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Feature Story:

KMFRI-TNC partnership charts new course for restorative mariculture beyond seaweed.



Highlights



World Mangrove Day: Kenya's Blue Carbon Plan Signals a New Era for Mangrove Conservation



From landing sites to laboratories: Strengthening Kenya's blue food systems through science and partnership



Voices from the Creeks. Building a sustainable prawn Fishery in Hidio and Ungu, Lamu County.

By: Dr. David Mirera, Hellen Moyoni, Faith Kimanga and Betty Mapenzi / Edits: Jane Kiguta / Layout: Jacqueline W. Wamta

KMFRI-TNC partnership charts new course for restorative mariculture beyond seaweed



KMFRI Researchers participating in seaweed restoration

Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has completed a comprehensive scoping assessment that identifies promising opportunities for expanding restorative mariculture beyond seaweed farming. The landmark study provides a scientific roadmap for diversifying Kenya's marine aquaculture sector through environmentally sustainable and economically viable species

Documented in the report, *Scoping Assessment of Aquaculture Species for Expanding Restorative Aquaculture Beyond Seaweed*, the assessment identifies high-value species such as sea cucumber, mud crab, milkfish and rabbitfish as priority candidates for commercial production. Beyond generating income, these species can contribute to healthier marine ecosystems, strengthen food security, and support the country's growing Blue Economy.

Stretching over 640 kilometers, Kenya's coastline offers enormous potential for sustainable marine aquaculture. Although seaweed farming has remained the dominant mariculture activity for years, the assessment demonstrates that the sector is ready to transition towards diversified production systems that deliver both ecological and socio-economic benefits.

According to the report, Kenya's mariculture industry has witnessed growing interest and investment in recent years. Marine aquaculture production reached 134 metric tons in 2024, with further growth expected following the implementation of the National Aquaculture Policy and the country's Blue Economy Strategy. The TNC-supported *Accelerating Restorative Aquaculture in Africa* project has already trained 121 farmers in best management practices, underscoring the strong demand for diversified mariculture enterprises.

Collaborative assessment identifies high-value species and a roadmap for expanding sustainable mariculture to strengthen food security, restore marine ecosystems, and drive Kenya's Blue

Expanding beyond seaweed

The assessment engaged farmers and stakeholders from Kijiweni Self Help Group, Dabaso Conservation Group and the National Mariculture Research and Training (NAMARET) Centre in Shimoni to evaluate suitable species for restorative aquaculture.

Among the top recommendations is sea cucumber (*Holothuria scabra*), identified as a priority species due to its high international market value and significant progress made by KMFRI in its domestication. The species is also well suited for Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) because of its low environmental footprint and ability to recycle nutrients within farming systems.

The study also highlights mud crab (*Scylla serrata*) as an ideal species for mangrove-based restorative aquaculture. Besides generating income for coastal communities, mud crab farming creates economic incentives for mangrove conservation. Recent KMFRI training programs in the Lamu-Tana seascape have equipped community groups with innovative techniques for fabricating plastic cages used in crab fattening, significantly reducing mortality and improving productivity.

In addition, milkfish and rabbitfish emerged as attractive finfish species for sustainable farming. Both species occupy lower trophic levels and thrive largely on natural diets, reducing dependence on expensive fishmeal-based feeds while making them ideal candidates for polyculture systems.

Building a stronger mariculture sector

The assessment identifies investment in capacity building and infrastructure as critical to unlocking the sector's full potential. Stakeholders ranked training on value addition, improved access to financing, better transportation networks and stronger cooperative

movements among the highest priorities for accelerating growth.



Kibokoni fish farmer harvesting from an IMTA pond where he has integrated milkfish, prawns, marine tilapia & sea cucumber.

Central to this transformation is the KMFRI-managed National Mariculture Research and Training (NAMARET) Centre in Shimoni, Kenya's first national marine hatchery. The facility is expected to play a pivotal role in reducing reliance on wild-caught seed for finfish and crustacean farming by providing a reliable supply of quality hatchery-produced juveniles throughout the year.

