



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

APRIL - 2026



KEPHIS Signs
Performance Contract to
Strengthen Service
Delivery & Accountability

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KEPHIS Participates
in The Kenya-India
Joint Trade
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KEPHIS Showcases Food
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Message from the Managing Director




Dear Stakeholders,

The April 2026 edition of the KEPHIS Newsletter highlights key milestones in advancing our mandate of safeguarding plant health, assuring quality, and facilitating safe trade. During the month under review, KEPHIS made significant strides across its core mandate, with impactful activities aligned to our functional areas.

In **phytosanitary services and biosecurity**, the Service intensified preparedness and response efforts against emerging threats. Sensitization forums in Nakuru and Bomet Counties on Goss's Wilt of maize, alongside regional surveillance

and farmer outreach through Plant Health Clinics, reflect our proactive approach to protecting Kenya's food systems from invasive pests and diseases.

In **trade facilitation and market access**, KEPHIS continued to strengthen Kenya's position in international markets. High-level engagements, including discussions with Kenya's High Commissioner to Malaysia, opened new opportunities for agricultural exports, while stakeholder forums held ahead of international audits reinforced compliance with global phytosanitary standards critical for sustaining export markets.



In **seed certification and plant variety protection**, through ongoing variety testing, stakeholder engagement, and regulatory oversight, KEPHIS continues to ensure that farmers access high-quality, certified, and climate-resilient planting materials that drive food security and sector competitiveness.

KEPHIS also deepened **stakeholder engagement and capacity building** across value chains. From avocado farmer trainings in Nakuru to seed grower capacity building in Homa Bay, and participation in national industry expos, these engagements continue to empower farmers, agribusinesses, and partners with the knowledge required to meet regulatory standards and access markets.

In promoting **environmental sustainability**, the Service contributed to national climate call through tree-planting initiatives in Naivasha, Nakuru, and surrounding regions, supporting ecosystem restoration and community awareness.

Institutionally, we continue to strengthen **governance and service**

delivery systems, as demonstrated through staff training on complaint handling and management, as well as technical capacity building through targeted trainings on ISO/IEC 17025. These efforts are aimed at enhancing accountability, improving responsiveness and strengthening public confidence in our services.

These achievements underscore KEPHIS' integrated approach; linking regulation, science, partnerships and outreach to deliver impact across the agricultural sector.

I wish to thank our stakeholders, partners, the KEPHIS Board of Directors and staff for their continued collaboration and dedication.

Thank you.

Prof. Theophilus Mutui, PhD.

Managing Director,
Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service
(KEPHIS)

The Editor's Note



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the April 2026 edition of the KEPHIS Newsletter.

This edition brings together a rich mix of stories that reflect both the technical depth of KEPHIS' work, the people and partnerships behind it. It draws attention to some of the unique features that make this edition particularly engaging.

A key highlight is the **Departmental Spotlight on Plant Variety Testing and Protection (PVT&P)**, which offers insight into the critical role the department plays in supporting innovation, protecting breeders' rights and ensuring that only high-performing and resilient crop varieties reach farmers. The feature also provides a closer look at the people behind this work, their achievements and the impact of their efforts on Kenya's agricultural sector.

This edition also captures compelling **field stories** from across the regions; from farmer engagements and plant health clinics to capacity-building initiatives that are transforming agricultural practices at the

grassroots. These stories not only showcase the Service's reach but also bring out the real-life experiences of farmers and stakeholders who benefit from KEPHIS services.

You will also find updates on **partnerships and collaborations**, including engagements with academic institutions and development partners, reflecting KEPHIS' continued focus on building synergies that strengthen service delivery and expand impact.

In addition, we feature stories that highlight **institutional growth and internal initiatives**, including staff trainings, knowledge-sharing sessions and welfare developments such as the KEPHIS SACCO. These elements are important in showcasing the Service as not only a regulator but also a people-centered organization.

As always, we have made deliberate efforts to present these stories in a way that is informative, relatable and reflective of the broader impact of KEPHIS work.

We hope you find this edition insightful and engaging.

Remember to follow us on our social media platforms to get daily updates on happenings within the Service:

Facebook & Linked-In: Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service – KEPHIS

X and YouTube: @KephisKe

Thank you.

Kellen Karuti

Deputy Director, Corporate Communications

Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)



KEPHIS SIGNS 2025/2026 PERFORMANCE CONTRACT TO STRENGTHEN SERVICE DELIVERY AND ACCOUNTABILITY



The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service - KEPHIS, signed the 2025/2026 Performance Contract on April 8, 2026, in Malindi. The contract was signed between the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Hon. Sen. Mutahi Kagwe and the KEPHIS Board Chairman Hon. Joseph M'Eruaki, alongside KEPHIS Board Member Prof. Albert Kimutai and was witnessed by the Managing Director, Prof. Theophilus Mutui.

A performance contract is a binding agreement between the Government, acting as the owner of a public agency and the agency's management. It defines responsibilities and expectations for achieving mutually agreed-upon results. The contract outlines key targets for the year,

strengthens accountability, enhances service delivery and aligns institutional performance with national development priorities.

KEPHIS supports the key pillars of the Government's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), particularly in agricultural transformation and inclusive growth. The institution plays a critical role in increasing agricultural productivity through the assurance of quality agricultural inputs, facilitating the availability of new plant varieties, and supporting the production of clean planting materials through nursery certification and tissue culture. Additionally, KEPHIS provides advisory services to farmers on the use of certified seeds, pest and disease management and facilitates market access.



STRENGTHENING KENYA–MALAYSIA AGRICULTURAL TRADE: HIGH COMMISSIONER’S VISIT TO KEPHIS ENHANCES PHYTOSANITARY COLLABORATION



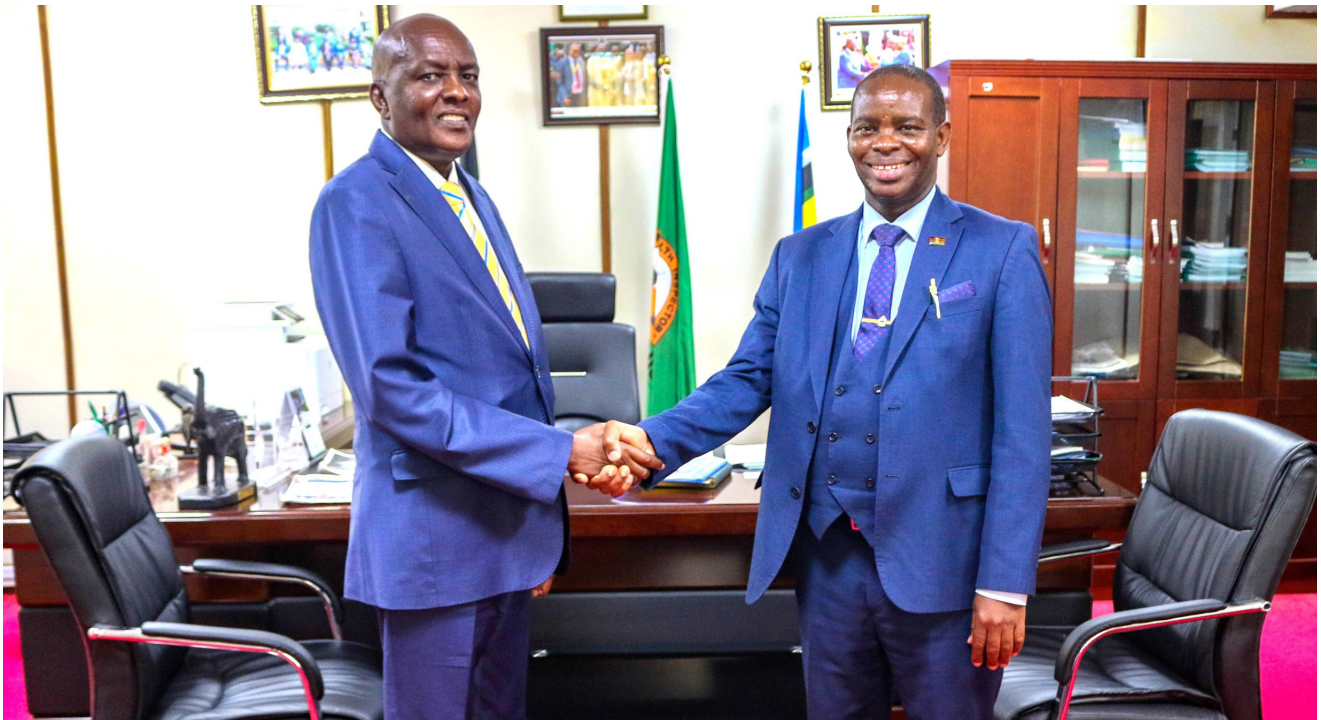
On 2nd April 2026, H.E. Amb. Ekitela Ronald John Moru, Kenya’s High Commissioner to Malaysia, paid a courtesy call to KEPHIS Managing Director, Prof. Theophilus M. Mutui, at the KEPHIS Headquarters in Karen. The High Commissioner was accompanied by Halima Sharif, an officer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underscoring the importance of intergovernmental collaboration in advancing Kenya’s trade agenda.

