

Mtafiti Monthly

By: Eugene Praise Edits: Jane Kiguta Photos: John Small Layout: Faith Mboka

KMFRI celebrates excellence at Annual Award Ceremony



KMFRI BOM Chair Dr. Amb. Wenwa Akinyi Oranga giving her opening remarks

Mombasa, October 28, 2025 - The atmosphere at KMFRI was filled with excitement and pride as employees gathered for the highly anticipated Annual Award Ceremony. The event, held at KMFRI headquarters, 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 Dr. Amb. Wenwa Akinyi Oranga, 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

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

On his part, KMFRI Director General Dr. Paul S. Orina emphasized that the achievement of the Institute's objectives depends on staff being guided by KMFRI's

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core values, which directly influence the quality of service delivery and client satisfaction. He congratulated all staff, noting that while not everyone may receive an award, each member has played a vital role in KMFRI's overall success. Employees from various departments were honored for their remarkable contributions, with awards spanning in departmental categories. Each award recipient was acknowledged for their unwavering commitment to excellence, inspiring their colleagues, and setting benchmarks in their fields.



KMFRI Director General Dr. Paul S. Orina giving his remarks

Among the evening's highlights was the heartfelt appreciation from colleagues and leadership, underscoring the sense of unity and shared success within the institution. The event concluded with a vote of thanks from the coordinator and Center Director Eric Okuku, expressing gratitude to all employees for their dedication and continued efforts in upholding the institution's vision and mission.



Top: KMFRI Director Freshwater Systems Dr. Christopher Aura receives a certificate from KMFRI BOM Chair Dr. Amb. Wenwa Akinyi Oranga.



Bottom: KMFRI marketing officer Ms. Priscilla Githui receives a certificate from KMFRI BOM Member Dr. Nancy Tele.

As the institution looks ahead to another year of progress and achievement, the Annual Award Ceremony stands as a testament to the dedication and hard work of its employees. Congratulations to all the award winners and nominees for their well-deserved recognition.

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KMFRI leads call for adoption of “Blue Values” to safeguard Indian Ocean benefits

The Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) has taken centre stage in promoting a new way of thinking about the ocean, one that recognizes its full value to people and nature.

During a special session on **Blue Values** at the 13th Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) Symposium in Mombasa, experts called for countries to adopt a more holistic approach to managing the Indian Ocean. The framework encourages nations to look beyond fisheries and tourism, and to appreciate the ocean’s role in regulating climate, protecting coastlines, supporting livelihoods, and preserving cultural heritage.



Top: KMFRI Researcher Scientist Mr. Justus Andati receives a certificate from KMFRI BOM Member Dr. Nancy Tele.

Bottom: Sagana Station Centre Director Dr. Domitila Kyule receives a certificate from KMFRI BOM Member Prof. Francis Njunge.

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.



Participants of the Blue Values session pose for a photo

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KMFRI Chief Scientist Dr. James Kairo said it is time for ocean management policies to reflect the true worth of marine ecosystems. “The ocean is more than a source of fish or tourism revenue. It is essential for climate regulation, biodiversity, and cultural identity. Recognizing these values will help countries make wiser decisions about investments, restoration and governance,” he said.

KMFRI co-organized the session alongside the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), CIFOR-ICRAF, the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), and GRID-Arendal. The discussion emphasized that sustainable ocean governance must consider ecological, social, cultural and climate benefits not just economic gains.

The *Blue Values* framework calls for investments that help restore ocean health while sustaining livelihoods. It also encourages the use of data and scientific evidence in decision-making, particularly through initiatives that map and monitor coastal ecosystems.

KMFRI continues to work with national and regional partners to strengthen research, build capacity, and support Kenya’s Blue Economy agenda through sound science and community-driven approaches.

By: Jane Kiguta & Phionalorna Nzikwa Layout: Faith Mboka



KMFRI Chief Scientist Dr. James Kairo delivering his presentation

Dr. Kairo also highlighted the importance of involving coastal communities in conservation work. “Communities living along the coastline understand these ecosystems best. Their knowledge and participation are vital if we are to find lasting solutions,” he noted.

