



KENYA PLANT HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICE (KEPHIS) **NEWSLETTER**

FEBRUARY - 2026



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Message from the Managing Director




Dear Stakeholders,

February's engagements reflect a Service deliberately strengthening the architecture of Kenya's plant health governance, regulatory science, and trade facilitation systems.

At the policy level, KEPHIS' engagement with the National Assembly Departmental Committee on Agriculture and Livestock on the proposed Plant Protection Bill, 2025 signals a critical transition toward a modern, coherent plant health legal framework. The Bill provides the foundation for clarifying intergovernmental roles under the Constitution, strengthening national

biosecurity coordination, and formally anchoring Kenya's obligations under international phytosanitary agreements. In parallel, Kenya's participation in finalisation of the East African Community Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Bill underscores our commitment to regional regulatory harmonisation and predictable trade regimes.

Operationally, the Service continues to align regulatory enforcement with evolving market requirements. Targeted sensitisation of technical personnel ahead of the forthcoming DG SANTE audit, deliberations under the Horticulture Competent Authority



Structure, and structured engagement with exporters reflect a proactive compliance posture designed to safeguard Kenya's market access in the European Union, UK and other high-value destinations.

Strategically, February also marked deliberate steps toward innovation and systems modernisation. Engagements on AI-driven pest surveillance, synthetic biology collaboration, and operationalisation of the RTB-EAGEL regional germplasm hub represent investments in diagnostic capacity, digital traceability and clean seed systems all central to strengthening national preparedness, resilience and competitiveness.

International cooperation remains a key pillar of our mandate. Discussions with the Republic of South Korea and partners under the Kenya–China Avocado Trade Assessment demonstrate a focused effort to diversify export markets while maintaining strict phytosanitary integrity. Market expansion must be anchored in science, transparency and institutional credibility principles that continue to guide our engagement.

At the same time, farmer-facing interventions including certified seed producer training, climate-smart crop partnerships, and outreach during national expos reinforce the connection between regulatory systems and farm-level productivity. Inclusive participation of youth, women and persons with disabilities in certified seed production strengthens both equity and sector sustainability.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect a Service consolidating its role as Kenya's National Plant Protection Organization safeguarding plant health, strengthening compliance systems, and enabling safe, competitive agricultural trade.

We remain committed to science-based regulation, institutional accountability, and continuous system improvement in support of national food security and economic transformation.

Prof. Theophilus Mutui, PhD.

Managing Director,
Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service
(KEPHIS)

The Editor's Note



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the February edition. This issue captures a month defined not merely by activity, but by institutional positioning.

The Service's engagement on the Plant Protection Bill, 2025 marks an important inflection point in modernising Kenya's plant health governance framework. The proposed legislation seeks to align regulatory mandates with constitutional realities, strengthen national-county coordination in pest management, and embed international phytosanitary obligations within domestic law. Complementing this is Kenya's active role in finalising the EAC SPS Bill reinforcing regional harmonisation and coordinated SPS oversight.

Beyond legislation, this edition reflects a regulatory institution actively managing risk and protecting market confidence. Preparations for the upcoming DG SANTE audit, structured stakeholder engagement under the Horticulture Competent Authority

Structure, and technical sensitisation on MRL trends illustrate a forward-looking compliance strategy aimed at sustaining uninterrupted access to premium export markets.

Equally significant is the Service's investment in systems strengthening. From AI-enabled pest surveillance and synthetic biology dialogue to operationalisation of the RTB-EAGEL regional germplasm hub, KEPHIS is positioning itself at the convergence of regulatory oversight, scientific innovation, and digital transformation. These efforts enhance early detection capacity, improve traceability, and reinforce the integrity of seed and phytosanitary systems.

The February edition also underscores the human and institutional foundations of regulatory excellence. The spotlight on KEPHIS Kitale highlights the operational depth behind seed certification and anti-counterfeit enforcement. Recognition of women in science affirms the expertise sustaining laboratory diagnostics and regulatory decision-making. The onboarding of interns strengthens continuity and professional capacity within the Service.

Taken together, the stories in this edition illustrate a Service focused on governance reform, compliance assurance, scientific advancement and inclusive agricultural transformation.

Happy reading!

Kellen Karuti

Deputy Director, Corporate
Communications

Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate
Service (KEPHIS)



KEPHIS ENGAGES NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE



Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) engaged Members of the National Assembly Departmental Committee on Agriculture and Livestock chaired by Dr. Kanyuithia Mutunga, during a sensitisation meeting that took place from 6th to 9th February 2026 at Pride Inn Mombasa, focusing on the Plant Protection Bill, 2025.

The meeting was officially opened by the Principal Secretary, State Department for Crop Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Dr. Ronoh Kiprono, who underscored the importance of strengthening Kenya's plant health governance framework to safeguard agricultural production, enhance national biosecurity, and support safe and sustainable trade.



PS. State Department for Agriculture Dr. Paul Ronoh officially opening the meeting

The engagement provided an opportunity to outline the rationale and key roles of the proposed Plant Protection Bill, 2025, including the need to modernise the existing Plant Protection Act (Cap. 324), which was enacted in 1937 and last substantively reviewed in 1972.



KEPHIS Chairman Hon. Joseph M'eruaki and MD Prof. Theophilus M. Mutui during the sensitization meeting

Discussions highlighted significant changes in the plant health sector at both national and international levels, the implications of Kenya's 2010 Constitution, particularly the devolution of agriculture and the need for clearer delineation and coordination of roles between the national and county governments in pest management.

Specifically, the Bill seeks to:

- Modernise Kenya's plant protection legal framework to reflect current national and global plant health realities;
- Provide clarity on the respective roles of the national and county governments in the prevention, control, and management of plant pests;

- Strengthen coordination and governance of plant health functions across all levels of government;
- Align Kenya's plant protection regime with international phytosanitary agreements and obligations;
- Designate KEPHIS as Kenya's National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) in line with international conventions; and
- Enhance safe trade and improve market access for Kenyan agricultural products.

Other key stakeholders participated in the engagement include the Pest Control Products Board (PCPB), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Aak-GROW/Crop Life Kenya.

