



STRATHMORE BUSINESS SCHOOL
MASTER OF MANAGEMENT IN AGRIBUSINESS
END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION
MMA 8302: STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR
AGRIBUSINESS

DATE: Tuesday, 10th February 2026

TIME: 3 Hours

Instructions

1. This examination consists of **FIVE** questions.
2. Answer **Question ONE (COMPULSORY)** and **ANY OTHER TWO** questions.

QUESTION ONE

(30 MARKS)

CASE STUDY

Strategic HRM Transformation at AgriFields Foods Ltd

AgriFields Foods Ltd is a rapidly expanding East African agribusiness enterprise specializing in high-value horticultural exports, sustainable seed production, and agro-processing for regional and European markets. Established in 2014, the company operates across Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, working with over 6,500 smallholder farmers and employing 3,200 staff. As global markets demand stricter food-safety certifications, traceability, and climate-smart agricultural practices, the firm has realized that its long-term competitive advantage lies not only in its agricultural technologies but also in strategically managing its human resources. By 2022, rapid expansion revealed significant HR-related constraints. Skilled agronomists, food-safety specialists, and digital farm-management technologists were scarce in the region. High competition from NGOs, development agencies, and multinational agro-firms further intensified the war for talent. At the same time, operational demands increased—packhouse workers often worked long shifts during peak seasons, and field extension officers travelled long distances to service contracted farmers. These realities pushed the firm toward formalizing Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices to ensure employee capacity aligned with organizational strategy.

To address talent shortages, the firm's HR director introduced a Strategic Workforce Development Plan. The plan emphasized building internal talent pipelines through structured apprenticeship programs, partnering with agricultural universities, and offering performance-based scholarships for employees pursuing diplomas or degrees in agronomy and food-safety sciences. Within two years, the percentage of technical roles filled internally rose from 27% to 56%, reducing recruitment costs and boosting employee loyalty. HR also introduced a competitive rural hardship package to attract skilled staff to remote plantation zones. Performance management reforms became another strategic priority. Previously, supervisors used general, non-standardized appraisal templates that lacked clarity on output expectations.

Employees complained of inconsistent evaluations, unclear performance goals, and limited feedback. In response, the firm implemented a Strategic Performance Management System based on the Balanced Scorecard approach. Key performance indicators (KPIs) were developed for each role: agronomists were assessed on farmer-training coverage, compliance with export standards, and yield improvement; packhouse workers were evaluated on wastage reduction, speed accuracy, and adherence to hygiene protocols; managerial staff were assessed on departmental productivity, cost efficiency, and innovation adoption. Mandatory quarterly coaching sessions were introduced to ensure continuous performance dialogue.

Learning and development efforts were expanded through the firm's Academy, which is an internal training hub designed to enhance employees' technical and leadership skills. The academy combines e-learning, field demonstrations, simulation-based training for seed-processing teams, and international exchange programs. The HR analytics unit monitors training effectiveness by linking learning outcomes to workplace productivity. Since the academy's establishment, export rejection rates dropped from 9% to 4%, and packhouse efficiency increased by 14%. Despite these strategic gains, the firm continued to struggle with employee engagement and well-being. A 2023 employee-climate survey revealed that while staff appreciated training opportunities, 48% felt under-recognized for exceptional performance, 39% believed communication across departments was ineffective, and many field officers felt isolated due to limited social support systems in rural areas. Additionally, turnover in remote farm stations was alarmingly high, reaching 28% annually. HR leadership recognized that SHRM must not only focus on performance structures but also cultivate a positive work environment.

The firm responded by introducing a comprehensive Employee Experience and Engagement Strategy. This included revamping the reward and recognition framework, establishing a digital engagement platform known as "MyAgriVoice" for real-time feedback, and creating wellness initiatives such as mental-health support, peer-support clusters, and periodic team-building retreats. Supervisors were trained on coaching skills, empathetic leadership, and conflict-resolution techniques to strengthen workplace relationships. Early outcomes showed improved morale, reduced absenteeism, and increased retention. Looking toward the future, the firm plans to deepen digital HR transformation. AI-based talent analytics, predictive labor-demand forecasting, biometric attendance systems, and GIS-integrated performance tools for extension officers are being considered. Management believes that SHRM will ensure operational consistency, compliance with global standards, and an empowered workforce capable of sustaining the company's competitive advantage.