The findings further reveal that 63 percent of respondents are already practicing Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA), making it the most widely adopted production system among surveyed farmers. By integrating fed species with extractive organisms such as sea cucumbers and oysters, IMTA improves water quality, reduces environmental impacts and enhances productivity per unit of water used.

Science driving sustainable development

The assessment represents a significant milestone in Kenya's efforts to build a resilient and restorative mariculture sector. The evidence generated provides practical guidance for government agencies, development partners, investors and coastal communities on priority investments and interventions needed to scale sustainable marine aquaculture.

Moving forward, KMFRI and TNC will continue working together to strengthen hatchery infrastructure, expand technical training and extension services, improve market systems and support the adoption of restorative aquaculture technologies across Kenya's coastal counties.

"This collaboration exemplifies the power of science-driven partnerships in achieving sustainable development goals," said KMFRI Chief Scientist and Mariculture expert, Dr. David Mirera. "By working together, we are not just expanding aquaculture, but building a restorative model that supports our coastal communities and protects our precious marine heritage for generations to come."



Dr. David Mirera, KMFRI Chief Scientist and Mariculture expert.

As Kenya advances its Blue Economy agenda, the partnership between KMFRI and TNC demonstrates how science, innovation and collaboration can transform marine aquaculture into a powerful engine for sustainable livelihoods, ecosystem restoration and inclusive economic growth.



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By: Ruth Ommala & Eugene Praise | Edits: Jane Kiguta

World Mangrove Day: Kenya's Blue Carbon Plan Signals a New Era for Mangrove Conservation



Mangrove forests are among Kenya's most valuable coastal ecosystems, providing environmental, economic and climate benefits.

Mangrove forests are among Kenya's most valuable coastal ecosystems. Quietly working behind the scenes, they protect shorelines from erosion and storm surges, provide breeding grounds for fish, improve water quality, and store vast amounts of carbon. They also support biodiversity and sustain the livelihoods of thousands of people who depend on healthy coastal environments.

Despite their immense value, mangrove forests continue to face growing pressure from climate change, pollution, unsustainable harvesting, and rapid coastal development. Protecting them has therefore become increasingly important not only for conserving biodiversity but also for strengthening climate resilience and supporting sustainable economic growth.

As the world marked the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem (World Mangrove Day) on 26 July, Kenya is reaffirming its commitment to safeguarding these critical coastal habitats through stronger policies, partnerships and long-term investment.

Established by UNESCO in 2015, World Mangrove Day raises global awareness of the ecological, economic and social importance of mangrove ecosystems. It also serves as a reminder of the urgent need to halt their degradation and promote their restoration and sustainable management for the benefit of present and future generations.

Kenya took a significant step towards achieving this goal on 17 June 2026 during the 11th Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa with the launch of the country's first Blue Carbon Ecosystems Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Implementation and Investment Plan (2025–2035).

The plan provides a practical roadmap for conserving, restoring and sustainably managing Kenya's blue carbon ecosystems over the next decade. It identifies priority actions, sets measurable implementation targets, outlines institutional responsibilities and establishes an investment framework to mobilize the resources needed to achieve the country's climate and coastal conservation commitments.



Blue carbon ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrass meadows, and tidal marshes, are among the world's most effective natural climate solutions. Besides storing significant amounts of carbon, they protect coastlines, support marine biodiversity and strengthen the resilience of communities that depend on healthy coastal ecosystems. Recognizing their ecological, social and economic importance, Kenya has placed these ecosystems at the heart of its climate action and Blue Economy agenda.

Mangroves are central to this vision. Beyond capturing and storing carbon, they act as natural barriers against coastal erosion and extreme weather, provide nursery habitats for commercially important fish species, improve water quality and create opportunities for sustainable livelihoods through ecotourism, beekeeping, sustainable harvesting and emerging blue carbon financing initiatives.

Across Kenya's coastline, community-led mangrove restoration initiatives continue to demonstrate that conservation is most effective when local communities are actively involved. In counties such as Kwale, Kilifi, Lamu and Mombasa, partnerships among communities, research institutions and government agencies have helped restore degraded habitats while

strengthening fisheries, supporting livelihoods and improving the resilience of coastal ecosystems.

