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Information-Related Barriers Affecting Market Access Among Youth-Owned Agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed information-related barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. The study focused on three areas of information-related barriers, namely access to market price information, access to buyer information and access to market networks. A mixed-methods approach using a convergent research design was employed. A sample of 110 youth-owned agribusiness operators was selected through simple random sampling. Five key informants, comprising two Municipal Agricultural Officers, two Cooperative Leaders and one Youth Agribusiness Mentor, were selected purposively. Primary data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings showed that limited access to market price information made it difficult for youth-owned agribusiness operators to know suitable selling prices and identify profitable markets. Limited access to buyer information also reduced the ability of youth to connect with reliable buyers and secure better market opportunities. The findings further showed that weak market networks limited contact with traders, processors, cooperatives and other potential buyers. These information-related barriers reduced the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to reach wider markets, negotiate better prices and maintain stable market relationships. The study concludes that inadequate market information and weak market networks are important barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality. The study recommends improving access to timely market price information, strengthening links between youth agribusinesses and buyers, improving agricultural extension services and supporting youth participation in cooperatives and other market networks. Further studies may examine how digital market information platforms can improve market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Tanzania.

Keywords: Information-related barriers, market access, youth-owned agribusinesses, market information, Iringa Municipality.

INTRODUCTION

Market access refers to the ability of producers and business operators to reach buyers and sell their products under suitable market conditions. Access to reliable market information is an important part of this process because agribusiness operators need information about prices, buyers, demand and available selling opportunities when making marketing decisions. Magesa et al. (2020) explain that access to agricultural market information can help farmers reach markets and buyers and become more active participants in agricultural marketing. The authors also found that middlemen often have better knowledge of market conditions and stronger access to buyers and traders, which can place farmers with limited information at a disadvantage. Digital technologies have also created new ways for agricultural producers to obtain information and connect with buyers. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2022) reported that online trading platforms can improve links between smallholder farmers and buyers.

Youth participation in agribusiness has received increasing attention because agriculture and agrifood systems can provide opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and income generation. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and African Union Commission (FAO & AUC, 2022) emphasise the importance of investing in young people and increasing their participation in agrifood systems in Africa. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2025) also highlights market integration, skills, technology and other forms of support as important for creating better employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people in African agriculture. However, young agribusiness operators need more than production skills to participate successfully in markets. They need information that can help them identify buyers, understand prices, respond to market demand and identify new market opportunities. Limited access to this information may reduce their ability to enter profitable markets and maintain relationships with buyers.

In Tanzania, youth participation in agriculture and agribusiness has been promoted as a way of creating employment and increasing economic opportunities for young people. The United Republic of Tanzania (URT, 2016) recognised the need to increase youth involvement in agricultural activities and value chains through the National Strategy for Youth Involvement in Agriculture. However, access to market information remains an important issue for agricultural producers and young agribusiness operators. Magesa et al. (2020), using evidence from six regions of Tanzania, found that poor access to agricultural market information affects farmers' ability to participate effectively in agricultural marketing. Their findings show that information can help agricultural producers understand markets, buyers and traders and can improve their participation in agricultural marketing. More recent national

evidence provides further support for this concern. Bai and Magembe (2026), using data from the 2020 National Sample Census of Agriculture, found that lack of market information was among the major problems affecting youth agribusiness in Tanzania. Their study also found that the use of information source channels and training or extension services were related to youth involvement in agribusiness. These findings show that access to market information is relevant to the participation and performance of young people in Tanzania's agribusiness sector.