KMFRI hosts Marine Spatial Planning workshop in Matuga, Kwale County

The Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) hosted a marine spatial planning stakeholder workshop in Matuga, Kwale County, under the theme “*Enhancing Livelihoods, Food Security, and Nutrition through Science and Innovation.*”

The workshop was organized under the flagship project Strengthening Sustainable Blue Food Systems in Coastal Kenya (SBFS, Kenya), a collaborative initiative between KMFRI and Norway’s Institute of Marine Research (IMR). Funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to the tune of KSh450 million, the four-year project seeks to strengthen sustainable blue food systems along Kenya’s coastline, with a focus on the Shimoni-Vanga seascape in Kwale County.

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IMR Director Dr. Eric Olsen delivered a presentation showcasing a model that illustrates the interconnection of coastal ecosystems. He emphasized the crucial role of community participation in supporting marine spatial planning models and tools that can drive sustainable coastal development.

Key focus areas of the SBFS project include fisheries stock assessment, with training in data collection, statistical and acoustic survey methods; the development of a monitoring framework for small-scale tuna fisheries; and building local scientific capacity for sustainable fisheries management.

A core component of the initiative is Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), which will entail the development of a Sustainable Ocean Plan (SOP) for the Shimoni-Vanga region through inclusive stakeholder engagement, participatory ocean governance, and socioeconomic and ocean accounting to inform policy and planning.



Stakeholders study a model illustrating the interconnection of the coastal ecosystems

The project also seeks to advance hatchery development, fish seed production, and the adoption of sustainable feed and marine cage farming

technologies, alongside training in hatchery management, disease control, food safety, and nutrition.

To curb post-harvest losses, the project will explore value addition to fish products, improve food quality and safety, and strengthen food safety laboratories and value chain capacity. It will also integrate blue carbon and climate resilience initiatives, including the establishment of a Blue Carbon Knowledge Hub, use of AI and GIS for mangrove and seagrass monitoring, and promotion of nature-based climate adaptation solutions.



Participants drawn from diverse blue economy sectors are guided on how to develop an appropriate model

The workshop brought together representatives from Beach Management Units (BMUs), government agencies namely Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA), Kenya Fisheries Service (KeFS), Kenya Forestry Service (KFS), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Kenya non-governmental organizations, the State Department for Blue Economy and Fisheries (SDBE&F) represented by Senior Fisheries and Blue Economy Officer Mr. Wilfred Tuitoek, on behalf of the Principal Secretary, and other state and non-state actors. It was officially opened by Kwale County

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Commissioner Mr. Stephen Orinda and closed by Deputy County Commissioner Mr. Christopher Siolo.

KMFRI was represented by Dr. James Mwaluma, Director of Ocean, Coastal Services and Blue Economy (representing the Director General, Dr. Paul Orina), and Dr. Jacqueline Uku, Principal Research Scientist and national Marine Spatial Planning lead. The IMR delegation from Norway was led by Dr. Eric Olsen.

The event featured presentations, panel discussions, and group sessions where community representatives highlighted both opportunities and challenges within the Shimoni–Vanga region. Key challenges included illegal fishing, use of unauthorized gear, plastic pollution, and habitat degradation caused by climate change, flooding, acidification, and sedimentation from upstream activities.

Participants called for greater awareness and education on coral conservation, multi-sectoral collaboration, and stronger enforcement of fisheries regulations to prevent illegal fishing in protected areas. They also emphasized joint co-management of fisheries resources to boost fish stocks and ensure long-term sustainability.

Dr. Uku underscored the importance of developing a Sustainable Ocean Plan for the region, noting that mapping marine resources is key to unlocking Kenya's blue economy potential.

"We have to ask ourselves what more we can do apart from seaweed," she said. "We are seeking to use ocean space more effectively and request government support to realize this vision."

Ahead of the workshop, the delegation paid a courtesy visit to the Kwale County Governor's Office, where they were received on behalf of Governor H.E. Fatuma Achani by Madam Sylvia Chidodo Leli, Head of Public

Service and County Secretary



KMFRI Director of Ocean, Coastal Services and Blue Economy Dr. James Mwaluma



Participants of the MSP Workshop during a courtesy visit to the Kwale County Governor's Office

The workshop sets the stage for the rollout of the Strengthening Blue Food Systems project in Shimoni–Vanga, aimed at enhancing livelihoods, food security,

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and community resilience while promoting sustainable blue economy investments. A central component of the initiative is the co-development of a Sustainable Ocean Plan (SOP) that integrates community priorities with national and regional marine governance frameworks.

their farming activities. Seaweed farmers, for instance, observe moon phases, known locally as *Bamvua*, to determine the best planting and harvesting periods. They prefer new and full moons, when tides are low, to access seaweed beds easily, thereby improving survival rates and reducing labour.