The new Implementation and Investment Plan builds on these successes by promoting collaborative management of blue carbon ecosystems. Its implementation will bring together the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), the Kenya Forest Service (KeFS), the six coastal county governments, national government institutions, development partners, the private sector and coastal communities in a coordinated effort to protect and restore Kenya's coastal resources.

As one of the lead implementing institutions, KMFRI will continue to generate the scientific evidence needed to guide conservation and restoration efforts. Through research, ecosystem monitoring, habitat restoration, innovation and technical advisory services, the Institute supports evidence-based decision-making that strengthens climate resilience, conserves biodiversity and promotes the sustainable management of Kenya's blue carbon ecosystems.

The launch of the Blue Carbon Ecosystems NDC Implementation and Investment Plan reflects Kenya's growing leadership in using nature-based solutions to address climate change. Protecting and restoring mangroves and other blue carbon ecosystems will not only help the country meet its national climate commitments but also strengthen food security, support sustainable livelihoods and unlock opportunities for a thriving Blue Economy.

As the world commemorated World Mangrove Day, the message is clear: protecting mangroves is about far more than conserving trees along the shoreline. It is about safeguarding fisheries, protecting biodiversity, strengthening coastal resilience and securing the future of the communities that depend on healthy marine ecosystems.

This year's World Mangrove Day was therefore both a celebration and a call to action. Through science, collaboration and sustained investment, Kenya is laying the foundation for healthier coastlines and more resilient communities. The Blue Carbon Ecosystems NDC Implementation and Investment Plan provides a shared vision to ensure that mangrove forests continue to protect biodiversity, support livelihoods, and contribute to climate resilience for generations to come.

The roots of resilience: Why mangroves matter

Stretching along Kenya's coastline, mangrove forests quietly perform services that are invaluable to both people and nature. Their intricate network of roots acts as a living barrier against powerful waves, reducing coastal erosion, stabilizing shorelines and trapping sediments that help coastlines naturally adapt to rising sea levels. By absorbing wave energy, healthy mangrove forests provide an effective and cost-efficient natural defense against storms while protecting homes, infrastructure and critical coastal habitats.



Gazi women planting mangroves

Beneath these tangled roots lies another equally important role. Mangroves serve as vital nursery grounds for fish, crabs and other marine life. The sheltered, food-rich waters provide young aquatic species with protection from predators and ideal conditions for growth before they migrate into coral reefs and the open ocean. The health of Kenya's fisheries is therefore closely tied to the health of its mangrove ecosystems, making their conservation essential for food security and the livelihoods of coastal fishing communities.

Mangroves are also among the world's most effective natural carbon sinks. Often referred to as "blue carbon" ecosystems, they capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in their trees and waterlogged soils for centuries. In fact, a hectare of healthy mangroves can store significantly more carbon than many terrestrial forests, making these ecosystems powerful allies in the fight against climate change. However, when mangroves are cleared or degraded through coastal development, pollution and deforestation, this stored carbon is released back into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Beyond climate regulation, mangroves are biodiversity hotspots that connect land and sea. Their roots provide shelter and breeding grounds for hundreds of species of fish, crustaceans, birds and other wildlife while filtering pollutants that would otherwise damage neighboring ecosystems such as coral reefs and seagrass meadows. In protecting mangroves, we also safeguard the rich web of life that depends on them.

Research and science continue to play a critical role in ensuring these ecosystems are protected for future generations. Through research, restoration initiatives and close collaboration with coastal communities and conservation partners, Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFR I) has continued to generate the scientific knowledge needed to guide sustainable mangrove management in Kenya.

One of the country's most celebrated examples of community-based mangrove conservation is Mikoko Pamoja in Gazi Bay—the world's first blue carbon project. Supported by scientific research and long-term partnerships, the initiative has demonstrated how healthy mangrove ecosystems can generate lasting environmental and socio-economic benefits. Through community-led conservation and reforestation, carbon credit revenues have been reinvested in local priorities, including classrooms, school books, clean water projects and other community infrastructure. At the same time, the initiative has strengthened mangrove conservation, enhanced fisheries, supported biodiversity and contributed to climate change mitigation, proving that investing in nature also means investing in people.

A single hectare of healthy mangroves can protect shorelines from erosion, sustain fisheries, store vast amounts of carbon and provide habitat for hundreds of species. Their value extends far beyond Kenya's coastline, making them indispensable to environmental sustainability, economic resilience and climate action.

As we commemorate the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, we are reminded that every mangrove restored and every forest protected is an investment in a healthier ocean and more resilient communities. Through science, innovation and partnerships, KMFRI remains at the forefront of generating the knowledge that informs mangrove conservation and sustainable management, ensuring that Kenya's coastal lifeline continues to thrive for generations to come.

By: Ruth Ommala | Edits: Jane Kiguta

From landing sites to laboratories: Strengthening Kenya's blue food systems through science and partnership



Fishermen return to the landing site after an overnight fishing trip, bringing in the day's catch that supports.

Long before sunrise, the landing sites of **Shimoni, Vanga and Jimbo** begin to come alive. Fishing boats slowly return from the sea after a long night, welcomed by traders and *mama choma* eager to see what the day's catch will bring. For these coastal communities, every catch tells a different story.



Some days bring plenty of fish and good business, while others end with empty nets and uncertainty.

For the fishermen, every trip to sea comes with uncertainty. Hours spent on the water do not always guarantee a good catch, especially when bad weather or changing fishing conditions make it difficult to find fish. When catches are low, the effects are felt throughout the value chain.

Fish traders have little to sell, *mama choma* have no fish to process, and many families lose an important source of income. As one fisherman explained, "*When the season is good, we catch more fish, traders have enough to sell, the mama choma have fish to process, and everyone earns something.*"

It was against this backdrop that scientists from the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), working alongside Norwegian partner institutions under the Strengthening Sustainable Blue

Food Systems in Coastal Kenya (SBFS-Kenya) project, visited the three landing sites to collect samples of dried, fried and other processed fish products. The exercise forms part of the project's Post-harvest Blue Food Safety and Nutritional Assessment component, which aims to improve food safety while increasing understanding of the nutritional value of blue foods.

The exercise was more than a scientific activity. It allowed researchers to engage directly with fishermen, fish traders, and *mama choma* to better understand the journey of fish from the sea to consumers. Fishermen shared their experiences of life at sea, the fishing grounds they visit, and the challenges they face. Fish traders and *mama choma* explained how fish is cleaned, fried, dried, and processed before reaching local and regional markets. These conversations gave researchers valuable insights into post-harvest handling practices, seasonal fishing patterns and the realities of those working along the fisheries value chain.

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Researchers collected samples of dried, fried and other processed fish products from different actors across Shimoni, Vanga and Jimbo. At the same time, KMFRI scientists received practical training from Norwegian partner institutions on internationally recognized blue food sampling methods, strengthening local scientific capacity and ensuring that the samples were collected using globally accepted standards.

The samples will be analyzed to determine their nutritional value and assess possible contaminants. The findings will help improve food safety, strengthen the quality of fish products and provide evidence to support policies that promote healthy diets, sustainable fisheries, and resilient blue food systems in Kenya.

The sampling exercise also reflects the strong and growing partnership between Kenya and Norway in advancing marine research, sustainable fisheries and the blue economy. This collaboration was highlighted during President William Ruto's recent visit to the Norwegian research vessel (R/V Dr. Fridtjof Nansen) at the Port of Mombasa during the 11th Our Ocean Conference. During the visit, the President reaffirmed Kenya's commitment to strengthening marine research, promoting sustainable fisheries and working with international partners to unlock the full potential of the blue economy for food security, job creation and sustainable economic growth.

For the people of Shimoni, Vanga and Jimbo, the visit by KMFRI scientists was more than a research activity. It was an opportunity for their knowledge and experiences to contribute to research that can improve livelihoods and strengthen Kenya's blue food sector. Every sample collected represents more than scientific data. It reflects the experiences of fishermen, traders and *mama choma*, whose knowledge is helping shape solutions that will strengthen food safety and support sustainable fisheries.



By bringing together science and the experiences of coastal communities, KMFRI and its Norwegian partners are helping build safer, healthier and more sustainable blue food systems. From the fishermen who brave the sea each night to the traders and *mama choma* who ensure fish reaches consumers, every person plays an important role. Together, their knowledge and scientific research are helping shape a future where Kenya's blue foods continue to nourish communities, support livelihoods and contribute to a thriving blue economy.

By: David Mirera, Faith Kimanga, Hellen Ngoa, Athman Mubarak, Jebril Olunga, Alex Kimathi, Isack Mondesto, Sheila Momanyi, and Mercy Chebii
Edits: Brian Isoe

Voices from the Creeks. Building a sustainable prawn Fishery in Hidio and Ungu, Lamu County.



Dried Prawns

Along the Kenyan coast lie long stretches of mangrove-lined creeks that are key in the development of coastal livelihoods in various ways. Creeks are critical ecosystems that provide the base for fisheries production and sustainability of the overall coastal fisheries value chain.

Creeks play a major role in protecting creek habitats, particularly mangroves, and in maintaining water

quality, helping sustain fish supplies, boosting livelihoods, and ensuring the long-term productivity of coastal fisheries, thereby uplifting the status of fishers who depend on fisheries to feed their families.

Our focus today is on the communities residing in Lamu County and how their proximity to the creeks has affected their lives. These communities living along the Indian Ocean have depended solely on the ocean to support their families and to take their children to school. To them, the creek is the sole provider they have had from the beginning.

A team of scientists from the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) recently proceeded on a field visit to Lamu County to undertake a detailed socio-ecological evaluation in five coastal communities of Kipungani, Matondoni, Mkunumbi, Mokowe and Ndambwe.

The assessment aimed to provide a full knowledge of the challenges and potential for shallow-water prawn fishing in the designated breeding closure regions of Hidio and Ungu. The researchers are working with local fishing communities and evaluating ecological conditions to provide key data to support sustainable fisheries management and increase the long-term resilience of these important coastal ecosystems.

The findings will inform evidence-based approaches to reconcile biodiversity protection with enhanced livelihoods so that the shallow-water prawn fishery may continue to sustainably support the communities that depend on it.

In-depth discussions with the locals proved to be of great importance considering their grasp of indigenous traditional knowledge at their fingertips. A glimpse into the statistics gathered indicated that a bigger population of the communities is defined by their profound dependence on the ocean, with a staggering 74.1% of those interviewed relying exclusively on fishing as their main livelihood, supplemented by only

13.8% who combine it with farming and a mere 10.3% who engage in small-scale business.

Creek fisheries are vital for local economies, cultural heritage, and coastal resilience. They provide livelihoods for many coastal households, support food security, and sustain fishing-related businesses. Sustainable management of these ecosystems is crucial for conserving biodiversity and ensuring the well-being of coastal communities for future generations, as opined by one *community member from Ndambwe*: "Fishing is my only source of livelihood. I cannot afford to stop fishing for even one month."



Our Prawns Are in Trouble

However, creek fisheries face pressures from overfishing, as we've seen; if we don't diversify and continue relying exclusively on fishing, then our resources in the ocean will keep on being depleted and thus hinder human sustainability. Extreme depletion of these resources means that with time, our households will begin struggling to make ends meet.

Over the past five years, fishers have noticed that prawn populations have decreased. More than half the fishers say the prawns they catch are now smaller than before. These findings are alarming, indicating that the habitat and water quality have degraded. A fisher from Kipungani observed: "We used to catch big prawns regularly. Now we mostly get small ones."

The consequences of depletion, with a key focus on prawns, extend beyond marine biodiversity. As prawn catches decline, coastal households become more vulnerable to food insecurity, reduced incomes, nutritional deficiency, and economic hardship. Promoting diverse livelihood opportunities, alongside sustainable fisheries management, including running small businesses, is essential to reducing pressure on these ecosystems, enhancing community resilience, and securing the present and future generations.

KMFRI has advocated for Fishing in specific breeding and nursery sites during crucial reproductive seasons to be temporarily prohibited by prawn closures, which are fisheries management tools, to preserve healthy populations for next harvests. These closures are made to let prawns breed, reproduce, and reach adulthood without interference, just like the octopus fisheries.

While temporary closures may reduce fishing opportunities in the short term, they generate long-term ecological and economic benefits by preventing overexploitation, sustaining fish stocks, and ensuring that future generations can continue to benefit from these valuable marine resources. The community is on board with them, eager to continue practicing the prawn closure system, which they term "smart fishing" in their own language. "These closures will lead to bigger and more prawns, and bring in monetary benefits," they added.



Recommendations for Sustainable Prawn Fisheries Management

The assessment highlighted the need to strengthen enforcement of existing fisheries regulations rather than introducing new ones, with the Lamu community recommending aligning seasonal prawn closures with August and September, a period they believe offers the best balance between protecting breeding stocks and minimizing disruptions to livelihoods.

To reduce dependence on fishing, participants emphasized the importance of investing in sustainable alternative livelihoods such as aquaculture, small businesses, climate-smart agriculture, and ecotourism to ensure they can still sustain themselves and their families.

Protecting mangroves and creek habitats emerged as another key priority, with communities recognizing these ecosystems as essential breeding and nursery grounds for prawns. Equally important is ensuring that

management interventions are equitable, with vulnerable groups benefiting from conservation initiatives and livelihood support.

Finally, the study underscored the critical role of Beach Management Units in fisheries co-management. Strengthening these community institutions through training, resources, and formal support will enhance community participation and improve the long-term sustainability of Lamu's shallow-water prawn fisheries.



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By: Jane Kiguta

Fisheries Bill reinforces KMFRI's strategic role in advancing Kenya's Blue Economy

The proposed Fisheries Management and Development Bill is set to enhance sustainable fisheries governance in Kenya by placing scientific research at the heart of decision-making, reinforcing KMFRI's role in supporting the country's Blue Economy agenda'.



The discussions on the Kenya Fisheries Management and Development Bill reaffirmed KMFRI's status as a statutory institution and underscored its central role in supporting the sustainable growth of Kenya's Blue Economy. The deliberations highlighted the critical importance of science, research, and innovation in fisheries governance, resource conservation, and aquaculture development.

The Bill further elevates the role of KMFRI by positioning the Institute as the primary source of fisheries and aquatic scientific evidence to inform policy and management decisions. It reinforces KMFRI's mandate as a key technical advisor to the Ministry responsible for fisheries and strengthens the Institute's contribution to the implementation of sustainable fisheries management measures.

Additionally, the Bill recognizes the importance of research-driven solutions in addressing emerging challenges facing the fisheries sector, including declining fish stocks, climate change impacts, biodiversity conservation, and food security. This places KMFRI at the heart of national efforts to harness the full potential of the Blue Economy while ensuring the sustainable utilization of aquatic resources.

Proposed Fisheries Management Bill Poised to Strengthen Science-Led Fisheries Governance.

Proposed Fisheries Bill holds great promise for Kenya's fisheries sector

Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) is poised to play an even more central role in advancing fisheries and Blue Economy research once the Fisheries Management and Development (Amendment) Bill is signed into law. The Bill was tabled before Parliament and debated by Members of Parliament, with the majority of legislators expressing support for it to proceed to the next stage of the legislative process.

If enacted, the proposed amendments are expected to strengthen the institutional and research framework for sustainable fisheries management, marine resource conservation, aquaculture development, and evidence-based decision-making within Kenya's growing Blue Economy sector.

"As Kenya prepares to implement the new fisheries legal framework, KMFRI reaffirms its commitment to providing credible scientific evidence, innovative technologies, and policy support that will ensure the country's fisheries resources are managed sustainably for the benefit of present and future generations," said KMFRI Director General Dr Paul Orina.

Commenting on the fisheries bill, KMFRI Director General says the proposed legislation reinforces an enduring principle in sustainable fisheries built on sound science.

"KMFRI remains at the forefront of generating the knowledge required to safeguard Kenya's aquatic resources and drive a resilient Blue Economy," he added.



KMFRI Director General, Dr. Paul S. Orina

As the country's lead marine and fisheries research institution, KMFRI is expected to provide critical scientific data, policy support, innovation, and

technical expertise to guide implementation of the amended law and support sustainable utilization of Kenya's aquatic resources.

Once it becomes law it is expected to usher in a new era of science-driven fisheries management by providing a modern legal framework for the sustainable utilization, conservation, and development of Kenya's marine and inland fisheries resources. The proposed law seeks to update Kenya's 2016 principal fisheries legislation.

Once enacted, the Bill will strengthen evidence-based decision-making by recognizing scientific research as critical in harnessing the fisheries sector.

Why the proposed law matters for KMFRI

The proposed Fisheries Management and Development Bill mark a significant milestone in Kenya's efforts to strengthen the sustainable management of its fisheries resources and advance the Blue Economy agenda. Once enacted, the legislation is expected to provide a modern legal framework for fisheries governance, conservation, aquaculture development, and the sustainable utilization of aquatic resources.

For the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), the Bill presents an opportunity to reinforce its role as the country's premier marine and freshwater research institution. As Kenya continues to embrace evidence-based decision-making, the demand for scientific research to guide fisheries management is expected to grow.

The Bill places strong emphasis on the use of science in fisheries management, underscoring the importance of research in informing policy decisions, stock assessments, ecosystem monitoring, and conservation strategies. This aligns directly with KMFRI's mandate of generating scientific knowledge to support the

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sustainable development and management of Kenya's marine and inland aquatic resources.

The proposed law also seeks to strengthen aquaculture development by creating an enabling environment for investment and innovation. This complements KMFR's ongoing research in fish breeding, hatchery technologies, fish nutrition, disease management, mariculture, and climate-resilient aquaculture systems aimed at increasing fish production and enhancing food and nutrition security.

In addition, the Bill promotes ecosystem-based fisheries management, recognizing the need to protect critical aquatic habitats while ensuring the sustainable use of fisheries resources. KMFR's research on mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass ecosystems, freshwater lakes, rivers, and marine biodiversity will continue to provide the scientific evidence needed to guide conservation and restoration initiatives.

The new legal framework is also expected to strengthen collaboration among institutions responsible for fisheries management. As the national fisheries research agency, KMFR is well positioned to work closely with the proposed Kenya Fisheries Service, county governments, universities, regional fisheries bodies, and development partners in generating scientific evidence to support effective resource management.

Beyond strengthening fisheries governance, the Bill is expected to contribute to Kenya's broader Blue Economy aspirations by promoting sustainable fisheries, creating employment opportunities, enhancing food security, attracting investment, and improving the livelihoods of coastal and inland fishing communities.

Implementation of the law will also increase the need for timely scientific data on fish stocks, environmental conditions, climate change impacts, and emerging threats to aquatic ecosystems. KMFR's long-standing expertise in fisheries research, monitoring, and innovation will therefore remain central to supporting informed decision-making at both national and county levels.

As Kenya advances its Blue Economy agenda, KMFR is expected to play an even more strategic role as a leading research institution and a critical partner in achieving sustainable fisheries, enhanced livelihoods, environmental stewardship, climate resilience, and national socio-economic development.



Mtafiti Pictorials



KMFRI Director General, Dr Paul Orina, hosted a courtesy visit led by Kenya School of Government (KSG) Chairman, Justice (Rtd.) Charles Nyachae, and KSG Director General, Prof. Nura Mohamed, EBS.



Current status of the National Mariculture Resource and Training Centre (NAMARET) in Shimoni, managed by the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute.



KMFRI Kisumu Research Centre received an assortment of field and laboratory supplies donated by the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) through the TRUEFISH Project.



KMFRI Naivasha Station hosted a successful inception meeting in collaboration with WWF-Kenya and NAOFO-CBO to launch the Papyrus Reeds Restoration project for Lake Naivasha.



KMFRI donated laboratory equipment to Ramisi Senior School in Kwale County as part of its Corporate Social Investment.



Technical assessment of fish ponds by KMFRI researchers based at the Baringo Research Centre



KMFRI Researchers participating in seaweed restoration



Gazi women participating in mangrove planting exercise

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