Required:

- a) Using evidence from the case study, analyze **FIVE** ways in which Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) contributed to sustained performance at AgriFields Foods Ltd **(10 Marks)**
- b) Drawing from the case study, Explain **FIVE** major SHRM challenges faced by AgriFields Foods Ltd and propose practical, implementable solutions that management should consider **(10 Marks)**

- c) Evaluate **FIVE** ways in which digital transformation, HR analytics and emerging technologies can enhance the effectiveness of SHRM practices at AgriFields Foods Ltd. **(10 Marks)**

QUESTION TWO

(15 MARKS)

- a) Matumbo Limited is transitioning from smallholder-based sourcing to a fully integrated agribusiness model that includes greenhouse farming, mechanized irrigation, and cold-chain logistics. Explain **FIVE** ways in which strategic workforce planning can help the company manage labour demand, technology adoption, and quality assurance during this transition **(10 Marks)**
- b) Due to diversification into high-value crops, Solara Verde Agritech Limited is restructuring operations by establishing new divisions such as Precision Farming, Crop Innovation Labs, and Post-Harvest Analytics. Describe **FIVE** strategies the company can use to manage this organizational change while maintaining staff morale and operational stability **(5 Marks)**

QUESTION THREE

(15 MARKS)

Zurima Agro-Enterprises is a mid-sized agribusiness firm in Eastern Kenya specializing in premium horticultural produce (avocado, French beans, and herbs) for export markets in the EU and Middle East. The company employs 180 workers across production, processing, and logistics departments. Recently, export clients have raised concerns about inconsistent product quality and delayed shipments. An internal audit shows that employee performance reviews are irregular, supervisors do not use standard performance metrics, and most farm workers complain they never receive feedback. To address this, Zurima's new HR Manager has designed a Performance Management Improvement Plan (PMIP) focusing on setting clear KPIs, introducing continuous feedback, strengthening supervisor training and linking rewards to performance outcomes. However, resistance from some supervisors, lack of digital tools, and a high turnover in the processing unit threaten the success of the initiative. As an HR Strategist, analyze **FIVE** the challenges you may deal with in implementing an effective performance planning and KPI-based system across the company.

QUESTION FOUR

(15 MARKS)

- a) Arivana Agro Co. is a fast-growing agribusiness focusing on premium vegetables for export. The company employs farmhands, irrigation technicians, packhouse staff, and drivers. Recently, workers have raised concerns about inconsistent overtime pay, unclear allowances, and lack of distinction between skilled and unskilled roles. Management wants to redesign compensation to increase fairness, motivation and productivity. Explain **FIVE** major challenges the organization may face when introducing a job evaluation exercise to establish an equitable pay structure **(5 Marks)**

- b) Kilanga GreenFarms Ltd is a large agribusiness enterprise in Kenya producing macadamia nuts and horticultural crops for export. The company employs 420 workers, most of whom belong to the Agricultural Workers Union. The CBA between the company and the union expired six months ago. Workers are demanding wage adjustments, improved housing allowances, and better overtime terms. Management argues that export prices have dropped and the company cannot sustain the proposed increments. Employees threaten to go on strike. As a newly employed HR manager, evaluate five ways in which the company can strengthen employee relations and ensure smooth implementation of negotiated CBA
(10 Marks)

QUESTION FIVE

(15 MARKS)

- a) Velora Farms Exports Ltd is a modern agribusiness company specializing in premium herbs, vegetables, and fruits for European markets. However, productivity has recently declined due to low worker motivation, poor communication, and rigid supervisory styles. The Board has appointed you introduce transformational leadership to inspire innovation, rebuild trust, and enhance employee commitment. Evaluate **FIVE** ways the company can effectively embed introduced leadership model to boost motivation, innovation and teamwork across the agribusiness operations
(10 Marks)
- b) A large agricultural cooperative is introducing digital farm-record systems to replace manual record-keeping among its member farmers. Using the ADKAR model, explain how the cooperative should guide farmers through this transition to ensure successful adoption
(5 Marks)