important for future research to use more complex methods, including statistical analysis of mediating or moderating variables, such as organizational culture, innovative ability, or employees' commitment, which could further explain the relationship between strategic leadership especially setting organizational direction and sustainable performance. Moreover, integrating qualitative approaches like in-depth interviews or case studies along with quantitative measurements would help understand how sharing vision and alignment is implemented in practice in the agriculture industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Almighty God for sustenance during my studies and development of this project, my supervisor, Prof. Mauthe S. Makau A. PhD, for his incredible insights, assistance and guidance without whom this project would be incomplete.

Statement of Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests.

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