

# Mtafiti Monthly

BY: Eugene Praise Kasuku, Faith Mboka & David Mwoma Edits: Jane Kiguta

## KMFRI fetes crème de la crème at annual award ceremony



On 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, the atmosphere at the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) was filled with excitement and pride as employees gathered for the highly anticipated Annual Award Ceremony. The event, held at KMFRI headquarters in Mombasa, recognized the dedication and outstanding performance of employees who have demonstrated exceptional commitment and excellence in their respective roles. The award ceremony was inclusive of staff members from Kegati, Kisumu, Shimoni and Mombasa centres.

The ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of the Board of Management, led by the chairperson Amb. Dr. Wenwa Akinyi Oranga Odinga, who commended the award recipients for their hard work and contributions towards the institution's continued success.

In her keynote address, Dr. Wenwa emphasized the institution's commitment to fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and teamwork. She emphasized on the importance of mutual respect

among employees and their bosses regardless of the age.

*“Annual award ceremonies like these are truly encouraging. As adults, we may sometimes feel that recognition isn't necessary, but it is important. These*



*Top, KMFRI Board Chair Amb. Dr. Wenwa Oranga Odinga flanked by BOM members and Ag CEO Dr James Mwaluma unveils the wall of fame. Bottom, Sagana Centre Director Dr Domitila Kyule receives a trophy and a certificate.*

*awards celebrate hard work, acknowledge progress, and inspire those who haven't received one to strive for more. Not receiving an award doesn't mean you haven't accomplished anything- it simply means that there's still room to grow. So keep pushing forward. Congratulations to all the award recipients, and to those who didn't receive one this time, take inspiration, learn from others, and work toward making it your turn next time.”* **Dr. Wenwa Akinyi Oranga Odinga**

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Echoing the Board Chair's sentiments, KMFRI Ag CEO Dr James Mwaluma said the award ceremony will give impetus to staff to improve in their areas of weakness.

Employees from various departments were honored for their remarkable contributions, with awards spanning the departmental categories. Each award recipient was acknowledged for their unwavering commitment to excellence, inspiring their colleagues, and setting benchmarks in their fields.

Among the evening's highlights was the heartfelt appreciation from colleagues and leadership,



*Kisumu's Head of Lab Ms Teresa Nyambura receives her certificate*

underscoring the sense of unity and shared success within the institution. The event concluded with a vote of thanks from Ag Director for Oceans and Coastal Services & Blue Economy Dr Jacqueline Uku, expressing gratitude to all employees for their dedication and continued efforts in upholding the institution's vision and mission.



*KMFRI Ag Director Oceans and Coastal Services & BE Dr Jacqueline Uku receives a trophy and a certificate.*

As the institution looks ahead to another year of progress and achievement, the Annual Award Ceremony stands as a testament to the dedication and



*Top, KMFRI Aquaculture Director Dr Jonathan Munguti being feted*

hard work of its employees. Congratulations to all the award winners and nominees for their well-deserved recognition.

***Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute remains committed to recognizing and nurturing its staff, ensuring that excellence continues to be at the heart of its operations.***

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BY: Eugene Praise Kasuku Edits: Jane Kiguta

## KMFRI joins the globe in marking World Seagrass Day

**K**enya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) on March 1 joined stakeholders in celebrating and raising awareness about the critical role of seagrass ecosystems - a day set aside every year to commemorate World Seagrass Day. The event, observed globally, brought together key conservation partners, government agencies and local community to emphasize the need to protect and restore seagrass habitats.

KMFRI was represented by Ag Director for Oceans and Coastal Services & Blue Economy Dr. Jacqueline Uku and Senior Research Scientist Dr. Lilian Nduku. The duo who happen to be seagrass research experts and ecologists highlighted the vital role of seagrass in biodiversity conservation, livelihoods, and climate mitigation.

In her speech, Dr Uku stressed the growing threats facing seagrass meadows; including pollution, destructive fishing methods, and climate change. She urged for stronger conservation efforts to ensure the sustainability of marine ecosystems.

KMFRI has been on the forefront of seagrass research and conservation efforts, working with local communities, national agencies, and international partners to come up with science based solutions for protecting these valuable ecosystems.

### Why protect seagrass?

Seagrass meadows, often referred to as the 'lungs of the ocean' provide food and shelter for a wide range of marine species, including fish, and sea turtles. Beyond their ecological importance, these ecosystems also support coastal economies by sustaining fisheries and offering coastal protection

against storms and erosion. Seagrass also help in fighting climate change by absorbing and storing



*KMFRI Ag Director for Oceans and Coastal Services & BE Dr Jacqueline Uku delivers remarks at the event held in Mombasa*

carbon dioxide which helps to reduce greenhouse gases and control the effects of climate variability. KMFRI also provides technical support to the Vanga Blue Forest (VBF) project which aims at promoting the restoration of both seagrasses



*KMFRI Senior Research Scientist Dr Lilian Nduku at the fete*

meadows and mangrove forests. This allows local communities to earn carbon credits by protecting

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marine, creating a sustainable economic model that benefits both the environment and livelihoods.

## KMFRI's conservation and research initiatives



*KMFRI Ms Amy Mumo addresses participants | Photo David Mwoma*



Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research institute is in partnership with the University of Oxford on the Large-Scale Seagrass Mapping and Management Initiative (LaSMMI), supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, to develop a field-verified map of Kenya's seagrass ecosystem which will enhance protection efforts and integrate seagrass conservation into national policies.

The project is also being implemented in mainland Tanzania, Zanzibar, Mozambique, and Madagascar, with key partners such as Fauna & Flora, the East African Wild Life Society, and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).

KMFRI is also concluding the Go-Blue Project, which has assessed the vulnerability of marine ecosystems, including seagrass, to climate change impacts such as extreme temperatures and climate variability.

On World Seagrass Day, KMFRI reaffirmed its commitment to safeguard these ecosystems. Through research, innovation, and collaboration. The institute remains at the forefront of efforts to protect seagrass, support coastal communities and contribute to global climate action.

*"Seagrass meadows are life support systems that contribute to fisheries, biodiversity and mitigation of global warming impacts. We must have the courage to protect and nurture these ecosystems for sustainability because their future depends on our choices." Dr. Lilian Nduku*

*"Celebrating the World Seagrass Day 2025 marks the fulfilment of a long journey of working to put seagrass on the Kenyan and global map. I look forward to developing partnerships that will help us make meaningful progress in the conservation and management of these critical habitats." Dr. Jacqueline Uku*



*KMFRI staff highlighting the vital role of seagrass on World Seagrass Day | Photo David Mwoma*

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## KMFRI recognizes women milestones to mark International Women's Day

BY: Jenipher Orimba

Edits: Jane Kiguta

**K**enya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) joined the world in celebrating women on 8<sup>th</sup> March, a day set aside to commemorate social, political and economic achievements of women.

This year KMFRI celebrated International Women's Day themed "Accelerate Action" in style. By leveraging social media platforms, we shared nuggets of wisdom by top female staff to inspire and offer new insights and perspectives on the role of women in society, and their contributions socially and economically.

And as KMFRI honoured women who have broken barriers in the fields of marine science, fisheries research, aquaculture and environmental conservation in March this year, it gave us an opportunity to reflect on their vital role in shaping Kenya's sustainable blue economy.

At KMFRI, women continue to lead in ground breaking research, scientific innovation in marine conservation efforts, among other thematic areas, which inspire future generations to dive into marine related fields. Audiences across diverse social media platforms appreciated the women's contributions and passion, recognizing their transformative role in their work.

**Brief background of the International Women's Day** World International Women's Day, celebrated annually on March 8th, is a global observance that honours the achievements, contributions, and resilience of women across the world.

**Origin** The history of International Women's Day traces back over a century. The first iteration of what we now celebrate as International Women's Day



  
Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute

*"In order to grow and accelerate action, we need to be consistent in self-awareness and strive to do away with superficiality through greater commitment to the values that build us."*

*Dr Victoria Tarus,  
Deputy Director, Technical Capacity Building, KMFRI*



  
Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute

*"Women in marine conservation don't just restore nature, they restore communities. A healthy ocean depends on thriving communities. Let's celebrate women's dedication to resilient ecosystems and stronger societies"*

*Dr. Juliet Karisa  
Coral Reef Expert-KMFRI*

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began in the early 20th century when the fight for women's rights and gender equality was gaining momentum.

The earliest roots of International Women's Day can be found in the labor movements in North America and Europe. In 1908, a group of 15,000 women in New York City marched for better working conditions, higher wages, and voting rights. The movement for women's rights was further galvanized by the struggles faced by women working in factories, where they endured dangerous conditions, low pay, and long hours.

However, it was a socialist movement in Europe that laid the

The significance of this date shifted over the years. And in 1921, Zetkin and other international women's leaders decided to change the celebration date to March 8th to align with various other political events of the time. The new date also aligned with growing demands for equality in the face of a rapidly changing social and political climate.

**Purpose of International Women's Day** International Women's Day exists to commemorate the social, political, and economic achievements of women. However, the purpose of this day extends far beyond mere celebration. It serves as a call to action for gender equality and



women's rights around the globe.

foundation for what would become International Women's Day. In 1910, the Second International Socialist Women's Congress was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. It was there that Clara Zetkin, a German socialist and advocate for women's rights, proposed the idea of an international day to fight for women's equality. She suggested that every year, on the same day, women across the world would come together to rally for their rights, demanding equal treatment in the workplace, politics, and society.

One of the primary objectives of International Women's Day is to bring attention to the ongoing struggles that women face. Despite significant progress over the last century, women in many parts of the world continue to experience discrimination, violence, and unequal access to resources and opportunities. International Women's Day draws attention to these disparities and seeks to mobilize efforts toward achieving gender parity in all areas of life. It serves as a platform for those whose rights are often overlooked—whether due to race, economic status, disability, or geography.

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## KMFRI hosts National Blue Carbon Dialogue to highlight Kenya's milestones

BY: Dr James Kairo, Dr Amina Hamza, Dr Kipkorir Langat, Dr Judith Okello, Ann Wanjiru, Fredrick Mungai & Brian Isoe

Edits: Jane Kiguta



Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) mangrove experts hosted a four-day workshop in Kilifi County on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, bringing together diverse stakeholders to assess the status of Kenya's blue carbon sinks and identify knowledge gaps and opportunities for conservation, restoration, and sustainable coastal management.

The meeting saw critical deliberations aimed at increasing awareness of the critical role of blue carbon ecosystems and the dire need to protect them for nature and community benefits and enhance capacity to develop sustainable blue carbon projects that involve mangroves and seagrass beds.

Mangroves and seagrasses make up the majority of Kenya's blue carbon habitats, which are essential for reducing climate change effects and providing other benefits like breeding grounds for fish. The Kenyan coast is home to mangroves, which are tidal forests that flourish along protected shorelines. In addition to providing a habitat for fish and other wildlife, they are crucial for capturing sediments and preventing shoreline erosion. Mangroves store huge quantities of carbon in both above- and below-ground components.



KMFRI Ag CEO Dr James Mwaluma during a press briefing

Speaking at the event, KMFRI Ag CEO Dr James Mwaluma outlined the advancements made in conserving blue carbon ecosystems, underscoring the institute's willingness to provide guidance and advice on sustainable policies that protect these ecosystems. He said this will be done by mapping and tracking the distribution of seagrasses and mangroves along the Kenyan coast.

*"Our work has proven that informed, science-based decisions are essential for the future of our coastal resilience and economic sustainability. We recognize that our work is most effective when united with government policies and multi-stakeholder initiatives. KMFRI stands ready to work closely with government agencies, local communities, and international partners to provide advice on evidence-based policies that promote the preservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems."*



KMFRI Ag CEO Dr James Mwaluma, SDBE&F regional coordinator Rashid Imam representing PS, Jumuiya ya Kauti ya Pwani Chair Dr Emmanuel Nzai

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KMFRI has, over the years, played a key role in the conservation of these ecosystems through various conservation approaches, inclusive of the communities like the Mikoko Pamoja, which was recognized in the United Nations for winning the Best Person of the Year award in 2023. Mikoko Pamoja uses an approach that is led by the community where conservation and restoration of mangrove is actively carried out by local communities, who also plant seedlings and maintain the forest.

Mangroves are an essential component of the climate change answer because of their extraordinary capacity to store carbon compared to



*KMFRI Chief Scientist Dr James Kairo with (L) State Department of Blue Economy & Fisheries regional coordinator, Mr Rashid Iman- representing SDBE & F PS Madam Betsy Njagi*

tropical upland forests. They can store up to five times as much organic carbon.

According to KMFRI Chief Research Scientist Dr James Kairo, a mangrove expert, nature-based solutions, including the replanting of mangrove and seagrass ecosystems, will greatly contribute to the mitigation of climate change effects.

