# A SURVEY OF BUSINESS STRATEGIES APPLIED BY AGRO-INPUT ENTERPRISES IN KENYA FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: A CASE OF MACHAKOS SUB-COUNTY

**By**

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**Abstract**

Agro input enterprises bring closer agricultural production farm inputs closer to farmers. This farm inputs include; seeds, fertilizers, tools, agro-chemicals, artificial insemination, animal feeds. They are also expected to provide information services though not all are committed to this and thus missing a very key marketing strategy. Agro input businesses face various challenges and opportunities that require them to apply different strategies for them to break even and make sustained profits in their businesses. One of the major challenges faced by agro input enterprises is seasonality of demand; various products and services are demanded at different levels at different times of the year due weather seasons and patterns. The different seasons bring about booming periods of sales and lean periods of low sales though some off season products do increase in demand during such times.

This call for agro input enterprises employ business strategies in order to have and maintain strategic positions of sustained competitive advantage. This study investigated the level of application of business strategies by agro input enterprises for competitive advantage. It explored the extent at which the three Michael Porters' generic business strategies were being implemented by agro input enterprises in Kenya. The strategies under the investigation were; cost leadership strategies, differentiation strategies and market focus strategies.

The study used descriptive research design. The population of the study accessed was 26 agro input enterprises licensed by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate (KEPHIS) and the Pests Control Board (PCB) to sell seeds and agro-chemicals. Due to the small population of agro input enterprises in Machakos Sub County a census survey was conducted. The researcher used structured questionnaires to collect the required data and the data was analyzed using the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS). Quantitative data was analyzed using cumulative frequencies, percentages and it was presented in form of tables.

The researcher found that only 5.26% of the agro input enterprises were implementing cost leadership strategies, 10.52% were implementing differentiation strategies while 10.8% were implementing market focus strategies. In conclusion, the extent of application of business strategies by agro input enterprises in the sub county is low.

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