



Evaluating Land Management Options for Transitioning to Regenerative Coffee Systems in Kenya

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Introduction

- Coffee is a major crop of Kenya's economy, ranking as the third-largest agricultural export.
- There is a growing global demand for transitioning to regenerative farming of coffee.
- Regenerative agriculture approaches can empower farmers to position coffee in the context of global demand and regulations relating to sustainable production, fair trade, healthy and safe diets.
- Understanding farmers' choices is key to sustainable coffee value chain growth.

Objectives

- A study was carried out under the Coffee Farmers Income Resilience Program, supported by IDH, to assess coffee farmers' preferences and barriers to adopting sustainable land management practices.

Study site

- The study involved 7 Coffee growing counties in Kenya (Fig 1).
- Covered farmer cooperatives under 3 coffee partners.

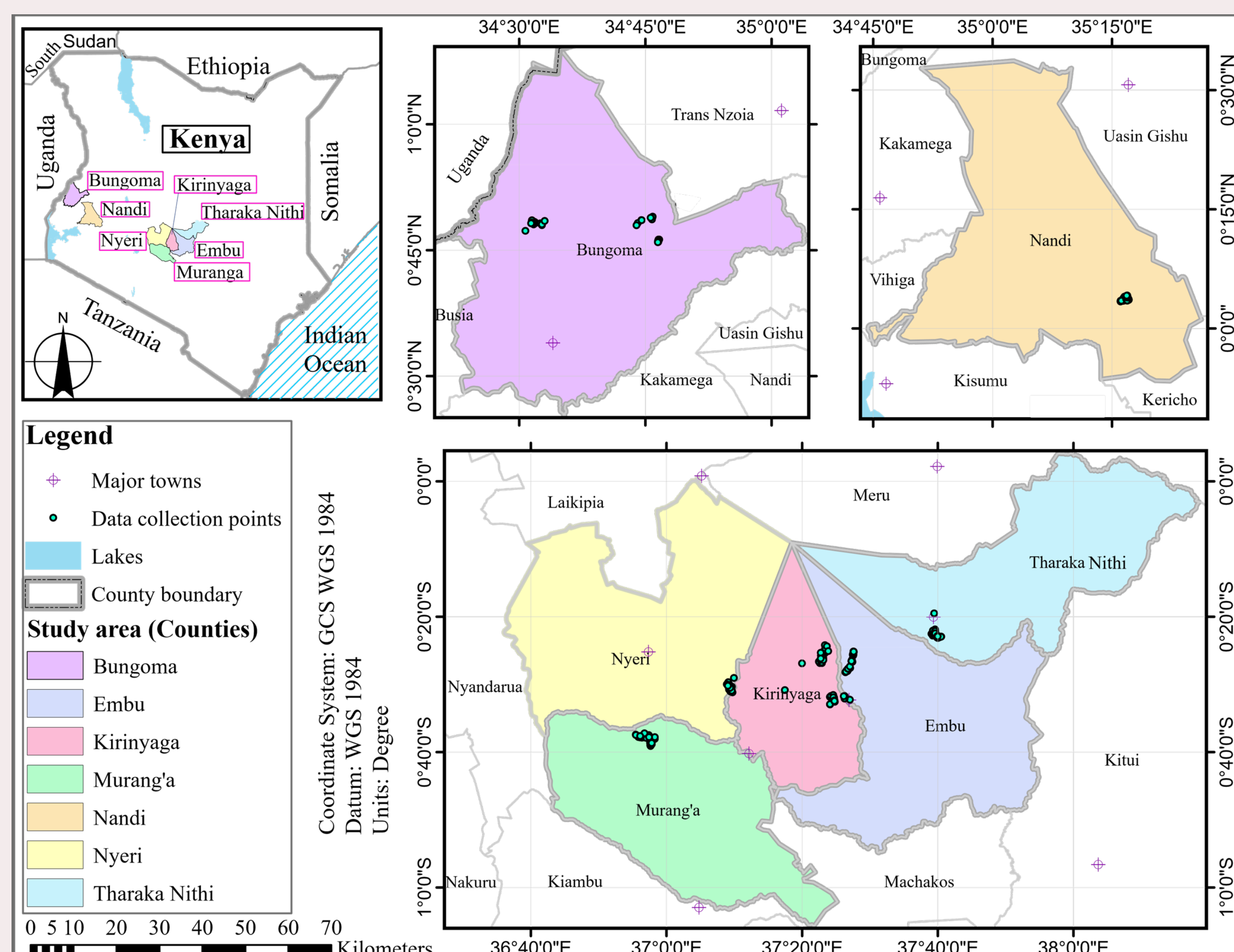


Fig 1: Study sites: Bungoma, Nandi, Murang'a, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Embu, Tharaka Nithi Counties in Kenya.

Methodology

- Field survey - December 2024.
- Study employed Evaluating Land Management Options (ELMO) tool (Emerton et al., 2016).
- ELMO is a 10-step participatory tool (Fig 2).
- Study utilized a mixed methods approach.
- 302 coffee farmers were sampled and interviewed.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held.
- Survey collected both qualitative and quantitative data.
- Data was collected via Kobo collect, downloaded and imported into STATA for cleaning and analysis.
- Descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean, median, minimum, and maximum values.

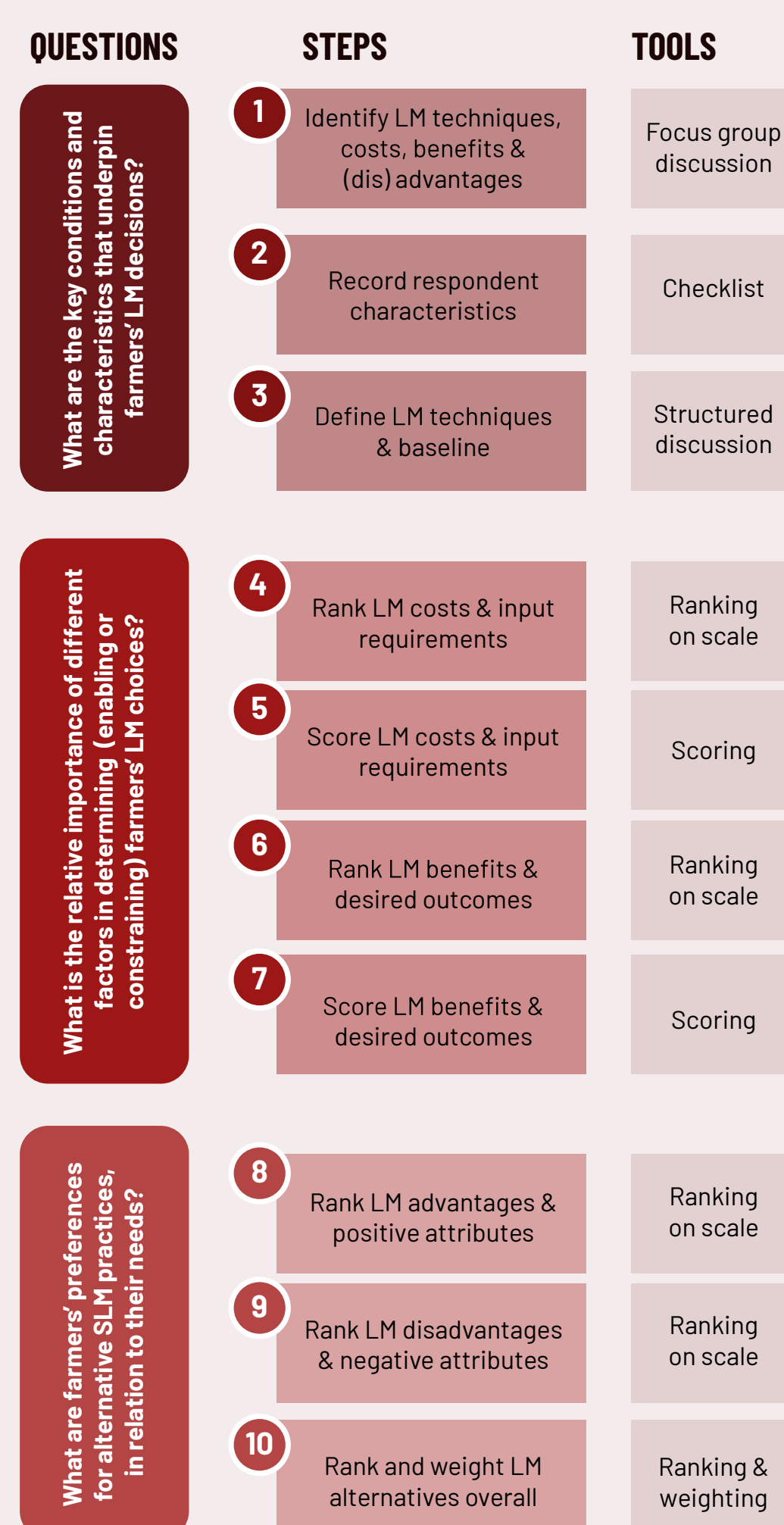


Fig 2: Evaluating Land Management Options (ELMO) steps.

Results

- Average age of coffee farmers ranged from 46 years to 56 years, signifying an aging population.
- Gender distribution of farmers: 45% (136) female and 55% (166) male.
- Most farmers adopting regenerative practices operate on small-scale farms, with median land sizes around 0.5 acres.
- Over 50% of farms reported low soil fertility and productivity.
- Diverse regenerative agriculture practices reported (Fig 2).



Fig 3: Regenerative coffee practices (Strip grasses on terraces, mulching, use of manure).

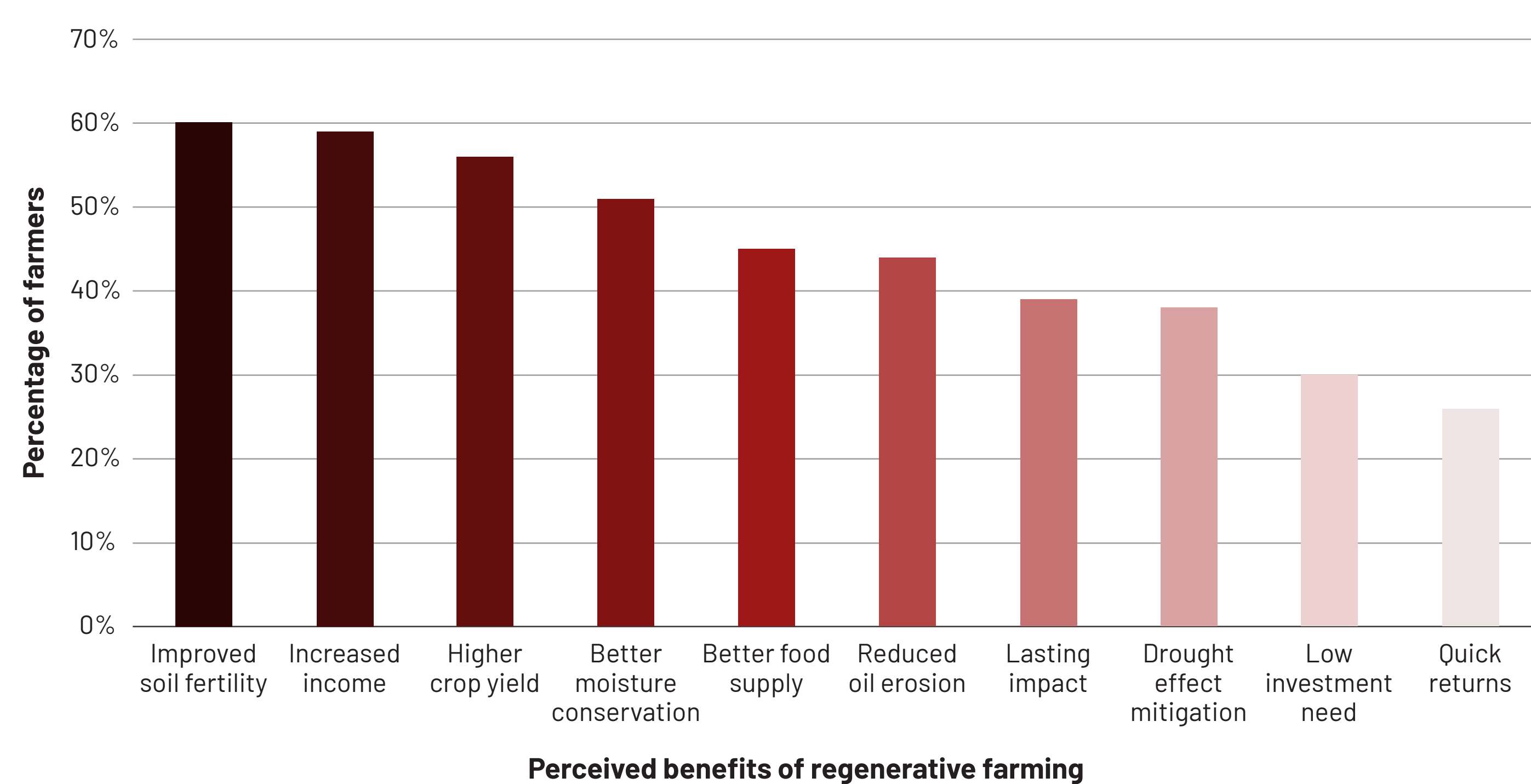


Fig 4: Perceived benefits and desired outcomes of regenerative coffee farming.

Disincentives for implementing regenerative practices in coffee:

- High labour requirement
- Cost of implementation
- Delayed and low returns/benefits
- Fear of loss of income during transition
- Fear of higher risks of pests
- Lack of know how and weak extension support

Conclusion

- There is a growing interest among Kenyan coffee farmers in adopting regenerative agricultural practices.
- Multiple benefits are borne from bundling the regenerative practices.
- Adoption of some practices is hindered by high labour, input cost and knowhow.
- Motivation to adopt should be informed by long term and sustained benefits as opposed to short term benefits.
- A step wise transition capitalizing on homegrown practices with less cost is needed.
- Markets can offer an incentive to transitions to sustainable coffee systems.
- Continuous capacity building and training is needed.

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