The meeting provided a strategic platform for engagement on phytosanitary matters, with a strong emphasis on facilitating increased market access for Kenyan agricultural produce to Malaysia. Discussions centered on aligning regulatory frameworks, strengthening compliance with international phytosanitary standards, and addressing potential barriers to trade. Both parties acknowledged the critical role of

sanitary and phytosanitary measures in safeguarding plant health while enabling smooth cross-border trade.

In addition, the deliberations explored broader opportunities to deepen bilateral trade relations between Kenya and Malaysia. Particular attention was given to high-potential export commodities from Kenya, including fresh horticultural produce, tea, coffee, and nuts, as well as opportunities for knowledge exchange and capacity building in agricultural technologies and value addition. The engagement also highlighted the importance of fostering partnerships that can enhance competitiveness and sustainability within the agricultural sector.

A key outcome of the meeting was the High Commissioner’s formal invitation to KEPHIS to participate in the Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture and Agrotourism



(MAHA) Expo scheduled for August 2026. The Expo is recognized as one of the region's premier agricultural exhibitions, attracting a wide range of stakeholders including policymakers, investors, producers, and technology providers. Participation in the event is expected to offer Kenya a valuable platform to showcase the diversity and quality of its agricultural products, strengthen its international presence, and create new linkages with potential buyers and partners in the Asian market.

The High Commissioner commended KEPHIS for its continued dedication to ensuring the quality and safety of Kenya's agricultural exports and for its proactive role in supporting trade facilitation. He reaffirmed the commitment of the Kenyan High Commission in Malaysia to work closely with KEPHIS and other stakeholders in unlocking new market opportunities and strengthening existing partnerships.

Prof. Mutui, in turn, reiterated KEPHIS' commitment to upholding stringent phytosanitary standards and to collaborating with both local and international partners to enhance the competitiveness of Kenyan produce globally. He emphasized the agency's readiness to support initiatives that promote market diversification and sustainable agricultural trade.

Also in attendance were Dr. Isaac Macharia, Director of Phytosanitary and Biosecurity; Dr. Florence Munguti, Acting Director of Laboratory Services; and members of the KEPHIS technical team, all of whom contributed valuable insights to the discussions. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to sustained engagement and concrete follow-up actions aimed at advancing Kenya's agricultural export agenda.

TRAINING ON DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF PECTO-BACTERIA SPP, DICKEYA SPP, & CLAVIBACTER MICHIGANENSIS NEBRASKENSIS HELD AT KENYA PLANT HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS, KAREN

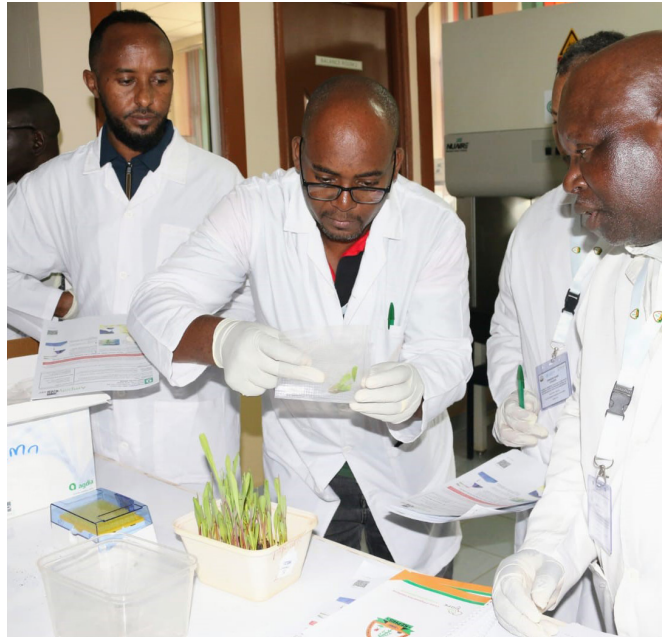


Imagine investing everything into your farm 10 acres of maize, carefully planted, well-tended, full of promise. The rains come. The crop emerges beautifully. Then slowly, something changes. The leaves begin to wilt. Long, grey-green streaks appear. The plants dry up before maturity. What once looked like abundance turns into loss. This is the reality of diseases like Goss's Wilt of maize. To farmers, it is not just a plant disease; it is lost income, disrupted plans, and a growing threat to food security.

From 27th April 2026 to 1st May 2026, KEPHIS through Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence COPE and in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) through Standards and Trade Development Facility STDF, funding, conducted a week-long training for laboratory technicians from 13 countries: Ethiopia, South Sudan,

Mozambique, Zambia, Lesotho, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Somalia, and Zimbabwe.





The training focuses on the detection and identification of soft rot bacteria in potato and Goss's Wilt of maize a major threat to profitable potato and maize production across Eastern and Southern Africa with significant implications for food security and the livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers. Through hands-on sessions and expert-led discussions, participants are exploring critical questions, including

- How to accurately detect soft rot bacteria and Goss's Wilt?
- How can laboratory techniques support faster and more reliable diagnosis?

However, a national survey conducted in Kenya, this year, found that goss wilt is not present in the country.

As Kenya's National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO), KEPHIS is mandated to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive pests and diseases that threaten agricultural productivity and food security. This makes the training especially critical in strengthening preparedness and response measures to ensure that Goss's Wilt is not introduced into the country.

KEPHIS NAIVASHA ADVANCES NATIONAL TREE PLANTING DRIVE THROUGH SCHOOL OUTREACH INITIATIVE



On 10th April 2026, the KEPHIS Naivasha team, led by Deputy Director Pamela Kibwage, conducted a tree-planting activity at Eleri Comprehensive School in Naivasha Sub-County, Nakuru County. The initiative formed part of the Service's ongoing commitment to environmental conservation and climate action in line with national priorities.

Between March and April 2026, KEPHIS, through its Naivasha office, donated over 5,000 tree seedlings to schools and farmer groups across Naivasha, Narok, and Nyandarua counties. This effort contributes to the Government's ambitious target of planting 15 billion trees by 2032, aimed at restoring ecosystems, enhancing biodiversity, and building community resilience against the impacts of climate change.

Through such outreach initiatives, KEPHIS continues to foster environmental awareness among young learners while promoting responsible stewardship of natural

resources. The engagement underscored the role of partnerships between institutions, schools, and local communities in driving sustainable development and securing a greener future for generations to come.



