



Participants attending a session during the conference. Photo KEFRI

THE FIRST KENYA COMMERCIAL FORESTRY INVESTMENT CONFERENCE AND EXPO

HOSTED BY KEFRI IN 2021

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The Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) hosted the first Kenya Commercial Forestry Investment Conference and Expo from 23rd to 26th November 2021 at KEFRI headquarters Muguga. The theme of the conference was “Commercial Forestry Investment for Wealth Creation, Enhancing Manufacturing, Food security, Health and Attainment of 10% Tree Cover in Kenya” It was organized by a multi-institutional team composed of public, private and development institutions such as the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF), Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), Kenya Forest Service (KFS), National Research Fund

(NRF), Council of Governors (COG), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Base Titanium Ltd, Kenya Climate Innovation Centre (KCIC), GATSBY Africa, We-Effect-Global, Family Bank, Cooperative Bank, Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB), Ukulima Sacco, Asili Sacco, Better Globe Forestry Ltd, Komaza Ltd, Kakuzi Ltd, One Acre Fund and the Forest Society of Kenya (FSK). The conference was officially opened by the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry Mr. Keriako Tobiko, CBS, SC. It was graced by ambassadors from Sweden, Costa

Rica, and Columbia and the FAO resident representative of Kenya. A hybrid mode entailing both physical and virtual participation was adopted.

The objective of the conference and expo was to provide:

1. A platform to national, regional, and international practitioners, researchers, professionals and investors to share knowledge, experiences, innovation, and opportunities in the commercial forestry sector in Kenya and the region.
2. An opportunity to exhibit and showcase technologies, products, services, and investment opportunities in the commercial forestry sector.
3. An avenue for stakeholders to take stock of the status

of the commercial forestry sector development and opportunities.

4. Opportunity for financing and investment linkages.

STATUS OF COMMERCIAL FORESTRY IN KENYA

The commercial forestry sector in Kenya has witnessed tremendous growth over the past few decades occasioned by the Country's rapid population growth, economic growth, and urbanization. This has in turn led to increased demand of forestry products and services. The growing demand has not been matched by the local supply of forestry products making Kenya a wood-deficit country. Kenya had an annual wood deficit of approximately 10.3 million m³ by 2013 where the country could only meet 70% of its timber demand sustainably. This deficit is covered through formal and informal imports of timber as well as unsustainable extraction from public natural forests in the country.

Forest products demand on the other hand has been on an upward trajectory occasioned by increasing population and economic growth.

CONFERENCE AND EXPO HIGHLIGHTS

The conference attracted between 250-300 physical participants and another 130–150 who attended virtually: from Kenya, regionally (Uganda and Tanzania) and globally (South Africa, India, Philippines,

Columbia, China, UK, Italy, Japan, Sweden and Costa Rica). A total of 52 presentations was made.

The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, expressed the government's commitment to support commercial forestry in the country. The CS disclosed that the government, together with stakeholders was mobilizing over 2 billion good quality seedlings for Kenya's re-afforestation efforts. He further launched several technical document and technologies such as the species-site matching digital application, and the solar seed-drying facility at KEFRI, both essential in propelling commercial forestry. The ambassadors of Sweden, Costa Rica and Colombia shared their countries' experiences on commercial forestry and forest products value chains. The Ambassador of Cost Rica shared the successful experience of FONAFIFO, a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) model that provides incentives to promote commercial forestry in the country and contributed to increased forest cover in the country (38% to 53%). The Swedish embassy shared their experience on the potential of timber as a construction material through its "Woodlife Sweden" programme while Columbia shared experiences on technologies and potential of bamboo in the construction of modern buildings.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE CONFERENCE

1. Capacity building, Policy and financial support to innovators in commercial forestry such as solar drying facilities of tree seeds;
2. Improved forest certification to promote sustainability in the sector through proper chain of custody;
3. Benchmark innovative public plantation management

models such as leasehold as used in Uganda;

4. Need for adoption of innovative and efficient production, harvesting and processing technologies across the value chains;
5. Capacity building of youth, women and other affirmative action groups in the forestry sector across the forestry value chain including seeds and seedling production

CONFERENCE EXPO

The expo was organized to provide an opportunity to showcase innovations, technologies, products and services in commercial forestry to stakeholders. It also aimed to provide marketing opportunities to stakeholders as well as a platform for innovators to interact with possible clients. The expo attracted over 40 exhibitors from from both public and private sector.



Field trip: value adding at Kakuzi's sawmill through production of pallets. Photo BGF

FIELD EXCURSION

The field excursion was held from 26th to 27th November 2021 to demonstrate the feasibility of commercial forestry and provide a platform for continued networking among conference participants. The trip was fully sponsored by JICA, Better Globe Forestry and the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI). A total of 90 participants to the conference were involved in the tour.



The CS of the Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources, Hon. Keriko Tobiko, addressing the conference. Photo BGF



Ambassadors of Sweden (right) and Columbia (left) with PS of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (middle), Hon. Chris Kipyo, at the Expo. Photo KEFRI

Key experiences and lessons from the field excursion included:

- Potential for dryland commercial forestry using *Melia volkensii* in Kiambere by Better Globe Forestry (BGF) on a TARDA field site;
- Improving productivity of *Melia volkensii* and *Acacia tortilis* at TIVA field site,
- Operation of successful village banks serving tree farmers, supported by Better Globe Forestry;
- Adoption of on-farm tree planting initiatives in the drylands of Kiambere by partner community farmers with the support of Better Globe Forestry;
- Round wood processing and preservation technologies in Kakuzi;
- Management of high productivity (400m³/ha) privately managed forest plantations (Kakuzi).

linkages, plantation management solutions, science laboratory services, consultancy services as well as forestry research dissemination.

For more details, please visit: <https://www.kefri.org/components/conference/conference.html>

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THE KENYA COMMERCIAL FORESTRY INNOVATION CENTER

A key recommendation from the conference and expo was the need to have a central place where information essential in up-scaling commercial forestry in the country could be accessed. This birthed the idea of establishing the Kenya Commercial Forestry Innovation Center (KCFIC). The proposed center will have a digital platform for providing information and engaging actors on information to support commercial forestry investment. Key functions of the center will be to: link stakeholders in commercial forestry to information, products, and services; support commercial forestry activities through offering technical advisory services, market information /



Field trip: timber produced at the sawmill of Kakuzi Ltd. Photo BGF