In Iringa Municipality, youth-owned agribusinesses participate in agricultural production, trading, processing and the supply of agricultural products to different buyers. The municipality provides opportunities for young people to engage in agribusiness and sell products through local markets and other market channels. However, having products to sell does not automatically mean that a youth-owned agribusiness has effective market access. Young operators may have difficulty obtaining current market prices, identifying reliable buyers, knowing where demand is high and developing useful relationships with traders, processors, cooperatives and other market actors. When market information is limited or received late, young agribusiness operators may depend on a small number of buyers, accept less favourable prices or miss better market opportunities. Existing evidence from Tanzania has established the importance of agricultural market information, while Bai and Magembe (2026) have specifically shown that lack of market information is a problem affecting youth agribusiness at the national level. However, limited evidence explains how specific information-related barriers affect market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality. Therefore, the present study focuses on information-related barriers, particularly access to market price information, buyer information and market networks and their effect on market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal situation, youth-owned agribusinesses should be able to access reliable markets, identify suitable buyers, obtain useful market information and sell their products at fair prices. Market information helps agricultural producers understand prevailing prices, identify buyers and make decisions about where and when to sell their products (Magesa et al., 2020). Access to digital and other information channels can also improve connections between agricultural producers and buyers and create more opportunities for market participation (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2022). In Tanzania, youth participation in agriculture and agribusiness has been promoted through government strategies and programmes that seek to increase youth involvement in agricultural value chains (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2016, 2022). Therefore, youth-owned agribusinesses are expected to use available market information and market networks to identify profitable opportunities and establish relationships with buyers.

However, available evidence shows that access to market information remains a concern among agricultural producers and young agribusiness operators in Tanzania. Magesa et al. (2020) found that access to agricultural market information influences the ability of smallholder farmers to participate in agricultural marketing. The study also showed that farmers may depend on intermediaries who have better information about markets, traders and buyers. More recent evidence from Tanzania indicates that lack of market information is among the problems affecting youth entrepreneurship in the agribusiness sector (Bai & Magembe, 2026). When youth-owned agribusinesses do not receive timely and reliable information about market prices, buyers and demand, they may have difficulty identifying profitable markets, negotiating with buyers and expanding their market networks. This can reduce their ability to reach wider markets and may limit the benefits that young people can obtain from agribusiness activities.

The problem is therefore not only the availability of markets, but also the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to obtain and use information needed to access those markets. Information-related barriers can be observed through limited access to current market price information, inadequate information about potential buyers, limited knowledge of market demand, few sources of market information and weak market networks. These barriers may affect the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to identify suitable buyers, compare prices, select better markets and maintain business relationships with market actors. Although Magesa et al. (2020) examined access and use of agricultural market information among smallholder farmers in Tanzania and Bai and Magembe (2026) examined youth entrepreneurship in the Tanzanian agribusiness sector, their findings do not provide sufficient evidence on the specific information-related barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

In Iringa Municipality, youth-owned agribusinesses engage in agricultural production, trading, processing and the supply of agricultural products to consumers and other market actors. However, there is limited local evidence showing whether these young operators receive adequate information about market prices, potential buyers, market demand and available market opportunities. It is also not sufficiently known whether weak market networks and limited sources of information affect their ability to reach buyers and participate in wider markets. Without clear local evidence on these information-related barriers, it is difficult to understand the specific information problems affecting youth-owned agribusiness market access in the municipality. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess information-related barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality, with particular attention to access to market price information, buyer information and market networks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

This study was guided by the Transaction Cost Theory, developed by Williamson (1979) to explain the costs involved in conducting economic transactions. The theory explains that transactions involve costs related to searching for information, negotiating agreements, monitoring performance and enforcing contracts. Williamson (2020) further explains that infrastructure, information availability and institutional support can influence the level of transaction costs. The theory is relevant to this study because financial barriers, information-related barriers and infrastructure barriers can increase the costs faced by youth-owned agribusinesses when obtaining capital, accessing market information, transporting products and dealing with buyers. High

transaction costs may therefore limit access to profitable markets and reduce business opportunities. The theory consequently provides a suitable basis for explaining how financial constraints, limited market information and inadequate infrastructure influence market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

Empirical Literature Review

Access to reliable and timely market information is important for youth-owned agribusinesses to identify buyers, understand prices and respond to market demand. Okello et al. (2020) found that accessibility, relevance and timeliness of ICT-based information influenced access to market information among youth dairy agripreneurs in Arumeru District, Tanzania. Similarly, Mbedule and Mungwabi (2023) found that smallholder farmers in Muheza District had limited access to market information and depended mainly on relatives, traders, meetings and radio. Almasi et al. (2023) further found that social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp, were important channels for accessing agricultural market information among small-scale farmers in Arusha City. More recently, Bai and Magembe (2026), using nationally representative agricultural data from Tanzania, identified lack of market information as one of the major factors affecting youth involvement in agripreneurship. These studies demonstrate the importance of information access in agricultural marketing; however, they mainly focus on farmers, dairy agripreneurs or general youth involvement in agripreneurship. Limited evidence therefore exists on how information-related barriers specifically affect market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality, creating a gap that the present study addresses.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The approach allowed the researcher to collect numerical data on information-related barriers affecting market access and also obtain detailed views and experiences from participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A convergent research design was used, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same period, analysed separately and compared during interpretation. This design was appropriate because it helped the researcher to measure information-related barriers while also obtaining detailed explanations from youth-owned agribusiness operators and key informants. The approach therefore provided a better understanding of how access to market price information, buyer information and market networks affect market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Iringa Municipality, located in the Iringa Region of Tanzania. The municipality has youth involved in agricultural production, trading and small-scale processing activities. It also has urban and peri-urban markets where agricultural products are sold to consumers, traders and other buyers. Iringa Municipality was selected because youth-owned agribusinesses require market information to identify buyers, understand prevailing prices and identify suitable market opportunities. The area therefore provided a suitable setting for examining information-related barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Population and Sampling

Population

A population refers to the entire group of people or units that have characteristics relevant to a particular study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population for this study consisted of 152 registered youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality. These agribusinesses included youth engaged in crop production, livestock activities and small-scale agricultural processing. The study also included five key informants comprising two Municipal Agricultural Officers, two Cooperative Leaders and one Youth Agribusiness Mentor. These participants were selected because they had relevant knowledge and experience concerning youth agribusiness, agricultural markets and market linkages in Iringa Municipality.

Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a smaller group from a larger population to participate in a study (Saunders et al., 2019). This study employed a combination of simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select 110 youth-owned agribusinesses from the 152 registered businesses, giving each business an equal chance of selection. Purposive sampling was used to select five key informants comprising two Municipal Agricultural Officers, two Cooperative Leaders and one Youth Agribusiness Mentor because they had relevant knowledge of youth agribusiness and agricultural markets. The quantitative sample size was determined using Slovin's formula at a 5% margin of error, giving a sample of 110 youth-owned agribusinesses. Together with the five key informants, the total sample consisted of 115 participants.

Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire is a structured instrument used to collect information from respondents using a set of prepared questions (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, questionnaires were administered to 110 youth-owned agribusiness operators to collect information on access to market price information, buyer information, market demand information, sources of market information, market networks and market access. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with five key informants comprising two Municipal Agricultural Officers, two Cooperative Leaders and one Youth Agribusiness Mentor. Interviews allowed the researcher to obtain detailed information about participants' experiences and views (Bryman, 2016). The interview questions focused on the availability and use of market information, access to buyers, market networks and information-related barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded, entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the quantitative findings. Frequencies, percentages and mean scores were used to present information on access to market price information, buyer information, market networks and market access. Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The interview responses were reviewed, coded and grouped into themes based on the study objectives. The main themes focused on market price information, buyer information, market networks and market access. The qualitative findings were then compared with the quantitative findings to provide a clearer understanding of information-related barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality (Miles et al., 2020).

The study observed ethical principles to protect the rights, privacy and welfare of participants. An introductory letter was obtained from the University of Iringa and permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant authorities in Iringa Municipality. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed about the purpose of the study before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Saunders et al., 2019). Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by avoiding the use of participants' names and using codes where necessary. Information collected from participants was kept securely and used only for academic purposes. Academic honesty was maintained by properly acknowledging all sources used in the study through APA referencing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Information-Related Barriers Affecting Market Access among Youth-Owned Agribusinesses

This section presents and discusses the findings on information-related barriers affecting market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality. The analysis addresses the specific objective of the study, which sought to examine how information-related barriers influence market access among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Table 1: Information-Related Barriers Affecting Market Access among Youth-Owned Agribusinesses

Information-Related Barriers	Response Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Access to market price information and Sales volume	Never receive price updates	34	30.9
	Monthly	10	9.1
	Weekly	2	1.8
	Daily	64	58.2
	Total	110	100.0
Buyer contacts and Market participation frequency	1–2 buyers	39	35.5
	3–5 buyers	61	55.5
	6–10 buyers	5	4.5
	More than 10 buyers	5	4.5
	Total	110	100.0
Access to demand information and Profitability	Never	50	45.5
	Once per month	13	11.8
	2–4 times per month	47	42.7
	Total	110	100.0

Information-Related Barriers	Response Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Access to market information and Profitability	No source	88	80.0
	One source	17	15.5
	Two sources	5	4.5
	Total	110	100.0
Buyer contacts and Sales volume	Sell to 1 buyer	30	27.3
	2–5 buyers	49	44.5
	6–10 buyers	3	2.7
	More than 10 buyers	28	25.5
	Total	110	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026)

Access to Market Price Information and Sales Volume

The findings in Table 1 show that 64 (58.2%) of the respondents received market price information daily, followed by 34 (30.9%) who never received market price updates, 10 (9.1%) who received market price information monthly and 2 (1.8%) who received market price information weekly. The open-ended responses revealed that respondents who received market price information daily were able to compare prices across different markets before selling their produce. This enabled them to identify markets offering better prices, negotiate with buyers and increase their sales volume. In contrast, respondents who never received market price updates explained that they depended on middlemen or nearby buyers because they lacked information about prices in other markets. As a result, they often accepted lower prices and missed better marketing opportunities. Overall, the findings indicate that limited access to timely market price information remains an important information barrier affecting sales volume among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

The quantitative findings were further supported by information obtained from the key informants. One Municipal Agricultural Officer explained the importance of market price information in improving sales performance.

Many young farmers lose good business opportunities because they do not know the prices offered in different markets. Some sell immediately after harvesting without comparing prices, while others depend on information provided by middlemen. Those who receive reliable price information are able to choose markets that offer better returns and sell larger quantities of their products. This improves both their confidence and business performance. Access to accurate market price information therefore contributes to higher sales volume (Municipal Agricultural Officer 1, 2 July 2026, 9:15 a.m.).

One Cooperative Leader described how market price information helps cooperative members make better marketing decisions.

Our members regularly share market prices from different locations before deciding where to sell their produce. This helps them avoid markets with low prices and direct their products to buyers offering better returns. As a result, many members sell more products because they target markets with stronger demand. Those who lack this information often make poor marketing decisions and record lower sales. Timely market price information therefore improves business outcomes (Cooperative Leader 1, 5 July 2026, 2:20 p.m.).

Offering another perspective, one Youth Agribusiness Mentor emphasized the role of technology in accessing market prices.

Many young entrepreneurs now obtain market price information through mobile phones and online platforms before transporting their products. This allows them to compare prices from different buyers and negotiate with confidence. Young people who fail to use these information sources usually depend on rumours or outdated information. Such decisions often reduce their sales because they enter less profitable markets. Better access to digital market information increases business opportunities and sales performance (Youth Agribusiness Mentor 1, 9 July 2026, 11:10 a.m.).

One Municipal Agricultural Officer highlighted the information barriers experienced by youth living in remote production areas.

Some young farmers operate in places where reliable market information is not easily available. They receive price updates late after many traders have already completed their purchases. This limits their ability to negotiate better prices or identify alternative markets. As a result, they continue selling at lower prices because they lack timely information on available market opportunities. Timely access to market price information therefore remains essential for improving sales performance (Municipal Agricultural Officer 2, 14 July 2026, 10:00 a.m.).

One Cooperative Leader explained that market price information strengthens farmers' bargaining power.

Youth who know the current market prices negotiate with buyers from an informed position because they already understand the value of their products. Buyers also become less likely to exploit them through unfair pricing. This encourages farmers to supply larger quantities since they expect better returns from their efforts. Those without price information usually accept whatever price is offered and earn less from their sales. Reliable market price information therefore supports higher sales volume and better business performance (Cooperative Leader, 18 July 2026, 3:05 p.m.).

The findings indicate that limited access to timely market price information is an important information barrier affecting sales volume among youth-owned agribusinesses. Limited access to timely market price information may reduce sales volume by limiting the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to identify profitable markets and make informed marketing decisions. These findings are consistent with Magesa et al. (2022), who found that farmers with regular access to market price information were better able to identify profitable markets and increase the quantity of products sold. Likewise, Match Maker Associates (2022) reported that timely market information enabled agribusiness owners to compare prices across different markets before selling their products, resulting in better marketing decisions. The findings also agree with FAO (2021), which observed that inadequate access to market information reduced farmers' bargaining power and limited their market performance. These findings further support the Transaction Cost Theory, which explains that information barriers increase the costs of searching for market opportunities and negotiating with buyers, thereby reducing business efficiency and limiting sales volume among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Buyer Contacts and Market Participation Frequency

The findings in Table 1 show that 61 (55.5%) of the respondents had between three and five buyers, followed by 39 (35.5%) who had between one and two buyers. In addition, 5 (4.5%) of the respondents had between six and ten buyers, while another 5 (4.5%) had more than ten buyers. The open-ended responses revealed that respondents with three or more buyer contacts participated in markets more frequently because they had established business relationships with different customers. These respondents explained that maintaining regular communication with buyers enabled them to receive advance orders and information about available market opportunities. In contrast, respondents with only one or two buyers indicated that they depended on a few customers and spent considerable time searching for new buyers after harvesting their produce. This limited their opportunities to participate in different markets within a month. Overall, the findings indicate that limited buyer contacts remain an important information barrier affecting market participation among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

The quantitative findings were further supported by information obtained from the key informants. One Municipal Agricultural Officer explained the importance of maintaining buyer contacts among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Young entrepreneurs who maintain regular communication with buyers rarely struggle to identify markets for their products. Buyers often inform them when demand increases and encourage them to supply additional produce. This motivates young farmers to participate in markets more frequently because they already know where to sell. Those with few buyer contacts spend more time looking for customers after harvesting. Building strong buyer relationships therefore increases market participation (Municipal Agricultural Officer 1, 4 July 2026, 10:00 a.m.).

One Cooperative Leader explained how buyer networks support regular market participation.

Cooperative members who establish relationships with wholesalers and retailers receive market information before other farmers. They are informed about the quantity and quality of products required, allowing them to prepare in advance. Because of these relationships, they attend different markets throughout the month to meet customer demand. Members with limited buyer networks usually wait for customers to visit the village before making sales. Strong buyer contacts therefore create more opportunities to participate in markets (Cooperative Leader 1, 8 July 2026, 2:35 p.m.).

Offering another perspective, one Youth Agribusiness Mentor emphasized the importance of networking in agribusiness.

Many young entrepreneurs focus only on production and give little attention to building business relationships. Successful businesses spend time communicating with buyers through phone calls, social media and business events. These connections help them secure repeat customers and identify new market opportunities. As a result, they participate in markets more regularly than those with weak business networks. Buyer contacts therefore remain an important resource for business expansion (Youth Agribusiness Mentor 1, 11 July 2026, 11:20 a.m.).

One Municipal Agricultural Officer highlighted the information barrier created by limited buyer networks.

Some young farmers rely on only one or two buyers throughout the production season. When these buyers fail to purchase their products, farmers spend additional time searching for alternative customers instead of participating in other markets. This reduces their opportunities to expand their businesses and increases the time required to complete sales. Expanding buyer networks would enable young entrepreneurs to participate in markets more consistently. Strong buyer contacts therefore remain important for improving market participation (Municipal Agricultural Officer 2, 16 July 2026, 9:40 a.m.).

One Cooperative Leader explained how long-term buyer relationships strengthen market participation.

Some buyers have worked with the same young farmers for several years because they are satisfied with the products they receive. These buyers continue informing farmers about future orders and new business opportunities. Such relationships reduce the time spent searching for customers and allow young entrepreneurs to participate in markets more consistently. Farmers with fewer buyer contacts often depend on unpredictable sales from passing customers. Strong buyer relationships therefore improve the frequency of market participation (Cooperative Leader 2, 20 July 2026, 3:10 p.m.).

The findings indicate that limited buyer contacts constitute an important information barrier affecting market participation among youth-owned agribusinesses. Limited buyer contacts may reduce market participation by restricting the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to identify and access diverse market opportunities. These findings are consistent with Abdallah et al. (2023), who found that agribusinesses with broader buyer networks were more likely to participate in different markets because they had established reliable marketing channels. The findings also agree with Ochieng and Ngugi (2022), who reported that maintaining long-term relationships with buyers reduced the time required to identify customers and increased participation in

agricultural markets. Furthermore, AGRA (2023) observed that farmers with diversified buyer networks accessed more marketing opportunities than those relying on only a few customers. These findings further support the Transaction Cost Theory, which explains that limited buyer contacts increase the costs of searching for customers and negotiating transactions, thereby reducing market participation among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Access to Demand Information and Profitability

The findings in Table 1 show that 50 (45.5%) of the respondents never accessed demand information, followed by 47 (42.7%) who accessed demand information two to four times per month, while 13 (11.8%) accessed demand information once per month. The open-ended responses revealed that respondents who never accessed demand information experienced difficulties identifying the quantity, quality and type of products required by buyers. As a result, many produced crops that did not match current market demand, resulting in slow sales and lower profits. In contrast, respondents who accessed demand information two to four times per month explained that they planned production according to customer requirements and market trends, enabling them to sell their products more easily and earn higher profits. Overall, the findings indicate that limited access to demand information remains an important information barrier affecting the profitability of youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

The quantitative findings were further supported by information obtained from the key informants. One Municipal Agricultural Officer explained how inadequate demand information affects business profitability.

Many young farmers begin production without first understanding what buyers need in the market. They sometimes produce crops that are already available in large quantities while buyers are looking for different products. This reduces sales because the market becomes saturated. Farmers who understand customer demand before production usually earn better profits because they supply products that buyers are actively looking for. Access to demand information therefore improves business performance (Municipal Agricultural Officer 1, 7 July 2026, 9:30 a.m.).

One Cooperative Leader described the experience of cooperative members.

Some members lose income because they receive information about customer demand after harvesting their products. By that time, buyers have already purchased from other suppliers or market demand has changed. Members who obtain demand information early prepare their production according to customer requirements and earn better returns. Early access to market demand information therefore reduces unnecessary production and improves profitability. Reliable information is essential for successful agribusiness (Cooperative Leader 1, 10 July 2026, 2:10 p.m.).

Providing another insight, one Youth Agribusiness Mentor emphasized the importance of market intelligence.

Many young entrepreneurs concentrate on production while giving little attention to collecting information about customer preferences. They may produce quality products, but if those products do not match current market demand, sales remain low. Young entrepreneurs who regularly gather information from buyers, digital platforms and business networks make better production decisions. This enables them to increase profits because they produce what the market requires. Demand information is therefore an important resource for business success (Youth Agribusiness Mentor 1, 13 July 2026, 11:15 a.m.).

The findings indicate that limited access to demand information is an important information barrier affecting the profitability of youth-owned agribusinesses. Limited access to demand information may reduce profitability by limiting the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to align production with market needs and consumer demand. These findings are consistent with IFAD (2022), which found that inadequate market demand information resulted in poor production planning and lower business returns among smallholder farmers. The findings also agree with Kirui et al. (2021), who reported that entrepreneurs with limited knowledge of customer demand frequently produced goods that did not match market requirements, reducing profitability. Furthermore, URT (2023) observed that improving farmers' access to timely demand information strengthened production planning, enhanced market responsiveness and increased business income. These findings further support the Transaction Cost Theory, which explains that inadequate demand information increases information search costs and decision-making uncertainty, leading to inefficient production and lower financial returns among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Access to Market Information and Profitability

The findings in Table 1 show that 88 (80.0%) of the respondents had no source of market information, followed by 17 (15.5%) who had one source of market information, while 5 (4.5%) had two sources of market information. The open-ended responses revealed that respondents with no source of market information experienced difficulties obtaining timely updates on market prices, buyer requirements and available marketing opportunities. As a result, they often sold their products in nearby markets without comparing available opportunities, reducing their chances of earning higher profits. In contrast, respondents with one or more sources of market information explained that they regularly obtained information from extension officers, cooperatives, mobile phones or fellow traders, enabling them to identify profitable markets and make better marketing decisions. Overall, the findings indicate that limited sources of market information remain an important information barrier affecting the profitability of youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

The quantitative findings were further supported by information obtained from the key informants. One Municipal Agricultural Officer explained how limited sources of market information affect business profitability.

Many young farmers produce quality crops but fail to earn good profits because they do not know where better markets are available. Some depend only on information from neighbours or middlemen, which is not always reliable. Farmers who receive information from different sources are able to compare market opportunities before selling their produce. This helps them identify better-paying buyers and improve their business returns. Access to multiple sources of market information therefore contributes to higher profitability (Municipal Agricultural Officer 1, 8 July 2026, 9:45 a.m.).

Building on this observation, one Cooperative Leader described the importance of reliable information sources.

Some cooperative members rely on only one source of information, while others have no reliable source at all. This limits their ability to respond quickly when new market opportunities become available. Members who receive information from extension officers, cooperatives and buyers make better marketing decisions because they have accurate and timely information. Using different information sources therefore improves profitability and business growth (Cooperative Leader 1, 12 July 2026, 2:15 p.m.).

The findings indicate that limited sources of market information constitute an important information barrier affecting the profitability of youth-owned agribusinesses. Limited sources of market information may reduce profitability by restricting the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to identify profitable market opportunities and make informed marketing decisions. These findings are consistent with the World Bank (2023), which reported that farmers with limited access to reliable market information were less able to identify profitable markets and therefore earned lower returns. The findings also agree with FAO (2022), which found that access to multiple sources of market information improved marketing decisions and increased business profitability. Furthermore, CTA (2021) observed that diversified information sources enhanced farmers' ability to respond to changing market conditions and improve financial performance. These findings further support the Transaction Cost Theory, which explains that limited information sources increase the costs of searching for market opportunities and making business decisions, thereby reducing the profitability of youth-owned agribusinesses.

Buyer Contacts and Sales Volume

The findings in Table 1 show that 49 (44.5%) of the respondents sold their products to between two and five buyers, followed by 30 (27.3%) who sold to only one buyer. In addition, 28 (25.5%) of the respondents sold their products to more than ten buyers, while 3 (2.7%) sold to between six and ten buyers. The open-ended responses revealed that respondents who sold their products to several buyers experienced higher sales because they had more marketing opportunities and were less dependent on a single customer. They explained that maintaining relationships with different buyers enabled them to sell larger quantities of produce within a shorter period. In contrast, respondents who sold to only one buyer reported that they often experienced delays in selling their products because they had limited marketing options whenever that buyer was unavailable or offered low prices. Overall, the findings indicate that limited buyer contacts remain an important information barrier affecting sales volume among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality.

The quantitative findings were further supported by information obtained from the key informants. One Municipal Agricultural Officer explained how buyer contacts influence sales volume among youth-owned agribusinesses.

Young farmers who maintain relationships with many buyers rarely experience difficulties selling their produce because they have several marketing options. When one buyer is unable to purchase, they quickly contact another buyer without delaying sales. Those who depend on only one buyer often struggle whenever that customer is unavailable or offers low prices. Expanding buyer contacts therefore helps young entrepreneurs increase their sales volume and improve business performance (Municipal Agricultural Officer 1, 10 July 2026, 9:20 a.m.).

Building on this observation, one Cooperative Leader described the experience of cooperative members.

Members who establish relationships with wholesalers, retailers and institutional buyers usually sell larger quantities of produce because they have a wider customer base. They also receive repeat orders from buyers who trust the quality of their products. Members with only one or two buyers often experience slow sales because they have fewer opportunities to market their produce. Maintaining strong buyer relationships therefore contributes to higher sales volume (Cooperative Leader 1, 14 July 2026, 2:30 p.m.).

Providing another perspective, one Youth Agribusiness Mentor emphasized the importance of expanding business networks.

Many young entrepreneurs focus on production but do not invest enough time in building relationships with potential buyers. Those who participate in agricultural exhibitions, business forums and digital marketing platforms usually attract more customers and increase their sales. Entrepreneurs with limited buyer networks continue depending on a few customers, making it difficult to expand their businesses. Developing wider buyer networks therefore improves sales performance (Youth Agribusiness Mentor 1, 18 July 2026, 11:25 a.m.).

One Municipal Agricultural Officer highlighted another challenge affecting sales.

Some young farmers lose customers because they do not maintain regular communication with buyers after completing a sale. As a result, buyers purchase from other suppliers during the next production season. Farmers who regularly communicate with buyers are more likely to receive repeat orders and sell larger quantities of produce. Continuous interaction with buyers therefore strengthens sales volume and business growth (Municipal Agricultural Officer 2, 21 July 2026, 10:15 a.m.).

One Cooperative Leader explained the value of long-term buyer relationships.

Long-term relationships with buyers create confidence between farmers and customers. Buyers who trust the quality and reliability of products continue placing orders throughout the year and often recommend other customers. This helps young entrepreneurs expand their customer base and increase the quantity of products sold. Strong buyer contacts therefore contribute to sustainable business growth and improved sales volume (Cooperative Leader 2, 24 July 2026, 3:05 p.m.).

The findings indicate that limited buyer contacts constitute an important information barrier affecting sales volume among youth-owned agribusinesses. Limited buyer contacts may reduce sales volume by limiting the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to reach more customers and access diverse market opportunities. These findings are consistent with Abdallah et al. (2023), who found that entrepreneurs with broader buyer networks secured more customers and achieved higher sales than those relying on only a few buyers. The findings also agree with Ochieng and Ngugi (2022), who reported that strong relationships between producers and buyers reduced marketing uncertainty and enabled farmers to sell larger quantities of agricultural products. Similarly, Kirui et al. (2021) observed that agribusiness owners with diversified buyer networks accessed more market opportunities and recorded better sales performance than those with limited customer connections. These findings further support the Transaction Cost Theory, which explains that wider buyer networks reduce the costs of searching for customers and negotiating market transactions, thereby improving business efficiency and increasing sales volume among youth-owned agribusinesses.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that information-related barriers have an important influence on market access among youth-owned agribusinesses in Iringa Municipality. Limited access to market price information, demand information, reliable information sources and buyer contacts makes it difficult for youth to identify suitable markets, understand market opportunities and connect with buyers. Improving access to relevant and timely market information is therefore important for strengthening the ability of youth-owned agribusinesses to participate in markets and improve their business opportunities.

The study recommends that Iringa Municipal Council, through agricultural extension officers, to strengthen the provision of timely market information to youth-owned agribusinesses through extension services, mobile phones and digital platforms. The Municipal Council and youth development officers should also support the formation of business forums and cooperatives where youth can share market information and establish links with reliable buyers. Youth-owned agribusiness operators should make active use of available digital platforms, extension services and business networks to obtain market information and identify suitable buyers. Cooperatives and other market-support organisations should strengthen direct links between youth agribusinesses and buyers to improve access to reliable markets.

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