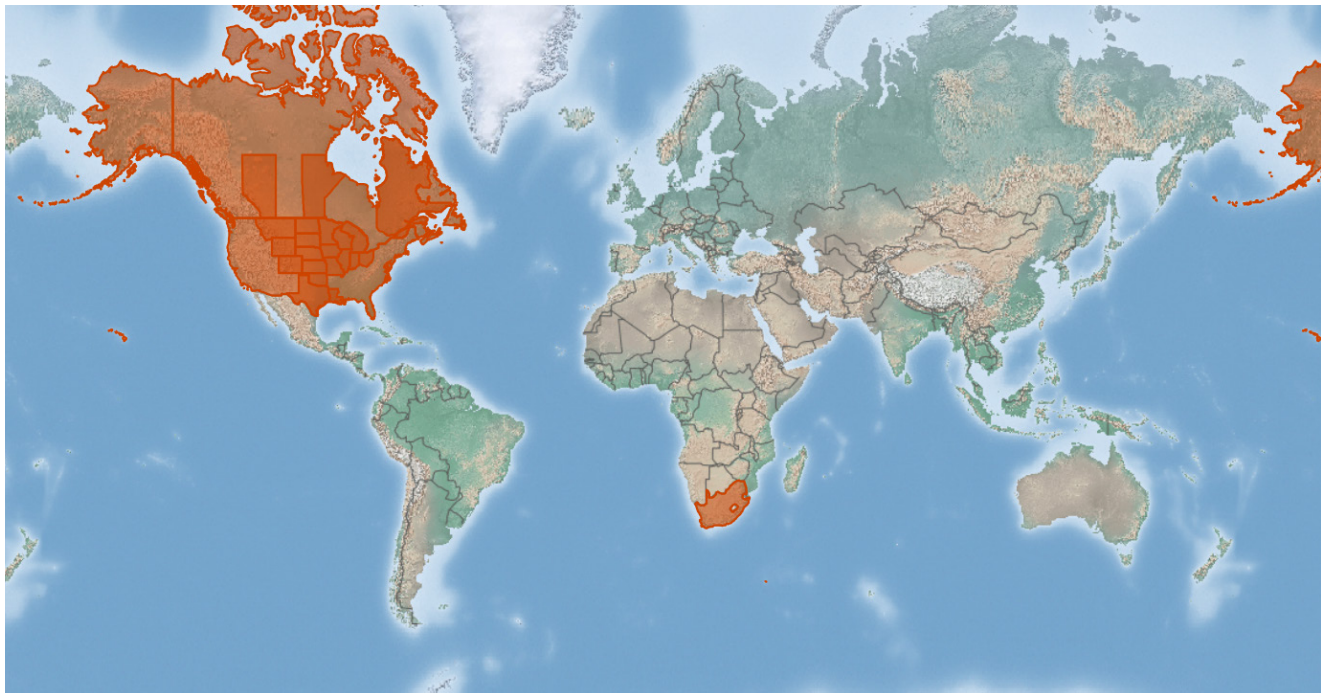
KEPHIS MOBILIZES AGAINST GOSS'S WILT OF MAIZE IN NAKURU AND BOMET COUNTIES



Group photo Nakuru forum

In a proactive move to protect the breadbasket of the region, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, through the Nakuru regional office, recently conducted intensive sensitization forums in Nakuru and Bomet Counties during the final week of March 2026. These sessions were designed as a critical mission to prepare the public for the arrival of Goss's Bacterial Wilt and Blight, a serious maize disease that has decimated yields in other parts of the world and now poses a significant biosecurity threat to Kenya's food security. Nakuru and Bomet were selected as focal points for this campaign because they are critical hubs for maize production where the high movement of farm machinery and seeds creates a natural elevated risk for the rapid spread of pathogens.

The global threat of this disease is well-documented, and the presentation of a global distribution map during the training highlighted how several nations have already classified the causal agent, *Clavibacter nebraskensis*, as a top-tier quarantine pest. While the disease was historically concentrated in North America, its recent detection in South Africa underscores the urgent need for local vigilance among Kenyan farmers and agricultural stakeholders. By seeing where the disease has already struck, our local communities can better appreciate the importance of the preventative measures being introduced by KEPHIS and the respective County Governments.



CABI, 2026. *Clavibacter nebraskensis*. In: CABI Compendium. Wallingford, UK: CAB International.

● CABI Summary Data

Global distribution of Clavibacter nebraskensis highlighting its status as a quarantine pest in various international markets.

Identifying the disease early is the most effective way to prevent a widespread outbreak, and there are specific visual signatures that distinguish Goss's Wilt from other common maize ailments. The primary symptom to watch for is the presence of "leaf freckles," which are dark green to black, water-soaked spots that appear inside larger, yellowish leaf lesions. As the infection progresses, the bacteria produce a sticky exudate that eventually dries into a shiny, parchment-like "varnish" on the leaf surface that glitters when held up to the sunlight. These lesions typically follow the leaf veins and exhibit distinctive wavy or irregular margins, creating a unique fingerprint that farmers should learn to recognize during their daily field scouting.



Diagnostic signs including characteristic leaf freckles and the shiny bacterial varnish that appears as the infection matures.

It is important for the public to understand that Goss's Wilt can often be confused with other conditions, which is why a careful differential diagnosis is necessary. For instance, Northern Corn Leaf Blight features cigar-shaped lesions but lacks the tell-tale freckles and shiny varnish of Goss's Wilt. Similarly, nitrogen deficiency may show a V-shaped yellowing starting from the leaf tip, and drought stress can cause leaves to roll and scorch, but neither of these physiological issues will produce the bacterial ooze associated with a true infection. Distinguishing between these conditions ensures that farmers do not panic unnecessarily while remaining alert to the genuine biological threats.

Managing this disease requires a long-term commitment to agricultural best practices, as there is currently no chemical cure once a plant has been infected. The forums emphasized a "two-year rule" for crop rotation, where farmers are encouraged to move away from maize and into non-host crops like beans, peas, or potatoes for at least two seasons to starve the bacteria living in the soil. Furthermore, because

the pathogen survives in old maize stalks, residue management through deep tillage is essential to accelerate the breakdown of infected material. Maintaining high standards of farm hygiene is also critical, including the decontamination of tools and machinery with a seventy percent ethanol or bleach solution when moving between different fields.

As we move forward, KEPHIS urges every member of the public to take an active role in this sensitization effort. If you observe symptoms in your fields that match the description of leaf freckles and shiny varnish, it is vital that you do not move the infected plants, as this can inadvertently spread the bacteria to healthy areas. Instead, you should immediately contact your local (Ward or Sub-County) Agricultural Officer or the nearest KEPHIS Regional Office for assistance. When providing samples for testing, always use a brown paper bag rather than plastic to prevent the sample from rotting, ensuring that our laboratories can provide an accurate and timely diagnosis to protect the regional harvest.



Group photo, Bomet Forum.

STAFF UNDERGO TRAINING ON COMPLAINT HANDLING AND MANAGEMENT BY THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN




Every day, we receive feedback from the people we serve, questions, concerns, and at times, complaints. How we respond to these moments speaks directly to who we are as an institution, shaping our reputation, credibility, and overall impact. It is this very impact that KEPHIS sought to strengthen through a recent training facilitated by the Office of the Commission on Administrative Justice (CAJ).

The one-day hybrid training, held at the KEPHIS headquarters in Nairobi, brought together staff from both headquarters and regional offices.

The event was officially opened by Ms. Kellen Karuti, Deputy Director, Corporate Communications. In her remarks, she noted, “While we consistently receive good ratings

from the CAJ on how we handle complaints, this training is critical in refining how we manage and report feedback, with a view to enhancing stakeholder satisfaction and, ultimately, strengthening our brand image.”

The training went beyond compliance it focused on building a deeper understanding of complaints as a tool for institutional growth. Participants explored fundamental questions such as what constitutes a complaint, who can lodge one, and the key principles underpinning effective complaint management. Sessions also covered the structure and importance of a complaints handling system, practical considerations in designing internal processes, and best practices in responding to information requests.



Effective complaints handling is not just an administrative requirement, it is central to accountability and service delivery. When institutions respond promptly and fairly to complaints, they demonstrate transparency, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen public confidence. Complaints provide direct insight into gaps in service, offering organizations an opportunity to learn, adapt, and prevent recurring issues.

Established under Article 59(4) of the Constitution and the Commission on Administrative Justice Act, 2011, The Commission on Administrative Justice, also known as the Office of the Ombudsman plays a pivotal role to address maladministration across both national

and county governments. This includes investigating issues such as delays, abuse of power, unfair treatment, and discourtesy in public service. Additionally, the Commission oversees and enforces the implementation of the Access to Information Act, 2016, ensuring citizens' right to information is upheld.

By equipping staff with enhanced skills and knowledge on complaints resolutions, the training reinforces a culture where complaints are not seen as disruptions, but as valuable feedback. Ultimately, better handling and reporting of complaints lead to improved service delivery and more moments where citizens feel heard, respected, and served.

KEPHIS CONVENES CEO FORUM TO STRENGTHEN COMPLIANCE AHEAD OF EU AUDIT



The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, with support from TradeMark Africa, convened a high-level sensitization forum for CEOs of vegetable export companies at the Jacaranda Hotel, Westlands on 8th April 2026. The forum brought together key stakeholders across the horticulture value chain, including government agencies, industry associations, and exporters, to align on compliance requirements ahead of the upcoming DG-SANTE audit.

Dr. Florence Munguti, delivering remarks on behalf of the KEPHIS Managing Director, emphasized the importance of collective responsibility in maintaining Kenya's export standards. "Sustaining access to international markets demands strict adherence to standards, traceability, and responsible use of plant protection products. As KEPHIS, we remain committed to working closely with all stakeholders to safeguard the integrity and competitiveness of Kenya's fresh produce exports." Said Dr. Florence Munguti.

Discussions focused on critical areas such as Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) trends, export volume performance, traceability, registration of Food Business Operators (FBOs), and the use of registered, restricted, and banned Plant Protection Products (PPPs). Stakeholders also shared practical experiences and interventions aimed at enhancing compliance and safeguarding Kenya's export market.





The engagement provided a collaborative platform for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and strengthening partnerships to ensure continued access to international markets and uphold the quality and safety of Kenya's fresh produce.



KEPHIS PARTICIPATED IN THE KENYA-INDIA JOINT TRADE COMMITTEE (JTC) 27th -28th APRIL, 2026

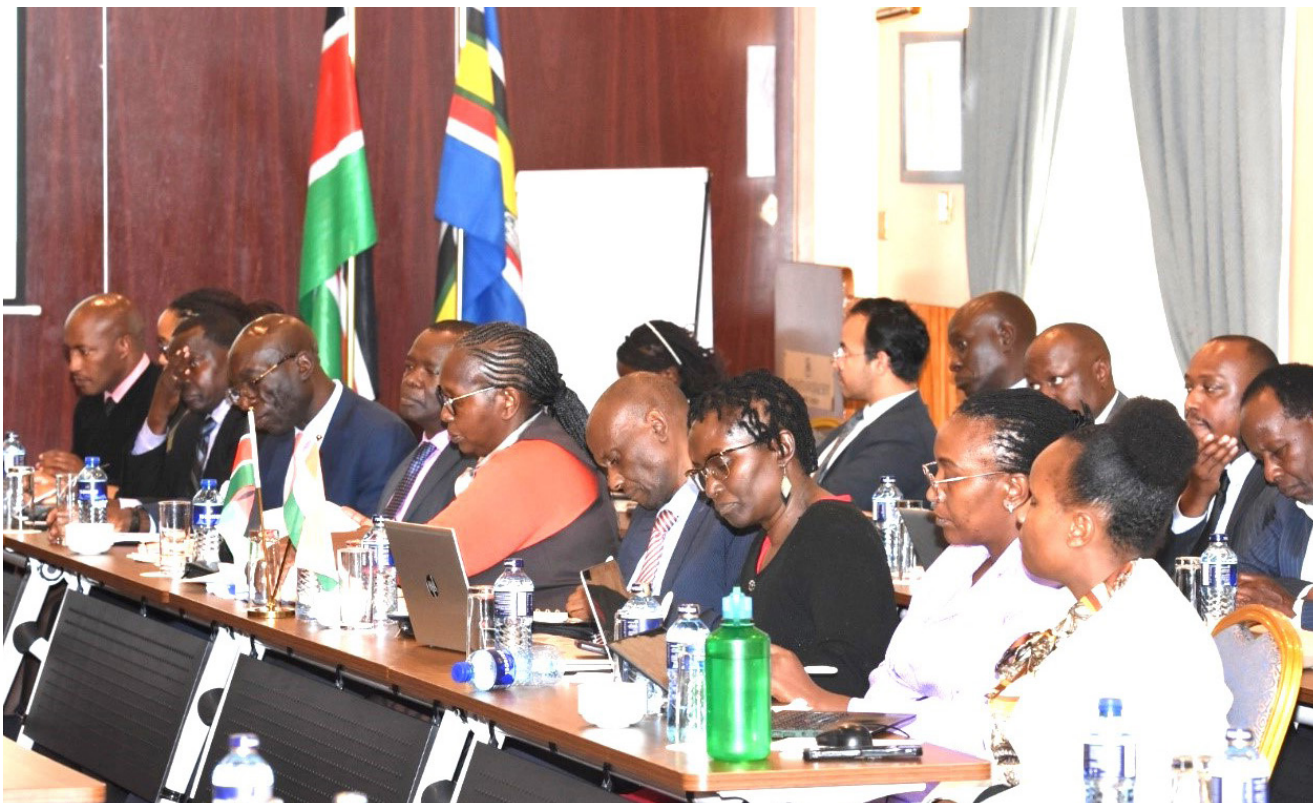


Kenya and India government officials met on 27th and 28th April for trade negotiations between the two countries. Kenya lead negotiator was P.S Regina Akoth Ombam the Principal Secretary State Department for Trade. KEPHIS was represented by Mrs. Phyllis Githaiga, Principal Inspector Standards, International Obligations and Trade.

Kenya and India maintain a strong and expanding trade relationship, with total bilateral merchandise trade estimated at approximately **USD 3.35 billion** in FY 2023/24. Kenya imported about **USD 3.17 billion** from India and exported roughly **USD 176 million**, reflecting a significant trade imbalance that Kenya seeks to progressively address through value addition and industrial cooperation.

India's key exports to Kenya include **petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, machinery, cereals, and plastics**, while Kenya's principal exports to India comprise **tea, coffee, soda ash, edible vegetables (notably pulses), and metal products**. The current structure reflects Kenya's dependence on industrial and manufactured imports, alongside its strengths in agricultural and mineral commodities.

Kenya aims to rebalance trade by expanding **value-added exports, attracting Indian investment and positioning Kenya as a regional production and distribution hub under AfCFTA, EAC, and COMESA frameworks**.



Mrs. Phyllis Githaiga discussed the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards SPS Protocol and agreement that sort to deepen cooperation across priority areas and market access for blueberries, raspberries, Macadamia nuts, Cashew nuts and various herbs among others. In her submission, she noted that though India gave market access for Avocados from Kenya, India imposed a 30% tariff which negated the gains and therefore Kenya not able to access the market. Other areas discussed included **Agricultural research, Intellectual property and livestock genetics**



KEPHIS SHOWCASES FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE AT CMA ANNUAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE & EXPO 2026



KEPHIS AT CMA EXPO 2026

The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) participated as an exhibitor at the Cereal Millers Association Annual Technical Conference and Expo 2026 held on 14th and 15th April 2026 at the Sarit Expo Centre in Westlands. The conference, organized by the Cereal Millers Association (CMA), was held under the theme “**Chagua Safe, Chagua Smart**,”. It brought together key stakeholders across the grain value chain, including millers, researchers, regulators, and industry players, providing a strategic platform for engagement, knowledge exchange, and collaboration

aimed at strengthening food safety and quality standards within the cereals sector.

During the expo, KEPHIS showcased its role in seed certification, laboratory services, and phytosanitary regulation; key functions that promote production of safe, high-quality cereals and cereal products. Through these services, KEPHIS ensures that seeds meet required standards, agricultural produce is free from harmful pests and diseases, and that both local and export markets are supplied with compliant products. KEPHIS also engaged directly with millers, researchers, and other stakeholders,



KEPHIS receives an appreciation award from CMA organizers



providing technical guidance on regulatory requirements and best practices across the cereals value chain. These interactions enhanced awareness on the importance of quality assurance, compliance, and the role of science-based regulation in promoting food safety and market access. The conference further offered an opportunity to strengthen partnerships between regulators and industry players, fostering a more coordinated approach to addressing emerging challenges in the cereals sector, including food safety risks, quality control, and trade requirements.

Through its participation, KEPHIS demonstrated its impact in enabling a safer and more competitive cereals industry by equipping stakeholders with practical knowledge and regulatory support that improves product quality, minimizes risks, and enhances consumer confidence. KEPHIS remains committed to working closely with partners across the value chain to ensure safe, high-quality agricultural produce while supporting Kenya's food security and export competitiveness.

KEPHIS AT BUKURA FIELD DAY



On 2nd April 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) Kisumu Regional Office participated in the Bukura Field Day held in Kakamega County, bringing together farmers, agricultural institutions, industry players, and other stakeholders to showcase innovations and share knowledge aimed at improving agricultural productivity.

The event provided an important platform for KEPHIS to engage directly with farmers and stakeholders on its mandate of assuring the quality of agricultural inputs and produce for a food-secure nation and safe trade. Through the KEPHIS exhibition

stand, participants received information on the agency's regulatory and technical services that support crop production, plant health, and market access.

During the field day, KEPHIS officers sensitized farmers on the importance of using certified seed and quality planting materials as a foundation for increased yields and resilient farming systems. Visitors were guided on how to identify genuine certified seed, the benefits of purchasing from licensed dealers, and the role of seed certification in maintaining varietal purity and crop performance.



The team also provided advisory services on plant health, including prevention and control of pests and diseases that affect key crops in the region. Farmers had the opportunity to seek expert guidance on crop inspection, disease symptoms, and practical measures to protect their farms and improve productivity.

In addition, KEPHIS highlighted its services in the accredited laboratories, where farmers and agribusiness stakeholders can submit soil, water for irrigation, seed, and fresh

produce samples for professional analysis. These services help farmers make informed decisions on soil fertility, input use, crop health, and produce quality.

Participation in the Bukura Field Day reaffirmed KEPHIS' commitment to working closely with farmers, county governments, and other partners to promote sustainable agriculture, strengthen food systems, and enhance access to quality agricultural inputs across the country.

KEPHIS CONDUCTS AVOCADO FARMER'S TRAINING ON SYSTEMS APPROACH AND BEYOND COMPLIANCE IN NAKURU COUNTY ON 14th TO 16th APRIL, 2026.



Approximately 150 Avocado farmers from Bahati, Njoro and Kuresoi North subcounties benefited from the 3-day capacity building program spearheaded by KEPHIS and Facilitated by Trade Mark Africa (TMA), in collaboration with the Nakuru County Government. The training, held from 14th to 16th April 2026, marked a major step towards strengthening the Avocado value chain, improving compliance with export quality standards, and empowering farmers with practical knowledge that directly enhances the quality and marketability of their produce.

The program included sessions on the role of KEPHIS in Phytosanitary Risk management and Trade Facilitation, identification and management of pests of concern to Avocado, Special export market requirements which included Systems approach and Beyond compliance, Avocado Nursery/Mother block establishment and certification, Avocado orchard, packhouse audits and exit point inspection for compliance which helped the farmers

gain the knowledge needed to remain competitive and enhance exports from Kenya. The program was delivered on site at the 3 sub counties ensuring wide reach and venues which were accessible and convenient for the farmers organized in groups.

The Forum brought together experienced KEPHIS officers, Trade Mark Africa, Nakuru county agriculture officers, and avocado farmers who were most eager to expand their knowledge on management of Avocado pests and meeting export market requirements. As part of the program, KEPHIS officers paid a courtesy call to Nakuru County Agriculture offices during which both institutions reaffirmed their commitment to continued collaboration, with Nakuru County staff expressing their appreciation for the strong partnership with KEPHIS and TradeMark Africa, noting that such joint efforts are key to enhancing farmer livelihoods and elevating Nakuru county position as one of Kenya's upcoming Avocado producing regions.



Throughout the three days, farmers were taken through packaged sessions designed to deepen their understanding of pest identification and management, particularly the control of FCM, fruit flies, scale insects and Persea mites, which remain a major challenge in avocado production. Officers took farmers through demonstrations, discussions on good agricultural practices, and interactive sessions that helped farmers appreciate the link between plant health, quality standards, and market competitiveness. Many participants welcomed the opportunity to ask questions, share experiences, and gain clarity on the steps required to comply with phytosanitary standards set by the export market.

The training also shed light on Export certification procedure and documentation required for export market compliance. Farmers were taken through export market requirements and post-harvest practices that ensure fruit quality is maintained from the farm to the point of export. By the end of the week, participants had gained clear understanding of the export market requirements, pest identification, monitoring and management and how to

comply for export Market access.

This initiative complements KEPHIS' broader mandate of safeguarding plant health and promoting safe trade, while ensuring farmers use certified planting materials to produce high-quality crops. As the program concluded, the feedback from farmers was positive. Many expressed confidence that the knowledge gained would improve their Avocado production practices and reduce post-harvest losses, ultimately increasing the quantity and quality of Avocados destined for both local and international markets.

The training served as a timely intervention even as the Avocado season just opened and as a strong foundation for continued growth in Nakuru's Avocado sector. With this successful training completed, KEPHIS and its collaborating partners have once again demonstrated their commitment to building a resilient agricultural sector, where farmers are informed, empowered, and well-prepared to tap into expanding market opportunities. This has been achieved through Timely capacity building forums.

KEPHIS SENSITIZE TOMATO VALUE CHAIN STAKEHOLDERS IN SIAYA



On 1st April 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) joined other key stakeholders in Siaya County for a consultative engagement which focused on strengthening the tomato value chain and enhancing market opportunities for farmers in the county. The forum brought together partners committed to improving productivity, quality standards, and access to both local and regional markets for tomato growers.

During the meeting, KEPHIS presented its role in supporting the growth and competitiveness of the tomato sector through regulatory and technical interventions. It was highlighted that KEPHIS will support farmers and agribusiness

players by certifying seedling nurseries to ensure the production and distribution of healthy, quality certified planting materials. Certified nurseries are critical in reducing the spread of pests and diseases while promoting strong crop establishment and higher yields.

The meeting also outlined the role of KEPHIS in facilitating trade through the issuance of phytosanitary certificates for tomato produce destined for export to neighbouring countries. These certificates are essential in confirming that consignments meet the required plant health standards/requirements of importing countries, thereby enabling smoother cross-border trade and expanding market access



for farmers and traders in Siaya County.

In addition, participants were informed of the advisory services offered by KEPHIS on plant health matters, including pest and disease management, crop health monitoring, and compliance with agricultural market standards. Such technical support is key to helping farmers address production challenges and maintain high-quality produce throughout the value chain.

KEPHIS further highlighted the availability of its state-of-the-art laboratories, where farmers can submit soil, water for

irrigation, and fresh produce samples for professional analysis. These services provide valuable insights on soil fertility, water suitability, residue levels, and crop health, enabling farmers to make informed management decisions that improve productivity and product quality.

Through continued collaboration with county governments and other stakeholders, KEPHIS remains committed to supporting agricultural value chains, promoting safe trade, and empowering farmers with the tools and knowledge needed for sustainable growth.

STRENGTHENING LABORATORY COMPETENCE AND QUALITY SYSTEMS AT KEPHIS



In April 2026, KEPHIS successfully conducted two specialized trainings at its Headquarters focusing on ISO/IEC 17025:2017 implementation and risk management in laboratory systems. The trainings brought together laboratory personnel from across the KEPHIS laboratories including those in the regions, enhancing institutional capacity in quality management, risk-based thinking, and compliance with international standards.

These engagements mark the beginning of a structured series of ISO/IEC 17025-based trainings, with upcoming modules focusing on:

- Method validation and measurement uncertainty
- Statement of conformity and decision rules

This progressive approach is aimed at strengthening laboratory accreditation

readiness, improving operational efficiency, and supporting Kenya's competitiveness in international agricultural trade.

KEPHIS acknowledges the valuable technical and financial support from the International Trade Centre through the UNIDO MARKUP II Project, which continues to play a key role in enhancing laboratory capacity.

Through these strategic partnerships and sustained investments in capacity development, KEPHIS is strengthening its role as a leading institution in plant health, food safety, and laboratory services in the region.

KEPHIS. ISO17025. LaboratoryQuality. Accreditation. FoodSafety. PlantHealth. CapacityBuilding. TradeFacilitation. UNIDO. ITC. KENAS.



KEPHIS CAPACITY-BUILD SEED GROWERS AND SEED MERCHANTS IN HOMA BAY



On 16th April 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) Kisumu Regional Office conducted a capacity-building training session for seed growers and seed merchants in Homa Bay County, aimed at strengthening compliance and improving the quality of seed production within the region.

The training brought together key stakeholders in the seed value chain and provided an opportunity for participants to gain a deeper understanding of the KEPHIS mandate in regulating and assuring the quality of agricultural inputs and produce for a food-secure Nation and safe trade. Officers highlighted the critical role of certified seed in enhancing agricultural productivity, safeguarding farmers' investments, and promoting sustainable food systems.

A major focus of the session was the seed certification process, where participants were taken through the requirements, procedures, and standards necessary for certification. The team explained

the importance of timely applications, adherence to prescribed regulations, and maintaining traceability throughout the seed production cycle.

Participants also received guidance on field inspection of seed crops, with emphasis on ensuring varietal purity, disease and pest management, isolation distances, and rouging of off-types. Best agronomic practices for seed crop management were discussed to help growers meet certification standards and improve overall seed quality.

The interactive session allowed participants to raise questions, share experiences, and discuss challenges affecting seed production and marketing in the county. Through such engagements, KEPHIS continues to support seed sector players with knowledge and technical guidance, ultimately contributing to increased access to quality seed and enhanced agricultural productivity across the country.

VALIDATION WORKSHOP ON THE POTENTIAL FOR BIO-INPUT VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN KENYA, WHICH TOOK PLACE ON 14th–15th APRIL 2026 AT SOSA COTTAGES, VIHIGA COUNTY



The Validation Workshop on the Potential for Bio-Input Value Chain Development in Western Kenya was held on 14th–15th April 2026 at Sosa Cottages in Vihiga County. It brought together key stakeholders from across the agricultural sector to examine how locally available organic resources can support the development of sustainable bio-inputs.

Discussions centered on abundant regional resources, including sugarcane by-products, rice husks, coffee and tea residues, maize and other crop waste, as well as urban organic waste. These materials were identified as critical building blocks for bio-input value chains that can enhance soil health, restore fertility, and promote sustainable agricultural productivity.

Participants assessed existing bio-

input value chains, identifying both opportunities and challenges. While there is strong potential driven by resource availability and growing demand for sustainable solutions, constraints such as limited farmer awareness, regulatory hurdles, quality assurance gaps, and underdeveloped markets were highlighted as key barriers.

The workshop also emphasized the importance of collaboration and regulatory support, with participation from the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), which oversees the registration of bio-fertilizers. Stakeholders agreed on the need for strengthened research, policy engagement, and market development to scale bio-input solutions across Western Kenya.

KEPHIS NAKURU STAFF ENGAGE IN TREE PLANTING EXERCISE TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



On 20th April 2026, the KEPHIS Nakuru Regional office staff participated in a tree planting initiative aimed at promoting environmental conservation and sustainability. The activity aligns with KEPHIS mandate of safeguarding plant health and supporting sustainable agriculture, while recognizing the vital role of trees in improving soil health, conserving biodiversity and enhancing climate stability.



The activity was spearheaded by the Deputy Director, Mr. Charles Onyango and the farm manager Mr. John Komu, who

steered the team through the tree planting exercise.

Practical demonstrations were conducted on proper tree planting techniques, including site preparation, correct spacing and appropriate handling and placement of the seedling to ensure optimal establishment and growth. This includes planting hole dimensions, soil fertility/ nutrition, potting soil handling, removal of the potting bag, trimming & trailing of excess roots, seedling placement, backfilling and firm soil covering to support root establishment and stability, reinforcing the importance of proper planting practices in achieving long-term environmental benefits.

The staff presented a vibrant and unified presence throughout the activity, with each member of staff actively participating during the exercise. A total of 1000 *Casuarina* spp seedlings were planted during this occasion.



KEPHIS Staff participating in tree planting

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STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE



FAO and KEPHIS representatives pose for a photo.

On 15th April 2026, the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) hosted a delegation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to discuss progress and strategic alignment of the Financing Agrochemical Reduction and Management FARM Project, supported by the Global Environment Facility.

The meeting focused on enhancing collaboration in reducing harmful agrochemical use, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and strengthening

regulatory and laboratory systems to support food safety and environmental protection in Kenya.

The Ag. Director, Laboratory Services Dr. Florence Munguti, representing the Managing Director, reaffirmed KEPHIS' commitment to supporting the successful implementation of the project and advancing science-based solutions for safer agriculture. Together, we are building stronger partnerships for a safer, healthier, and more sustainable agricultural future.



KEPHIS PLANT HEALTH CLINICS STRENGTHEN FARMER SUPPORT AT THE GRASSROOTS



KEPHIS Plant Doctors explaining the management & control of sweet potato weevil to the farmer at Kapkwen market in Bomet County.

Recent field activities conducted in Bomet County and Nakuru County on 24th and 31st March 2026 highlighted the impact of Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) Plant Health Clinics (PHCs) in addressing crop health challenges at the grassroots level. This is inline with its mandate of safeguarding plant health.

The Plant Health clinics served as a frontline diagnostic and advisory platform, providing farmers with timely expert guidance on crop pests, diseases, and overall plant health. Through these engagements, farmers were sensitized on the importance of using certified planting materials and guided on accessing KEPHIS laboratory

services such as soil and water analysis, key components in sustaining productivity and maintaining soil health.

In Bomet, a key maize and Irish potato growing region, farmers received targeted support on the management of major crop diseases including late and early blight, blackleg, soft rot, and maize lethal necrosis disease (MLND). Whereas, in Nakuru, the clinics addressed a range of challenges such as nutrient deficiencies in beans, bacterial wilt in tomatoes, and blossom end rot, with recommendations focusing on the use of certified seeds and appropriate fertilizer application.



KEPHIS plant Doctor explaining the management & control of Bacterial wilt of tomatoes to the farmers at Bahati in Nakuru County.

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In addition, the clinics also promoted improved farming practices through continuous engagement. Emphasis was placed on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), encouraging the use of preventive, biological, and cultural control methods as sustainable alternatives to excessive chemical use.

KEPHIS continues to play a critical role in safeguarding farmers against counterfeit

seeds, an issue frequently raised during the clinics, where awareness creation and regulatory oversight are strengthened to equip farmers with the knowledge needed for informed decision-making, ultimately resulting in improved yields, reduced losses, and enhanced food safety.

DEPARTMENTAL SPOTLIGHT : PLANT VARIETY TESTING AND PROTECTION (PVT&P) DEPARTMENT



Mr. Jacob K. Cheptaiwa

Deputy Director in charge of Plant Variety Testing and Protection (PVT&P) Department.

1. Kindly introduce yourself


My name is Mr. Jacob K. Cheptaiwa, the Deputy Director in charge of Plant Variety Testing and Protection (PVT&P) department. My management roles include Providing oversight and coordination of the department: - Planning, coordinating, managing and directing nationwide plant variety testing, administering plant breeder's rights and development of variety certification descriptors. While operational roles include Oversee development of plant variety testing and protection guidelines and strategies; Ensure Implementation and compliance with plant variety testing and protection policies, guidelines and strategies; Coordinate development of plant variety testing and protection plans, systems and procedures and coordinate implementation; Providing technical leadership and guidance on matters pertaining to plant variety testing and protection; Managing human, financial and material resources assigned to the departments; Maintaining necessary

data bases and registers for plant variety testing and protection; Identifying and engaging collaborating partners; Promoting departments accountability and Fostering a corporate culture that promotes ethical practices and good corporate citizenship in the Department.

2. What is the mandate of the Plant Variety Testing & Protection Office (PVT&P), and why is it important to Kenya's agricultural sector?

Plant Variety Testing & Protection (PVT&P) Office is responsible for implementing plant variety protection laws under the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (Cap 326) and administering Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) to grant legal protection to developers of new plant varieties. It maintains the official register of protected varieties and oversees testing processes— Distinctness, Uniformity, and Stability (DUS) and National Performance Trials (NPTs) to ensure new varieties meet required standards before Registration and Listing. Additionally, the office regulates the release and registration/ Listing of new plant varieties for commercial use, safeguarding both breeders' rights and the quality of agricultural technologies and innovations in Kenya.

PVT&P system plays a vital role in Kenya's agricultural sector by encouraging innovation through intellectual property rights that motivate breeders to develop improved crop varieties with traits that meet farmer, consumer, market, diversity and environmental needs like higher yields, quality attributes, water efficient, drought tolerance, and disease resistance. Plant



variety testing and confirmation of variety attributes gives assurance and guide farmers and users before they embark on choosing, adopting for cultivation, varieties meeting their food, feed, aesthetic, environment and industrial needs. It ensures quality and reliability of seeds by subjecting new varieties to rigorous testing, protecting farmers from substandard inputs. By promoting the adoption of high-performing and resilient crops, it strengthens food security in the face of climate challenges and rising demand. The system also supports regulation and fair trade by ensuring compliance with national and international standards, while protecting breeders' rights, which in turn attracts private sector investment and enhances the competitiveness and sustainability of the seed industry.

3. What are the key services provided by PVP, and who are your primary stakeholders?


PVP office provides key services that support the development and regulation of Testing, Recognition, Naming and Protection of new plant varieties in Kenya. **It grants Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR)**, giving breeders legal control over the commercialization of their technologies and innovations, and **conducts or coordinates Distinctness, Uniformity, and Stability (DUS) and National Performance Trials (NPTs)** to ensure new varieties meet required standards before Recognition, Naming and Registration. The office also **facilitates the, naming, registration and official release of new varieties for commercialization, maintains an up-to-date register of registered and protected varieties** to ensure, compliance, control, accountability,

transparency, and offers advisory and technical support to breeders on application procedures and compliance. Additionally, **it enforces policies and regulations under the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (Cap 326)**, ensuring adherence to both national and international standards.

The primary stakeholders of the Plant Variety Testing & Protection (PVT&P) system include **farmers doing their own breeding and selection, Kenyan and International plant breeders** from both public and private institutions such as universities and research organizations, as well as **seed companies** who seek variety testing and legal protection services for new varieties. Seed companies and producers rely on PVT&P for licensing and commercialization, while farmers benefit as end users through access to high-quality, diverse seeds. Research institutions and universities depend on the system to safeguard their innovations and technologies, and **government and regulatory bodies** collaborate with PVT&P on policy implementation and enforcement. Additionally, the Department contributes in setting global standards by contributing in Technical working groups of **international organizations** such as the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV).

4. How does plant variety protection contribute to agricultural productivity, innovation, and food security in Kenya?

PVT&P system plays a central role in strengthening Kenya's agriculture by promoting innovation, productivity, food security, diversity and environmental sustainability. By ensuring that only high-



performing, high quality, climate resilient crop varieties are released, it helps farmers achieve higher yields, quality and more reliable harvests. Through the protection of breeders' rights, PVT&P encourages continuous research and investment in developing improved varieties suited to farmer, consumer, market and changing local conditions. It enhances food security by supporting the availability of climate-resilient and disease-tolerant varieties, improves seed quality and farmer confidence, and fosters a competitive agricultural sector.

5. What are some of the key achievements or milestones the PVT&P has realized in recent years?


Plant Variety Testing & Protection (PVT&P) in Kenya has achieved notable progress in recent years, marked by a steady increase in PBR applications and protected varieties, signaling growing confidence from both local and international breeders. Also, the system has facilitated release of climate-resilient varieties enhancing sustainable food security:-On average, more than half of yearly variety releases are climate smart; supported manufacturing through release of industrial crop varieties. Additional milestones include enhanced stakeholder capacity, adoption of automated online Seed Certification & PVP (SC&PVP) system to improve efficiency and accessibility. PVT&P has also supported sectors like **floriculture**, where protected varieties (e.g., roses) dominate exports..

6. How does PVT&P work with breeders, researchers, and institutions to promote uptake of plant breeders' rights?

PVT&P department plays an active, collaborative role in supporting breeders, researchers, and institutions to make Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) practical and widely adopted. It provides technical guidance throughout the application process, collaborates with universities and research organizations in variety testing and trials, and conducts capacity-building programs to improve understanding and compliance. Additionally, we built trust and enhance service uptake through Synergistic strategies with stakeholders including joint development and review of test guidelines, experience sharing, sharing of testing facilities, identification of similar varieties, joint forums on Plant Variety Testing and Protection. Through partnerships with the relevant government institutions, research bodies, regional and international organizations to reduce information gaps on benefits of uptake of plant breeders' rights.

7. What steps has the department taken to improve access to plant variety testing protection services and streamline processes?

The department has made significant improvements to make its services more accessible, efficient, and user-friendly for breeders, researchers, and seed companies. These include the adoption of the automated online Seed Certification & PVP (SC&PVP) system, which allows applicants to submit applications, upload documents, make payments and track the progress of Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR), DUS and NPT testing, and variety registration digitally. Applications for PBR are accepted throughout the year, supported by clearly defined submission timelines for DUS



testing and National Performance Trials (NPT), enabling better planning and reducing delays. In some cases, DUS and NPT processes are conducted concurrently to speed up variety approval, while national test guidelines have been developed for crops lacking protocols so as to simplify processes for both local and international applicants.

8. How does PVT&P ensure compliance with national and international plant variety Testing and protection standards?

PVP ensures compliance with national laws and international standards. It operates under the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (Cap 326), which guides how Plant Breeders' Rights are granted, how varieties are tested and released, and how violations are handled. PVP also follows international standards through the use of UPOV test guidelines to ensure consistency and global recognition. Compliance is further ensured through strict testing (DUS and NPTs, proper registration and record-keeping. In addition, training, awareness programs, and collaboration with local and international partners help staff and stakeholders understand and follow the rules, making the systems reliable and well-regulated.

9. How does your department support the broader mandate of the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)?


The Plant Variety Protection (PVT&P) department supports the broader mandate of KEPHIS by strengthening General Regulatory compliance, availing varieties with attribute meeting consumer needs, enhancing market access, superior high yielding and resilient varieties, enhancing

agricultural productivity, competitiveness, food security and sustainable agro-environment. It ensures that only distinct, superior and adaptable varieties are released into the market, reinforcing seed certification systems and preventing the spread of substandard planting materials. By granting Plant Breeders' Rights, it promotes research and development, and supports a steady flow of improved and climate-resilient crop varieties. PVP also strengthens plant health by encouraging pest and disease-resistant crops, while operationalizing legal frameworks such as the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act (CAP 326) through registration, enforcement, and compliance systems. In addition, it facilitates trade by aligning with international standards like those of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV). Through stakeholder engagement, and training, PVT&P builds confidence and collaboration, ultimately helping KEPHIS achieve its mandate of safeguarding plant health and promoting sustainable agricultural development in Kenya.

10. What is the future outlook for PVT&P, and what innovations or improvements can stakeholders expect?

The department will continue improving its systems and services to respond more and continuously and effectively address plant variety needs of our farmers, consumers, market access, Manufacturing, diversity and environmental sustainability

What are the main challenges facing the department, and how are you addressing them?

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- a)** The main challenge facing the Plant Variety Testing & Protection (PVT&P) system include climate change and emerging pests and diseases, which derails evaluation and ultimately delaying the approval of new, resilient crop varieties.
- b)** Another challenge is the low uptake of Plant Breeders' Rights among local breeders due to limited awareness and understanding.
- i. The climate change challenges can be mitigated by enhancing forecasting systems to enable predict risks and planning for their management
 - ii. Additionally, enhancing uptake could be increased by expanding and intensifying awareness forums, integrating PVT&P education into academic curricula, to increase local participation.

11. What drives your passion for this work, and what keeps you motivated?

This is my deep commitment to identifying, registering and protecting superior quality varieties that solves farmer problems, consumer preferences, market requirements, industrial raw material specifications, food and nutrition security and climate change requirements. When

I see varieties that have gone through the PVT&P system creating impact in farming communities in the Country and beyond, supporting innovation by encouraging breeders develop better crop varieties that improve yields, quality, tolerate pests and diseases, and adapt to climate change is quite satisfying. Seeing new varieties successfully reach farmers, improve harvests, expand manufacturing, enhance export, and uplift their livelihoods is highly motivating!

12. What message would you like to share with plant breeders, farmers, and other stakeholders?

Plant breeders, farmers, and other stakeholders are encouraged to actively engage with the Plant Variety Testing & Protection (PVT&P) system to support Kenya's agricultural growth. Breeders should protect their innovations through Plant Breeders' Rights, while farmers are advised to use certified, improved seeds to boost productivity and resilience. Researchers, seed companies, and institutions should collaborate with KEPHIS to ensure compliance and promote innovation. Overall, cooperation and trust in the PVT&P system will help strengthen agriculture, improve food security, enhance sustainable agro- environment and support national development.

**BREEDERS/ APPLICANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATE
IN VARIETY EVALUATION VISITS 26th -29th JANUARY 2026 TO
ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND INCLUSIVI-
TY IN VARIETY TESTING PROCESSES**



KEPHIS through the Plant Variety Testing and Protection department conducted Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) evaluation visit for the 2025 season two crops. The objectives of the DUS evaluation visit were; to give stakeholders (Breeders) the opportunity to appreciate the variety testing process, to evaluate the management of the trials, to evaluate the suitability of comparative varieties that have been used to check their candidate varieties, and to check the general performance of their varieties thereby enhancing benefits

such as improved, evidence-based decision-making, enhanced accountability, and the identification of risks, and opportunities for improvement. .

The exercise covered KEPHIS four regions; Kisumu, Nakuru, Embu and Nairobi. The evaluation exercise covered trials with maize (Medium kit and transitional kit), finger millet, cassava, Jute mallow, tomato, wheat, grain triticale, common bean, sorghum and Rhodes grass.



Dus Jute Mallow (Mrenda) at Kephis Lanet



Dus Sorghum Evaluation at Kalro Kiboko

With the climate change and other challenges being witnessed in the Agricultural sector, it is becoming increasingly necessary to facilitate production of superior crop varieties that can withstand these challenges. KEPHIS is mandated to facilitate this process through carrying out two key variety tests; National Performance Trials (NPT) test and Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) test. NPT test is aimed at ascertaining value for cultivation (VCU) of crop varieties while DUS is intended to assess whether a

variety is distinct from the existing varieties, uniform in its characteristics and stable over the years of regeneration. The end result of a DUS test is giving a variety an identity through evaluation of its characters and generation of a variety descriptor. A variety that has passed the two tests is released and entered into the National Crop Variety List thereby enhancing its recognition, identity, protection and quantification of genetic potential available to farmers for commercialization or for use by consumers and other stakeholders.



Stakeholders in one of the Cassava DUS site at Kibos Kisumu Regional Office



Maize DUS trials at Kiboko site Nairobi Regional Office




DUS grain triticale site at KEPHIS Lanet



DUS wheat site at KEPHIS Lanet





Among the crops evaluated are climate smart crops (Finger millet, cassava sorghum, common bean and maize transitional kit) and Traditional High Value crop [Jute mallow Mrenda]. If released, these crop varieties will add to the pool of climates smart varieties already released and commercialized. This will widen the scope of these climate smart varieties that farmers can adopt to help mitigating the effects of climate change. This will go a long way in addressing food and nutrition security in line with the government Bottom Up Economic Transformation Agenda.

The evaluation exercise also covered the high value crops (HVCs)- Jute mallow Mrenda and tomato crops). These are very important crops because they help to transform agriculture from a subsistence venture to a profitable and market-oriented venture. Besides, they offer significantly higher income per unit of land, thus helping in maximizing the little space due to the challenge of decreasing land size per household. This results in job creation, raising household income and livelihoods especially in the rural areas and increased export earnings.

The evaluation exercise was very successful. The six objectives were effectively

achieved. The stakeholders applauded KEPHIS for the excellent work the Service is doing in facilitating smooth testing and release of crop varieties. KEPHIS, through the Deputy Director Plant Variety Testing and Protection Mr Jacob Cheptaiwa thanked breeders for their collaboration and co-operation that has made the process of variety testing and protection very smooth. Further, KEPHIS emphasized her commitment and dedication to serve all the stake holders with utmost professionalism and high level of integrity in line with her core values.

Participants in the DUS evaluation visit exercise, led by the Deputy Director Plant Variety Testing and Protection Mr. Jacob Cheptaiwa and Deborah Shituvi who is the Deputy Director Kisumu region paid a courtesy call to the Kenya Sugar Research and Training Institute (KESRETI) Kibos. They were welcomed by Dr. Eveline Cheramgoi who is the acting Deputy CEO of the institute, accompanied by Dr. Jacob Omollo (Acting Head of Crop Improvement and Management Directorate) and Edwin Shikanda (Acting Head of Plant Breeding and Biotechnology Division)

MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY (MKU) ENGAGEMENT WITH KEPHIS



On 20th April 2026, a strategic and forward-looking engagement was held between Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) and the management of Mount Kenya University (MKU), aimed at exploring and strengthening areas of mutual collaboration in advancing agricultural excellence and capacity building.

The meeting focused on key partnership areas designed to bridge the gap between academic training and industry practice. Among the core areas discussed was the provision of student attachment opportunities, which will equip learners with hands-on experience and real-world exposure in plant health, seed certification, and regulatory processes

The deliberations also emphasized the

development and enhancement of practical courses in Phytosanitary and seed science. This will ensure that students not only gain theoretical knowledge but also acquire the technical competencies necessary to support plant health management, seed quality assurance, and overall food security.

Additionally, both institutions explored avenues for joint research, recognizing the importance of innovation and evidence-based solutions in addressing challenges facing agriculture today.

This engagement marks a significant step towards building strong institutional partnerships that will not only benefit students and researchers but also contribute to a more resilient, productive, and sustainable agricultural sector.

KEPHIS SACCO



Joining a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO) has become an increasingly popular financial choice, especially in times where access to traditional banking services may be limited or expensive. SACCOs are member-owned financial institutions that prioritize the economic welfare of their members, making them a powerful tool for financial growth and stability.

KEPHIS as a Corporation has got several welfare associations, most of which are managed at respective regional offices. However, there is one SACCO which was registered as a Savings and Credit Cooperative Limited on 21st April, 2016 with Registration No. CS/ 19963. KEPHS SACCO is guided by the Cooperative Societies Act and Sacco By-laws. The requirements for membership is Kes. 1,000 which is a one-off joining fee, then a member is required to hold at least 250 shares of Kes. 20 each. The Sacco held its 8th Annual General Meeting

on Tuesday 14th April, 2026 where dividends and rebates were declared at 9% and 8% on share capital and member savings respectively.



MEMBER BENEFITS

One of the most significant benefits of joining KEPHIS SACCO is access to affordable credit. Unlike commercial banks that often impose high interest rates and strict lending conditions, the SACCO typically offer loans at lower interest rates with more flexible terms. Lending is at three times of a members savings. Because members pool their savings, they can borrow against their contributions, without the need for heavy collateral. This makes it especially valuable for individuals who may struggle to secure loans elsewhere.

Another advantage is the culture of saving that SACCOs generally promote. Members are encouraged to make regular contributions, which not only builds financial discipline but also creates a safety net for future needs. Over time, these savings can grow into substantial amounts, helping members meet personal goals such as education, home ownership, or business investment.

KEPHIS SACCO also provide a sense of ownership and participation. Every member has a say in how it is run, typically through voting rights and participation in annual general meetings. This democratic structure ensures transparency and accountability, as leaders are elected from within the membership. It also fosters a strong sense of community and trust among members.

In addition, members often benefit from dividends and interest on their savings. Since SACCOs are not profit-driven in the same way as commercial banks, any surplus generated is distributed back to members. This means that the more active and committed a member is, the greater their potential returns.



LEADERSHIP

KEPHIS SACCO has a structured leadership led by the Executive Committee, Credit Committee, Education Committee and Supervisory Committee – which oversees the SACCO's operations. Below are the current office holders for the SACCO;

1. **Stephen I. Esharanda** – Chairman
2. **Precious Kariuki** – Vice Chairperson & Chairperson, Education Committee
3. **Naomy Macharia** – Honorary Secretary
4. **Samuel Kimani** – Treasurer
5. **Moses Kichwen** – Chairman, Credit Committee
6. **Yvonne Kibe** – Member, Credit Committee
7. **David Odhiambo** – Secretary, Credit Committee & Member, Education Committee
8. **Kennedy Wanyeki** – Member, Education Committee
9. **Edwin Kemboi** – Chairman, Supervisory Committee
10. **Ruth Sila** – Member, Supervisory Committee
11. **Pamela Ogari** – Member, Supervisory Committee.

PICTORIAL

Highlights of the Performance Contract Signing



Highlights from the CEO Forum to Strengthen Compliance Ahead of EU Audit





Highlights of the Tree Planting Activities





KENYA PLANT HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICE (KEPHIS)
NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

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