KEPHIS AND SOUTH KOREA STRENGTHEN AGRICULTURAL TRADE TIES



H.E Kang Hyungshik (C) Ambassador of the republic of South Korea to Kenya, Prof. Theophilus Mutui (4th L) KEPHIS MD, and the team pose for a group photo.

At the heart of the discussions was the critical role played by KEPHIS in safeguarding plant health and facilitating safe trade. As Kenya's National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO), KEPHIS ensures that all horticultural exports comply with stringent international phytosanitary standards. Through rigorous inspection, certification, laboratory testing and surveillance systems, the institution guarantees that Kenyan produce meets the importing country's requirements while preventing the introduction and spread of harmful pests and diseases.

The Korean market presents promising opportunities for Kenyan horticulture, known globally for its high-quality avocados and vibrant, long-stemmed roses. However, access to such markets demands strict adherence to plant health protocols,

traceability systems and quality assurance frameworks. The engagement between KEPHIS and the South Korean delegation reflects a shared commitment to aligning regulatory requirements, streamlining export processes and fostering mutual confidence in agricultural trade systems.

By upholding robust phytosanitary standards and promoting transparent regulatory frameworks, KEPHIS continues to champion Kenya's agricultural exports. The institution not only protects local agriculture but also acts as a gateway to global markets, enabling farmers, exporters and industry stakeholders to access new trade opportunities.

This courtesy visit signals more than diplomatic goodwill, it represents a deepening partnership rooted in trust,

quality and shared economic growth. As Kenya seeks to diversify its export destinations and strengthen trade ties in Asia, collaborations such as this reinforce the country's reputation as a reliable supplier of safe, high-quality horticultural produce. Through sustained engagement and technical cooperation, KEPHIS remains steadfast in its mandate: safeguarding plant health, facilitating safe trade, and positioning Kenya as a global leader in horticultural excellence.



VISIT BY INDIANA AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM PROFESSIONALS TO KEPHIS HEADQUARTERS



On 23rd February 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) hosted professionals from the Indiana Agricultural Leadership Program at its Headquarters. The visit focused on fostering knowledge exchange and strengthening collaboration in agricultural leadership and phytosanitary matters. The delegation was received and welcomed by the Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence (COPE), followed by introductions and opening remarks from KEPHIS Directors.

A joint presentation was delivered by Dr. Florence Munguti, Ag. Director Laboratory Services. All the other Directors; Phytosanitary and Biosecurity Services, Seed Certification and Plant Variety Protection were represented. The presentation provided an overview of the KEPHIS mandate and its core functions in phytosanitary regulation, biosecurity, seed certification, plant variety protection, and laboratory diagnostic services. The Indiana delegation also presented the objectives of their



leadership program and shared insights on agricultural leadership development in the United States. An interactive discussion followed, addressing regulatory frameworks, agricultural innovation, and capacity building, and identifying potential areas for collaboration. The visit concluded with a guided tour of the Analytical Chemistry Laboratory (ACL), Food Safety Laboratory, and Plant Health Laboratory further strengthening professional ties between the two institutions.



KALRO AGRINVEST EXPO 2026: KEPHIS ENGAGES FARMERS ON QUALITY AND SAFETY



Ms. Stella Maris and Mr. Eric Wanyonyi take farmers through the KEPHIS mandate at the Agrinvest Agricultural Expo.

On 20th February 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service took part in the KALRO Agrinvest Agricultural Expo 2026, connecting directly with farmers and other key stakeholders from Machakos County. The Expo served as a critical platform for knowledge-sharing, networking, and showcasing innovations in agriculture.

KEPHIS leveraged the event to sensitize participants on its wide range of services, emphasizing their importance in ensuring agricultural productivity, market access, and food safety. Farmers were guided on the processes and benefits of seed certification, plant health inspections, Phytosanitary certification for exports, and adherence to both national and international quality standards. These interventions are vital in preventing the spread of pests and diseases, improving crop yields, and ensuring that produce meets market requirements for both local and export trade.



JOY WING MAU GROUP.



On 2nd February 2026, KEPHIS led by the Managing Director, Professor Theophilus Mutui hosted representatives from Joy Wing Mau Group, under the Kenya-China Avocado Trade Assessment, a collaborative project with Strathmore Agri-Food Innovation Centre (SAFIC), supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates. The China delegation was accompanied by Professor Simon Wagura and Madam Elsie Kangai both from Strathmore University. The Chinese delegation visited KEPHIS for a policy and regulatory interview as part of their Kenya field visit.

Joy Wing Mau Group is a leading fresh produce enterprise with an omni-channel distribution network reaching over 20 million customers, spanning 10,000 supermarkets and 5 major e-commerce platforms, and serving an estimated 5 million avocado consumers across China's Tier 1 cities.

Joy Wing Mau visit forms part of the Assessment of Kenya-China Avocado Trade Links, a project supported by The Gates Foundation. The visit sought to generate evidence-based insights to strengthen Phytosanitary compliance systems and facilitate increased Kenyan avocado exports to the Chinese market. Given KEPHIS' statutory mandate, the discussion led by Mr. Eric Were and Ms. Dorcas Mugambi, focused on: Phytosanitary and inspection requirements for avocado exports to China, Export certification and compliance procedures, Regulatory and operational barriers affecting China-Kenya avocado trade, Institutional capacity gaps and support needs, Policy and technical recommendations to facilitate trade expansion.

DELEGATION FROM WAJIR COUNTY EXPLORES PARTNERSHIP WITH KEPHIS ON CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE



KEPHIS and Wajir County Government teams pose for a group photo during the courtesy visit

KEPHIS hosted a delegation from the County Government of Wajir, Department of Environment and Climate Change, during a courtesy visit to the KEPHIS Headquarters on 10th February 2026. The delegation was led by the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Environment and Climate Change, accompanied by the Chief Officer, and two Environment Officers. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Isaac Macharia, Director Phytosanitary & Biosecurity services on behalf of the Managing Director and focused on potential areas of collaboration aimed at strengthening climate change adaptation and resilience initiatives within the county.

During the visit, the Wajir County officials expressed strong interest in partnering with KEPHIS to support the production and scaling up of climate-smart crops, including date palms, cassava, sweet

potato, indigenous tree species, and fruit trees. The delegation emphasized the importance of these crops as sustainable strategies for enhancing food security, supporting livelihoods, and building resilience against the adverse effects of climate change in arid and semi-arid regions.





The County Government of Wajir further sought KEPHIS' technical support in the establishment of a modern nursery to facilitate the propagation of quality planting materials suited to the county's ecological conditions. Additionally, the delegation requested collaboration in capacity building programmes, knowledge transfer, and other technical areas aligned with KEPHIS' mandate.

KEPHIS welcomed the proposed partnership and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting counties through the provision of expertise in seed and plant health systems, quality assurance, and sustainable agricultural development. The engagement underscores the growing role of intergovernmental collaboration in advancing climate-smart agriculture and environmental sustainability across Kenya.



KEPHIS HOSTS STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS ON SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS



The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) convened a consultative meeting with representatives from the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) AfriCenter, and the University of Nairobi to explore potential areas of collaboration in synthetic biology. Dr. Isaac Macharia led the discussions on behalf of the Managing Director, KEPHIS. Participants included Dr. Margaret Karembu, Director, ISAAA AfriCenter; Dr. Godfrey Ngure, Senior Program Officer, ISAAA AfriCenter; Prof. Douglas Miano, University of Nairobi; and the KEPHIS laboratory team led by Dr. Florence Munguti, Ag. Director, Laboratory Services.

Synthetic biology is an interdisciplinary field that applies engineering principles to redesign biological systems for useful purposes, integrating advances in molecular biology, bioengineering, and computational tools. In agriculture, these approaches are increasingly being explored to strengthen

diagnostics, surveillance, and sustainable crop protection strategies.

Discussions focused on identifying strategic partnership opportunities in research, innovation, and capacity development to support science-based solutions for Kenya's agricultural systems. Particular emphasis was placed on the potential application of synthetic biology tools to enhance plant disease detection, monitoring, and management.

The meeting underscored the importance of cross-institutional collaboration in advancing regulatory science, strengthening diagnostic capacity, and supporting the responsible adoption of emerging technologies. KEPHIS reaffirmed its commitment to working with research institutions and partners to promote innovation that contributes to national plant health protection, trade facilitation, and sustainable agricultural development.



WOMEN IN SCIENCE: SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS, STRENGTHENING FOOD SYSTEMS



In laboratories, inspection points, and regulatory offices, women at KEPHIS are quietly shaping the integrity of Kenya's agricultural systems. Their impact is reflected in every certified seed lot, compliant export consignment, and laboratory report that safeguards food safety and strengthens trade.

In regulatory science, precision is essential. Women working in different settings, such as microbiology labs, pesticide residue analysis, seed quality assurance, and phytosanitary services, describe their work as both intellectually demanding and deeply purposeful. Their scientific evaluations generate the data that informs compliance decisions, upholds national and international standards, and enables farmers to access markets with confidence.

Through their work, food safety is protected, plant health systems are

strengthened, and agricultural productivity is enhanced.

However, the journey has not been without challenges. Many have navigated highly technical, often male-dominated environments where expertise must be consistently demonstrated. Balancing ambition with societal expectations has required resilience. Yet these experiences have strengthened their confidence and leadership voice.

Their fulfillment can be credited to the impact they bring from knowing that accurate laboratory analysis protects consumers, improves seed quality, preserves environmental health, and supports national food security. By bridging science and policy, they help translate laboratory findings into regulatory systems that protect livelihoods and strengthen Kenya's agricultural competitiveness.

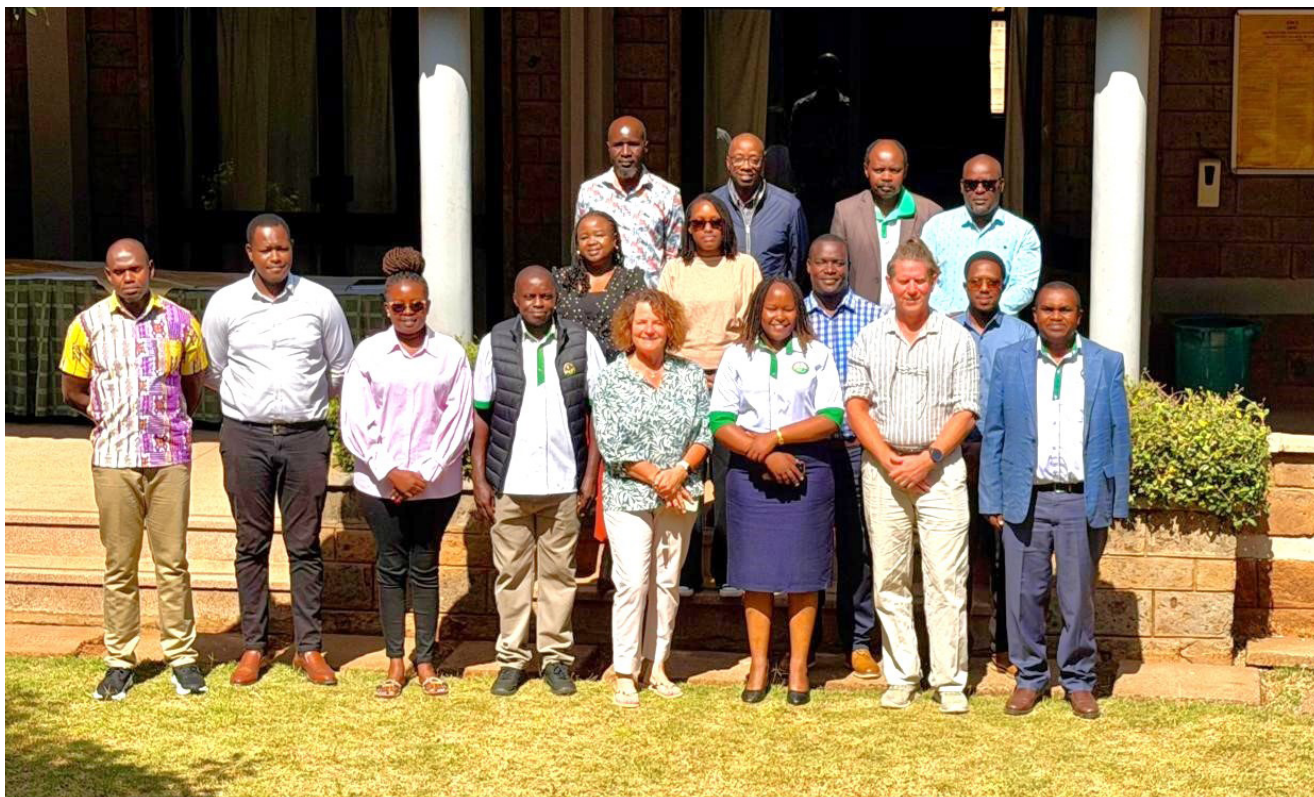


KEPHIS continues to support women through leadership opportunities, capacity building, creating an enabling environment and structured pathways for career advancement within regulatory science. As more women step into management, laboratory leadership, and policy influence roles, KEPHIS remains committed to

fostering inclusion and nurturing the next generation of scientists.

Collectively, their experiences tell a powerful story of women who safeguard standards, protect plant health, and ensure that science informs policy for a food secure nation and safe trade.

KEPHIS HOSTS RTB-EAGEL PARTNERS TO FAST-TRACK OPERATIONALIZATION OF REGIONAL GERmplasm HUB



On 13th February 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) hosted partners from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the International Potato Center (CIP) for a high-level technical meeting to deliberate on the next steps towards operationalization of the RTB-EAGEL Laboratory at KEPHIS Headquarters.

The meeting, chaired by Dr. Isaac Macharia, brought together scientists and technical teams from KEPHIS, IITA and CIP to review progress made in establishing the regional germplasm hub for vegetative propagated crops. The facility, supported through funding from GIZ under the Crops to End Hunger Initiative, is designed to serve East, Central and Southern Africa by accelerating access to clean early generation seed and strengthening national breeding systems.

The RTB-EAGEL Laboratory will focus on key crops including cassava, potato, sweet potato, yam and banana. Its mandate includes:

- Supporting plant breeding through rapid multiplication of early generation seed
- Virus indexing and diagnostics
- Conservation of local germplasm
- Facilitating safe exchange of clean planting materials
- Capacity building and training for national programs

Partners acknowledged the long-standing collaboration between KEPHIS, IITA and CIP and reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the facility becomes a regional centre of excellence for diagnostics, tissue culture and germplasm exchange.



In addition to technical discussions, the meeting-initiated conversations on the legal and financial framework that will guide operation of the RTB-EAGEL Laboratory. Partners agreed to convene further consultations to define governance structures, partnership agreements and timelines, with the aim of establishing a sustainable project model over the next five years.

Members expressed optimism regarding the progress made and

committed to accelerating implementation to ensure the laboratory begins serving national and regional breeding programs as soon as possible.

The RTB-EAGEL Laboratory positions KEPHIS as a strategic regional hub for clean seed systems and reinforces Kenya's leadership in plant health, diagnostics and germplasm management across Africa.

LEGISLATIVE DRAFTSPERSONS; SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY EXPERTS MEET TO FINALISE THE SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) BILL



Kenya participated in the meeting of Legislative Draftspersons that was held from 9th to 13th February, 2026 in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania.


The meeting which was attended by legislative draftspersons, trade experts, sanitary and phytosanitary experts from the Partner States, Trade Mark Africa and staff from the EAC Secretariat aimed to finalise drafting of the East African Community (EAC) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Bill in preparation for consideration by the Sectoral Council on Legal and Judicial Affairs (SCLJA).

The development of the bill follows the commitments highlighted in Chapter Eighteen (Articles 105 to 110) of the East African Convention to cooperate in agriculture and food security, including the control of animal and plant diseases and in sanitary and phytosanitary measures to facilitate trade within the Community.

In addition, the development of the bill is also in line with the Protocol on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, which aims to strengthen the coordination of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures at national and regional levels and promote trade in food and agricultural products within the Community.

The SPS Bill was developed to operationalize the cooperation of the Partner States under Chapter Eighteen and the Protocol on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

The meeting considered the draft SPS Bill Act, which makes provisions for the prevention of the introduction and spread of harmful organisms and diseases destructive to plants and animals. This is to ensure food and feed safety in the community; to establish a coordinating mechanism for SPS Measures; to establish the East African SPS



Committee: to provide for the designation of national competent authorities and to provide for related matters.

The experts further deliberated on various aspects that would strengthen SPS regulatory framework including Risk Assessment, Designation of Reference Laboratories and Centers of Excellence to strengthen science-based decisions and enhance the Phytosanitary capacity of the region.

The deliberations further considered inspections and quarantine procedures within the community including transit permits for plants and plant products, animals and animal products as well as food and feed.

More to that, experts further discussed on transparency and exchange of information by partner states to facilitate trade as well as application of emergency and transparency measures.

It is expected that upon finalization of the bill the partners states shall implement the Act upon adoption by the East African Legislative Assembly.

The meeting was a clear demonstration of the goodwill of the East African community to support regional trade and harmonization. KEPHIS reaffirms its commitment to promote safe trade by engaging in more partnerships.

KEPHIS SENSITIZE TECHNICAL PERSONNEL FOR BEAN PODS AND CAPSICUMS'



Acting Director, Laboratory services, Dr. Florence Munguti pose for a group photo with the participants and senior laboratory staff.

The sensitization forum has a far-reaching impact across the horticultural value chain, with stakeholders greatly benefiting from clearer guidance on compliance with EU and UK market standards, particularly on pesticide application, record keeping and MRL management. This reduces the risk of interceptions, rejections and financial losses, while enhancing farm-level food safety practices and environmental stewardship. The stakeholders will gain improved assurance of product compliance and traceability, strengthening their credibility in international markets. By understanding notification trends and audit expectations, exporters are better positioned to mitigate trade disruptions and maintain consistent market access. Technical Personnel and Advisors are empowered with up-to-date regulatory information and practical compliance strategies. This enhances the quality of advisory services provided to farmers and ensures uniform interpretation of market requirements across the sector. By addressing MRL trends and preparing

stakeholders for the upcoming DG SANTE audit, the forum contributes to safeguarding Kenya's reputation as a reliable exporter of safe horticultural produce. Reduced border rejections translate into sustained foreign exchange earnings, job security within the horticulture sector, and strengthened trade relations with the EU and UK. Ultimately, improved compliance with international food safety standards ensures that consumers receive safe, high-quality produce, reinforcing trust in Kenyan horticultural exports.

KEPHIS remains committed to safeguarding plant health while facilitating safe trade. The forum was supported by TradeMark Africa (TMA) through the Regional Economic Development for Investment and Trade (REDIT) programme implemented through the Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence (COPE), further demonstrating a collaborative approach to strengthening Kenya's horticultural competitiveness.



Mr. Bernard Okonda does a presentation.



The group follows through during the sensitization

REVOLUTIONALIZING WHEAT PRODUCTION: INSIGHTS FROM THE RUMURUTI FIELD DAY ON 5TH FEBRUARY 2026



KEPHIS Nakuru participate in a wheat field day held at Sasumua Ol Maisor Farm in Rumuruti on February 5, 2026. This marked a significant milestone in Kenya's journey toward sustainable agricultural development. Organized by the Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA) and the Cereal Growers Association (CGA), the event brought together over 300 participants, including farmers from key wheat producing counties including Narok, Uasin Gishu, Laikipia, Meru and Nakuru. The primary focus was the promotion of climate-smart technologies, specifically minimum tillage and conservation agriculture, to support wheat production in low rainfall and marginal areas.

A major highlight of the expo was the integration of modern mechanization and precision agriculture. Farmers observed advanced machinery and the innovative use of drones for disease scouting and spraying, technologies designed to boost productivity while reducing labor. The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) played a crucial role, with its exhibition stand serving as a hub for farmers to learn about seed assurance and plant health. This engagement directly addressed the institution's 2025/2026 performance targets by enhancing the capacity of youth, women and agribusiness players within the wheat value chain.



The event was graced by Principal Secretary for State Department for Agriculture, Dr. Paul Ronoh, who underscored the government's commitment to reducing Kenya's 92% reliance on wheat imports. He assured farmers that certified seeds and subsidized fertilizers would be available at all National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) depots to eliminate cartels and ensure

fair pricing. The PS underscored the need for farmers to implement Climate-Smart Practices and technologies, including crop rotation, minimum tillage and the use of certified seeds to enhance soil health and crop yields. He further urged KEPHIS to enhance enforcement measures against dealers of uncertified seeds to protect farmer investments from fraudulent inputs.

KEPHIS EXPLORES AI-DRIVEN PEST SURVEILLANCE TO STRENGTHEN PHYTOSANITARY SERVICES



Dr. Isaac Macharia (3rd right) poses for a group photo with Russell IPM representatives and staff from KEPHIS.

Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), through its Phytosanitary Department led by Dr. Isaac Macharia, held a strategic engagement meeting with Russell IPM, a United Kingdom-based company specializing in Integrated Pest Management (IPM), to explore innovative digital solutions for pest surveillance.

During the meeting, Russell IPM showcased TruePest, an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered pest monitoring system designed to modernize how pests are detected and tracked in farms and greenhouses. The technology uses AI image analysis to identify, count and record insects captured on sticky traps, eliminating the need for labor intensive manual counting while significantly improving accuracy and

consistency of pest data. TruePest operates in combination with species-specific lures tailored to different pest groups. These include floral and pheromone - based attractants for thrips, fermentation - based baits for spotted wing drosophila and pheromones targeting various moth species. Using the mobile application, growers and inspectors simply take a photo of a trap, after which the system automatically analyses the image and generates standardized digital records that can be stored, tracked and reported over time.

For KEPHIS, the technology presents major opportunities to strengthen national pest surveillance. It supports early detection of invasive and quarantine pests, enhances phytosanitary inspection and certification



processes, improves digital record-keeping and boosts traceability for agricultural produce. These capabilities contribute directly to food security, compliance with international phytosanitary standards and improved confidence in Kenya's certification systems.

Stakeholders across the agricultural value chain stand to benefit greatly with Farmers gaining early warning on pest pressure, enabling timely interventions that reduce crop losses and unnecessary use of pesticide. On the other hand, exporters will benefit from improved compliance with international market requirements, lowering the risk of consignment rejection. Researchers, meanwhile, can leverage reliable, standardized pest population data to analyse trends, support pest risk analysis and inform evidence - based responses.

Through such engagements, KEPHIS continues to demonstrate its commitment to embracing innovation, modernizing inspection services, strengthening collaboration with stakeholders and positioning Kenya as a forward - looking leader in plant health protection and agricultural trade facilitation.



TRAINING OF YOUTH, WOMEN AND PWDs AS CERTIFIED SEED PRODUCERS HELD IN SAMBURU COUNTY ON 30TH JANUARY, 2026.




The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Nakuru held a vibrant training forum in Samburu County bringing together 150 participants including 85 youths, 85 women, and 8 persons with disabilities (PWDs). The event focused on certified seed production, pest and disease management, and the adoption of modern technologies, all aimed at strengthening compliance with seed certification standards and promoting sustainable agricultural trade.

The County Director of Agriculture opened the forum by emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in the seed value chain. KEPHIS' Nakuru Deputy Director then outlined the organization's mandate in ensuring seed quality, plant health, and

safe agricultural trade. Participants were also guided through good agricultural practices such as soil preparation, crop rotation, pest control, and record keeping, all which are essential for meeting certification requirements.

KEPHIS Inspectors introduced 3G technologies that support seed traceability and transparency, enabling farmers to monitor production processes more effectively. Additionally, a technical session on potato pests and diseases equipped attendees with identification and management strategies reinforcing the importance of certified seeds and phytosanitary standards. The seed certification process was also explained in detail, covering soil analysis, field inspection,



grading, and labeling which are critical steps for accessing wider markets and protecting farmers from losses.

During interactive discussions, farmers shared challenges in pest management and accessing certified seeds where KEPHIS Inspectors responded with practical solutions emphasizing professionalism and integrity in seed production; and participants expressing enthusiasm for adopting new technologies and standards which signaled a strong commitment to agricultural excellence.

In closing, KEPHIS pledged continued support and training for Samburu farmers

and a farmer representative delivered heartfelt thanks promising to implement the lessons learned. The forum concluded with renewed partnerships and a shared commitment to food security and sustainable agriculture.

The training reaffirmed KEPHIS' dedication to inclusivity, plant health, and agricultural transformation by equipping youths, women, and PWDs with knowledge and tools as Samburu County is poised to play a stronger role in Kenya's agricultural future.

FINGER MILLET EXPERTS DISCUSS STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENT TECHNOLOGIES IN KENYA.



The KEPHIS team, led by Mr. Maina (Director, Seed Certification & Plant Variety Protection), with Finger Millet Experts from: Crop Trust led by Dr. Shivali Shama, Egerton University led by Prof. Kimurto, KALRO Kibos led by Dr. Oduori, ICRISAT led by Dr. Ojulong.

Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) team, led by Mr. Maina, Director of Seed Certification and Plant Variety Protection, recently came together with Dr. Shivali Shama, Prof. Kimurto, Dr. Oduori and Dr. Ojulong for a productive discussion on the progress of ongoing finger millet variety evaluations. The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on the journey so far and to strengthen collaboration as the candidate varieties move closer to possible release.

Across trial sites in Alupe, Soin, Kiboko, Kambi Mawe, Koibatek, Kisii, Kibos and Kitui, the National Performance Trials (NPTs) and Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) Tests are generating valuable insights under different environmental conditions. What makes this process particularly meaningful is that the candidate varieties were selected by farmers themselves. Their preferences and lived experiences have shaped the traits under evaluation — including earliness to fit into changing seasons, drought tolerance to withstand harsh climates, a snapping attribute

that makes harvesting easier, and enhanced micronutrient content to boost household nutrition.

Beyond the technical assessments, the team also explored practical pathways to ensure that once the varieties are officially released, farmers can access quality seed without delay. Strengthening seed multiplication, working closely with seed producers, and improving distribution systems were highlighted as key steps toward making these improved finger millet varieties widely available.

This collaborative effort reflects a shared commitment to supporting farmers with resilient, nutritious crops while contributing to Kenya's broader food and nutrition security goals and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA). It is a clear demonstration that when researchers, regulators and farmers work together, meaningful progress toward sustainable agriculture and improved livelihoods can be achieved.

HORTICULTURE COMPETENT AUTHORITY STRUCTURE MEETING



On Friday, February 20th, 2026, KEPHIS, along with its stakeholders (PCPB, KEPROBA, Ministry of Agriculture, and KALRO), held a meeting of the Horticulture Competent Authority Structure (HCAS) at KEPHIS headquarters. The meeting included fruitful deliberations regarding Kenya's plant health status and compliance with market requirements for the European Union, USA, UK, Russia, and Australia. Discussions also covered notifications concerning mangoes exported from Kenya to Oman and an update on European Union food safety in preparation for the upcoming DG Sante Audit scheduled for June 2026. The team outlined the way forward to sustain Kenya's access to these markets by addressing non-compliance and ensuring safe trade with our partners.



DEPARTMENTAL SPOTLIGHT



An Interview with Dr. Thomas Kosiom

Ag. Deputy Director Kitale Regional Office

1. What is the core mandate of KEPHIS Kitale?

KEPHIS Kitale is strategically located Trans Nzoia County, often referred to as Kenya's breadbasket. The office was established in 1913 during British Protectorate and it became one of the regions when KEPHIS was established in 1996.

The core mandate of the KEPHIS Kitale station is to ensure that farmers in the region have access to and use certified seeds and plant materials of the highest quality. Our office oversees the certification of thousands of hectares of seed crops annually supporting national food security. The key objectives under KEPHIS Kitale are to safeguard the quality of agricultural inputs and produce in this high-potential agricultural region. The Kitale office champions the fight against counterfeit agricultural inputs. The station serves a vast region, primarily covering Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Elgeyo Marakwet, Nandi, Turkana, Bungoma and West Pokot counties as well as parts of Kakamega and Busia.

2. What key services does the station provide to farmers and stakeholders in the region?

Our station provides a comprehensive range of services that include:

- **Seed Certification and Field Inspection:** This is our flagship service, ensuring the genetic purity and quality of maize, wheat, barley, and forage seeds produced in the region, which are planted across the country. We offer over 75% of our certification services to Kenya Seed Co hence our close proximity to it in Kitale.
- **Post Seed Certification Surveys:** We conduct surveys to establish status of seed in the market. The exercise has weeded out fake seeds, protecting farmers from financial losses and ensuring food security.
- **Variety Testing:** We conduct national performance trials on various agro-ecological zones to establish suitable and superior varieties for our region. We also conduct DUS to support grant of PBR.
- **Post Control:** We conduct post control for all certified seed lots to ensure minimum standards of seed certification are maintained.
- **Laboratory Services:** Seed testing for purity and germination to ensure farmers get seed lots that have passed minimum standards. Also conducting soil for fertility tests, testing water for irrigation suitability, testing manure, fertilizer among others to support farming communities in Kenya.
- **Phytosanitary Services:** We facilitate the movement of produce by carrying out phytosanitary inspection of imports and exports at Malaba, Lwakhakha and Suam as well as EIA offices. Further,

we carry out farm audits in production sites for flowers and avocado to ensure compliance with destination market requirements and sustain or increase foreign income/earnings.

- **Farmers and Stakeholders' Training:** We build the capacity of farmers, seed stockists, county extension officers and key stakeholders through field days, demonstrations, and awareness forums on quality assurance.

3. How has KEPHIS Kitale supported farmers or exporters in the region?

We collaborate closely with the Kenya Seed Company to scale up research and release certified, drought-tolerant, and disease-resistant maize varieties to help farmers overcome challenges posed by climate change. We also empower farmers by training them on how to identify genuine seeds using the KEPHIS scratch codes, and we encourage them to report poor germination so we can conduct investigations and retesting. For exporters, we facilitate compliance by training growers on protocols like the system approach for managing False Codling Moth (FCM) to meet strict international market requirements.

4. What are some of the major milestones or achievements of the Kitale station in the past years?

In a major operational achievement, the station has notably increased the volume of seed lots undergoing post-control testing, a critical function for verifying varietal purity and identity as required by CAP 326 and OECD guidelines. Monitoring of authorized activities has been enhanced including monitoring of authorized seed

fields inspections and authorized seed testing. Management of MLND has been enhanced thus assuring farmers of disease-free certified seed.

5. How does the station contribute to national agricultural goals?


KEPHIS Kitale is a key contributor to national food security and economic growth by ensuring the distribution of high-quality, certified seeds from Kenya's breadbasket. Our work in combating fake seeds protects farmers from losses and safeguards national productivity. We also support the government's agenda on climate change by testing and promoting climate smart varieties.

6. How does the station ensure quality, efficiency, and compliance in its operations?

The station maintains rigorous physical inspection protocols, conducting routine surveillance of seed stockists to combat counterfeits and field inspections during growing seasons to verify genetic purity by strictly adhering to Kenyan laws (CAP 326) and international OECD guidelines. Furthermore, the station fosters a culture of transparency and stakeholder collaboration, working closely with seed companies and traders to ensure a cohesive and responsive quality assurance system across the entire value chain.

7. How has the team adapted to emerging issues such as climate change, pest outbreaks, or regulatory changes?

In response to climate change, we are actively involved in testing, promoting



and certifying new crop varieties that are drought-tolerant, fast-maturing, and disease-resistant to help farmers adapt to changing weather patterns. We also participate in trainings for our border officers on emerging threats, such as the Banana Bunchy Top Disease, to enhance our preparedness and management strategies at the regional level.

8. How does the station promote teamwork and professional growth?

We promote a collaborative environment where our team works together to host large stakeholder events and conduct joint inspections. Our staff regularly participate in trainings on various topics, such as emerging pest management protocols, ensuring our team remains knowledgeable and equipped to deliver excellent service.

9. Are there any upcoming events that you would want to sensitize farmers?

While our calendar is dynamic, farmers in the region are looking forward to upcoming Eldoret National ASK Show due in in March 4th – 8th 2026 which provides a valuable opportunity to engage with our inspectors and plant doctors. We also plan to conduct training workshops for farmers and seed stockists.

We urge all farmers to buy certified seed from KEPHIS licensed agro-dealers only. They should verify validity of the seed lots by scratching sticker labels and sending codes to 1393. The empty packages should be kept safe just for use in case seed fail to germinate. Any suspected counterfeit

seed should immediately be reported to the Managing Director-KEPHIS through phone number 0709 891 000 or email to director@kephis.org

10. How do you handle customer feedback and service improvement?

Customer feedback is vital for our service improvement. We have a structured mechanism where farmers are encouraged to report issues, such as poor seed germination, directly to us. These complaints trigger investigations, and seeds can be returned through the stockist to the seed company for official retesting by KEPHIS. This process ensures grievances are formally addressed and informs our enforcement strategies. We also value direct dialogue during stakeholder forums and the ASK show, where we receive real-time feedback to enhance our service delivery.

11. What message would you like to share with stakeholders and colleagues across KEPHIS?

To our valued stakeholders, farmers, seed companies, and traders, we express our sincere gratitude for your continued collaboration in promoting use of certified seeds and fighting counterfeits. To my colleagues across KEPHIS, let us remain united in our science-based mission. The work we do in Kitale and across the country is the pillar of Kenya's food security and global agricultural competitiveness. Guided by our core values of integrity and professionalism, we are committed to driving excellence in plant health and quality assurance across the agricultural sector.

KEPHIS RECEIVES OVER 100 INTERNS FROM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) has welcomed over 100 interns from the Public Service Commission (PSC) in a significant move aimed at advancing youth empowerment and strengthening professional capacity in Kenya's agricultural sector.

The on-boarding of the interns marks an important milestone in KEPHIS' continued commitment to nurturing the next generation of plant health and agricultural service professionals. The interns will receive hands-on experience across various technical and operational departments, equipping them with practical

skills and industry exposure essential for their career growth.

During their placement, the interns will actively contribute to KEPHIS' mandate by supporting service delivery, enhancing operational efficiency, and reinforcing ongoing programs in plant health, seed certification, phytosanitary services, and quality assurance. This initiative not only provides meaningful professional development opportunities for young graduates but also strengthens the foundation for a resilient and sustainable agriculture sector.

KEPHIS NAKURU FRATERNITY SENSITIZED ON FIRE SAFETY BY THE REGIONAL OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH) COMMITTEE

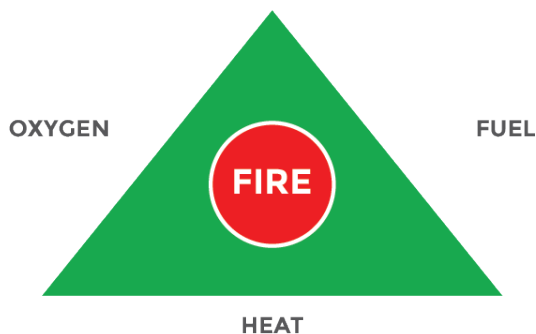


The risk of fire in Nakuru is eminent, particularly during the dry season of December–March every year. In response to this heightened risk, the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Committee conducted a comprehensive fire safety sensitization session for all KEPHIS Nakuru staff, including farm casuals and security guards. The objective of the training was to enhance awareness, ensure compliance with fire safety legislation, and improve overall emergency preparedness within the station.

The sensitization emphasized key provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2007 as well as the Factories and Other Places of Work Act (Cap 514), Fire Risk Reduction 2007. Section 81(1) of the

Occupational Safety and Health Act 2007 requires every workplace to provide properly maintained and accessible fire extinguishing equipment, trained personnel, adequate means of escape, and unobstructed emergency exits.

To enhance understanding of fire prevention and control, the OSH Committee Chairperson explained the fire triangle concept, noting that fire occurs when three elements, heat, fuel, and oxygen, combine. He further emphasized that eliminating any one of these elements effectively extinguishes a fire. The session underscored the importance of vigilance, routine inspection of fire-fighting equipment, and adherence to safety procedures to minimize fire risks, especially during the dry season.



faults (overloading, short circuits, poor connections), improper disposal of smoking materials, gas leakages, poor housekeeping and natural causes such as lightning. Common fire sources discussed included cooking equipment, heating equipment, electrical distribution systems, flammable liquids (oil, petrol, kerosene), fertilizers and gas installations.

Methods of Extinguishing Fire

- **Starvation** – Removing fuel
- **Smothering** – Removing oxygen (e.g. using a fire blanket)
- **Cooling** – Removing heat (e.g. using water)

The team brainstormed on the potential risks that could cause fire around the region which included; Hazardous acts such as carelessness and negligence as well as hazardous conditions including electrical

Classes of Fire

Class A – Ordinary combustibles (paper, wood, cloth, plastic)

Class B – Flammable liquids and gases

Class C – Energized electrical equipment

Class D – Combustible metals

Class F – Cooking oils and fats (under some standards)

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS AND COLOR CODING



The fire extinguishers are color coded in Cream, Blue, Black and Red respectively.

- Water **(Red)**-extinguishes Class A fires only.
- CO₂ **(Black)** -Electrical fires because it is a poor conductor of electricity, does not support combustion, is denser than air and leaves no residue.
- Dry Powder **(Blue)**-Multi-purpose/ metal fires.
- Foam **(Cream)**- Flammable liquids, not electrical.
- Fire Blanket- Kitchen fires.

Participants were trained on the PASS method of extinguishing fire:

P – Pull the pin, **A – Aim** at the base of the fire, **S – Squeeze** the trigger, **S – Sweep** side to side

The training emphasized proactive fire prevention through risk assessment,

inspections, fire drills, preventive maintenance, good housekeeping, material management and active vigilance by all staff. It also reinforced the importance of ensuring availability of functional first aid kits. Staff were informed to promptly report accidents occurring around the work environment within 24 hours in the General incidence register.

Conclusion

The sensitization successfully reinforced legal compliance, technical knowledge and practical response skills necessary to prevent and manage fire emergencies.

Fire safety remains a shared responsibility. Through continued awareness and adherence to safety procedures, Nakuru staff are better equipped to safeguard lives and property.



KEPHIS ENGAGES SEED SELLERS IN VIHIGA AND KISUMU COUNTIES



On 24th and 26th February 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) Kisumu team conducted consultative training sessions for seed sellers in Vihiga and Kisumu Counties as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen compliance with seed certification standards and safeguard seed quality in Kenya.

The first session was held on 24th February 2026 in Vihiga County by the KEPHIS Kisumu Regional Office team, led by the Deputy Director, Ms. Deborah Shituvi. The engagement focused on seed certification procedures and the mandate of KEPHIS in regulating and safeguarding the quality of seeds in the country. Participants were sensitized on the importance of complying with seed laws and regulations, understanding the seed certification process, enhancing farmers' access to quality certified seeds, improving crop yields, and strengthening food security.

Subsequently, on 26th February 2026, KEPHIS conducted a similar training session for seed sellers in Kisumu County. The forum

emphasized strengthening compliance with seed certification standards, enhancing understanding of regulatory requirements, and promoting the distribution of quality, certified seed.

Across both sessions, participants were guided on proper seed handling and storage practices, accurate record keeping for traceability, and identification of counterfeit seeds. The trainings also highlighted the critical role of KEPHIS in assuring quality agricultural inputs and produce towards a food-secure nation and facilitating safe trade.

The engagements provided valuable platforms for dialogue, experience sharing, and collaboration between KEPHIS and seed sellers. The forums reaffirmed KEPHIS' commitment to safeguarding seed quality, supporting improved agricultural productivity, and promoting sustainable agricultural development and national food security.

FROM RESEARCH TO IMPACT: KEPHIS AT THE KALRO OPEN WEEK 2026.



KEPHIS took part in a two-day Open Week exhibition at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), Kabete, held from 27th – 28th February 2026.

The event, themed “From Research to Markets: Scaling Agricultural Technologies for Inclusive Growth,” aimed to showcase research innovations that provide practical solutions to farmers and boost agricultural productivity. It also sought to bridge the gap between research and the market by bringing together researchers, policymakers, farmers, and other industry stakeholders.

During the exhibition, KEPHIS showcased its innovations in seed certification, which ensure that farmers have access to genuine, high-quality seeds for improved yields. We also demonstrated various techniques used in the detection and prevention of harmful pests and diseases like the use of pheromone traps safeguarding food security and supporting international trade. Additionally, we highlighted scientific innovations such

as tissue culture technology, which produces disease-free planting materials and enhances agricultural productivity for improved food security.

KEPHIS remains committed to supporting farmers and other stakeholders by assuring the quality of agricultural inputs from farm to fork.



CAPACITY BUILDING FOR NURSERY OPERATORS IN BARINGO COUNTY



The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) held a collaborative nursery operators training at the **Kenya School of Government (KSG)** Kabarnet in Baringo County on **February 25, 2026**. The training was jointly conducted by KEPHIS, Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA-HCD) and Agriculture Department, County of Baringo. The session drew 45 Nursery operators from Baringo Central and Baringo North sub-counties. The program focused on the vital role of plant health in facilitating safe trade, covering essential technical areas such as **nursery registration**, certification, and integrated **pest management**.

The training focused on the role of KEPHIS in safeguarding plant health

while facilitating safe trade; Nursery establishment; Nursery Registration; Nursery certification. Also included were nursery planting practices and pest management. The training emphasized the importance of use of certified plants for planting as a key feature in ensuring quality inputs. The training concluded with experience sharing and a plenary discussion, allowing participants to air their experiences and challenges. The main challenge noted was lack of markets of seedlings and quality inputs, especially pesticides. At the end of the training, the participants appreciated KEPHIS role in quality assurance of agricultural inputs, and requested for more similar trainings in future.

PICTORIAL

Highlights from the Training of Youth, Women and PWDs as Certified Seed Producers Held In Samburu County.





Highlights from the Agrinvest Expo in Machakos County



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