*“We need to create an environment that can remove this carbon from the atmosphere through a nature-based solution. Therefore, protecting mangroves is one of the natural solutions that can significantly prevent the disasters that are befalling us due to the effects of climate change.”*

Coastal communities can be affected by the rise of sea level, which will steer flooding, leading to loss of property and displacement of people besides

ultimately destroying their source of livelihood. This will hinder the day-to-day socio-economic activities the communities have depended on for a long time.



*KMFRI Senior Research Scientist & mangrove ecologist Dr Kipkorir Langat*

The dialogue highlighted key barriers facing the blue carbon ecosystems development, including: seagrass ecosystems being poorly understood and mapped, weak policy tools for the management of these ecosystems hindering the cohesive and collective management of these ecosystems, inadequate and decentralized platforms for data sharing, collaboration, and dissemination of information on blue carbon.

Opportunities for integrating Kenya’s blue carbon



*Jumuiya ya Kauti ya Pwani Chair Dr Emmanuel Nzai*

ecosystems into climate strategies and development plans were also an agenda in the deliberations with international collaboration fronted as necessary in building technical capacity, raising awareness, and mobilizing resources for blue carbon. Increased plantation and conservation of these ecosystems mean an increase in the number of credits communities from

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the coast stand to reap from the sale of carbon. The Gazi community in Kwale County has been at the forefront of conserving mangroves, and through the sale of carbon, they have developed their community by sponsoring their students to school and constructing various key infrastructures in the area.

Policies and management frameworks revolving around the blue carbon ecosystems were also discussed, with new ones being fronted while revamping the existing ones. These management tools, like the National Mangrove Ecosystem Management Plan, the National Mangrove Ecosystem Restoration Guidelines, the National Mangrove Portal, the Lamu Mangrove Harvesting Plan, and the Mangrove Nursery Manual, are critical to guiding the sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems.



*Participants follow the dialogue*

To fully realise the potential of blue carbon for the benefit of the environment and society, the Ministry of Mining, Blue Economy, and Maritime Affairs was advised to put in place immediate policy measures. Creating enabling policies that support the application of nature-based solutions is one way to accomplish this.



*KMFRI Senior Research Scientist & mangrove ecologist Dr Amina Hamza at the dialogue*

The workshop speakers underscored the need to include all actors, including women and marginalized groups, in policy formulation and decision-making tables, which will offer a platform to capture the interests of all stakeholders and develop policies that speak to the interests of all and develop a clear path guiding the conservation of these ecosystems

The Kenya National Blue Carbon Dialogue now intensifies enhancing partnership and coordination among stakeholders in Blue Carbon Ecosystems (BCE) conservation and management, as well as recommendations to improve blue carbon governance and provide evidence-based policy, ensuring a sustainable legacy to protect our coastline and future generations.



*KMFRI Principal Research Scientist & Chair National Mangrove Management Committee Dr Judith Okello*

KMFRI Ag CEO Dr Mwaluma, in conclusion, called upon the stakeholders present to harness the expertise of KMFRI as the leading body in blue carbon research to pave the way for transformative strategies that integrate environmental stewardship with socioeconomic development. He noted that for a strong resilient community to be developed, and secure the legacy of the future generations, there is need to protect our ecosystems.

***KMFRI in collaboration with Kenya Forest Service (KFS) organized the National Blue Carbon Dialogue with support from key partners including UNEP, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), WWF-Kenya and Wetlands International-East Africa (WI-EA).***

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## Mtafiti Pictorials

by John Father Small

Photos by Maliki Fumbwe | David Mwoma | Brian Isoe | Rael Obara



KMFRI's best performers pose for a photo with the BOM Chair Amb. Dr Wenwa Akinyi Oranga Odinga, BOM members, and Ag CEO Dr James Mwaluma.



KMFRI Chairperson, Amb. Dr. Wenwa Akinyi Oranga Odinga issuing cheques to landowners where the institute sits, finalizing the compensation process



KMFRI BOM member Dr Nancy Tele fetes Director Freshwater Systems Dr Christopher Aura



KMFRI BOM member Dr Nancy Tele fetes Socioeconomics Director Dr Jacob Ochiewo

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*KMFRI Deputy Director HR & Administration Dr Irene Githaiga receives a certificate from Mr Jalfred Maliro, AG rep in KMFRI BOM*



*Fabricated innovative cages making process demonstration by community in Lamu*



*KMFRI BOM Member Prof Francis Njunge fetes Kegati Centre Director Dr Paul Orina*



*KMFRI Naivasha research scientists and technical staff visit Kegati station to benchmark on aquaculture best management practices*