By: Hellen Ngoa, Dr. David Mirera, Faith Kimanga, Stephen Makupe, Edward Waiyaki & Faith Mboka
Edits: Jane Kiguta Layout: Faith Mboka

KMFRI study reveals indigenous wisdom key to sustainable mariculture

A new study by the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) has revealed that Indigenous Knowledge (IK) systems practised along Kenya's Coast could hold the key to sustainable and climate-resilient mariculture.

The research, conducted in Kwale and Kilifi counties, documents traditional practices among coastal communities that promote eco-friendly fish, seaweed, and sea cucumber farming. The study, titled "*Documenting Coastal Indigenous Knowledge in Kenya to Support Sustainable Mariculture Management*," underscores the value of integrating traditional knowledge with modern mariculture techniques to reduce costs, improve productivity, and enhance environmental conservation.

According to the report, farmers from the Mijikenda and Swahili communities continue to rely on centuries-old wisdom passed down through generations to guide



Fish farmers observing moon phases for ponds replenishing and cleaning

Fish farmers also apply their understanding of tidal cycles, or *Mawimbi*, to manage pond water quality naturally. High tides are used to replenish oxygen and nutrients, while low tides are ideal for cleaning and maintenance, reducing the need for mechanical aeration. To feed their fish, many farmers prepare organic feeds using locally available materials such as aquatic animals (*Tondo*), insects, and kitchen waste, minimizing dependence on expensive commercial feeds.

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Kibokoni fish farmers preparing Tondo as supplement to artificial feeds

In addition, the behaviour of migratory and resident birds, referred to as *Ndege wa Msimu*, serves as a natural guide for predicting seasonal changes and approaching storms. Farmers rely on these signs to plan stocking and harvesting schedules, protecting their investments from adverse weather. Seaweed farmers also demonstrate environmental consciousness by using biodegradable materials such as mangrove wood and coconut coir for stakes and ropes, reducing their environmental footprint while lowering costs.

Despite the richness of this traditional knowledge, the study warns that it is at risk of being lost as younger generations show limited interest in these practices. Most of the knowledge remains with middle-aged community members, making youth involvement essential for its preservation and continued relevance.

“This indigenous knowledge enhances ecological sustainability and cost-efficiency in mariculture,” the research team stated. “Formal recognition and integration of IK into national policies is no longer an

option but a necessity for the sustainable growth of Kenya’s Blue Economy.”



Photo showing the utilization of traditional local resources

To address the knowledge gap, the report recommends the formal integration of Indigenous Knowledge into mariculture policies and training programmes. It also calls for greater community involvement in decision-making, enhanced capacity building to blend traditional methods with modern tools, and systematic documentation of Indigenous Knowledge through digital databases and community workshops to prevent its erosion.

KMFRI believes that combining traditional wisdom with modern science will strengthen Kenya’s mariculture industry and ensure sustainable livelihoods for coastal communities.

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Mtafiti Pictorials



KMFRI's best performers pose for a photo with the BOM Chair Amb. Dr Wenwa Akinyi Oranga Odinga, BOM members, and Director General Dr. Paul S. Orina.



KMFRI Director Socioeconomics Dr. Jacob Ochiewo receives a certificate from KMFRI BOM Member Ibrahim Noor.



KMFRI Asst. Director O & H Dr. Joseph Kamau receives a certificate from KMFRI BOM Member Dr. Nancy Tele.



KMFRI Seagrass Scientist Dr. Jacqueline Uku receiving a certificate from KMFRI BOM Member Mr. Nelson Dzuya.

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Left, KMFRI Chief Scientist Dr. James Kairo during a courtesy visit to the Kwale County Governor's Office.



KMFRI Director of Ocean, Coastal Services and Blue Economy Dr. James Mwaluma receives certificate from KMFRI BOM Member Ibrahim Noor.



Participants of MSP Workshop in Matuga, Kwale County, pose for a photo during a courtesy visit to the Kwale County Governor's Office.

Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute