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“Filling gaps and removing traps  
for sustainable resource management”

## Intra-Household Land Tenure Insecurity – The Mute Risk to Sustainable Food Production in Western Kenya

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### Abstract

Land tenure security is a key and decisive factor in shaping land productivity, household food security and poverty levels in rural areas. In three counties of western Kenya – Kakamega, Bungoma and Siaya, intra-household land tenure insecurity is common - particular members of a household, especially women and youth, are denied the rights to own, access, use or inherit ancestral land due to their gender, marital status, age or other conditionalities set by the land owner, often the elderly male household head. This happens under cultural construction of a complex household structure upon which land access and control rights are allocated. The bundle of rights to land is based on customary beliefs and traditions which determine allocation according to gender, position and status of birth in the household, and relation with the household head. Legal pluralism is notable - modern and customary regimes prevail in the governance of land rights, often existing in contradiction while at times supportive of each other. Overall, traditional practices dominate. Complex and complicated succession laws only exacerbate the intra-household land tenure insecurity challenge. The result is that women, especially widows, and youth are unable to optimally partake in household food production decision making. A transdisciplinary approach to understand the complexity and drivers of intra-household land tenure insecurity and practical solutions to addressing the challenge were adopted by the study. A number of social innovations have been tested and found to possess promising potential for long term solutions. These include land clinics, community land lease guidelines and integrating youth and women into joint land investments with clear benefit sharing mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Intra-household, land tenure insecurity, youth, Kenya