KENYA PLANT HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICE (KEPHIS)

NEWSLETTER

MAY - 2026

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Message from the Managing Director

Dear Stakeholders,

Welcome to this edition of the KEPHIS Newsletter.

As we continue to deliver on our mandate of safeguarding plant health, assuring the quality of agricultural inputs and produce, and facilitating safe trade, I am pleased to share key milestones achieved during the month under review.

This period has been marked by significant progress in strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing service delivery, and deepening stakeholder engagement. Among the notable achievements was the launch of a new fleet of operational vehicles that will enhance our field surveillance, inspection, certification, and monitoring activities across the country. This investment reflects our commitment to efficient service delivery and improved responsiveness to the needs of our stakeholders.

We also strengthened regional and international collaboration through engagements with strategic partners, including the Namibian Agronomic Board and participants from several African countries undertaking capacity-building programmes through our Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence (COPE). These partnerships continue to position KEPHIS

as a regional leader in phytosanitary capacity development and regulatory excellence.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, the Service undertook a Mid-Term Review of the KEPHIS Strategic Plan 2023–2027. The review provided an opportunity to assess progress, identify emerging priorities and align our interventions with the evolving needs of Kenya's agricultural sector.

During the month, KEPHIS joined the global community in commemorating the International Day of Plant Health under the theme ***"Plant Biosecurity for Food Security and Nutrition."*** Through plant health clinics, exporter sensitization forums, tree-planting initiatives and farmer outreach activities, we reinforced the critical role that plant health plays in protecting livelihoods, enhancing food security and supporting sustainable trade.

We also continued to strengthen seed quality assurance, pest surveillance, laboratory diagnostics, and stakeholder capacity-building initiatives across the country. These efforts are critical in ensuring that farmers access quality planting materials while safeguarding agricultural productivity and market access.

As we move forward, we remain committed to innovation, collaboration, operational excellence and responsive service delivery.

I thank our Board of Directors, staff, stakeholders and partners for their continued support and partnership in advancing Kenya's agricultural transformation agenda.

Prof. Theophilus Mutui, PhD.

Managing Director,

Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)

The Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the May 2026 edition of the KEPHIS Newsletter.

This edition highlights the critical role of plant health in safeguarding food security, facilitating safe trade and protecting agricultural productivity. As the world marked the International Day of Plant Health under the theme Plant Biosecurity for Food Security and Nutrition, KEPHIS continued to demonstrate why plant biosecurity remains the first line of defence against pests and diseases that threaten crops, livelihoods and market access.

Inside this issue, we spotlight efforts to strengthen pest surveillance, diagnostics and response systems, including regional training on the detection and identification of Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN), one of the most destructive pests affecting potato production. We also feature articles on invasive pest surveillance in nurseries and mother-blocks, management of Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease (MLND), nursery certification and the Pest Insight Report, all of which demonstrate KEPHIS' commitment to protecting Kenya's plant resources and agricultural productivity.

We also bring you highlights of key operational activities and engagements undertaken across the Service, showcasing KEPHIS' ongoing efforts to enhance service delivery, strengthen collaborations and support its mandate.

We hope you enjoy this edition and gain a deeper appreciation of the work being undertaken every day towards a food secure nation and safe trade.

To keep up with our daily activities and updates, follow us on our social media platforms:

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Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service

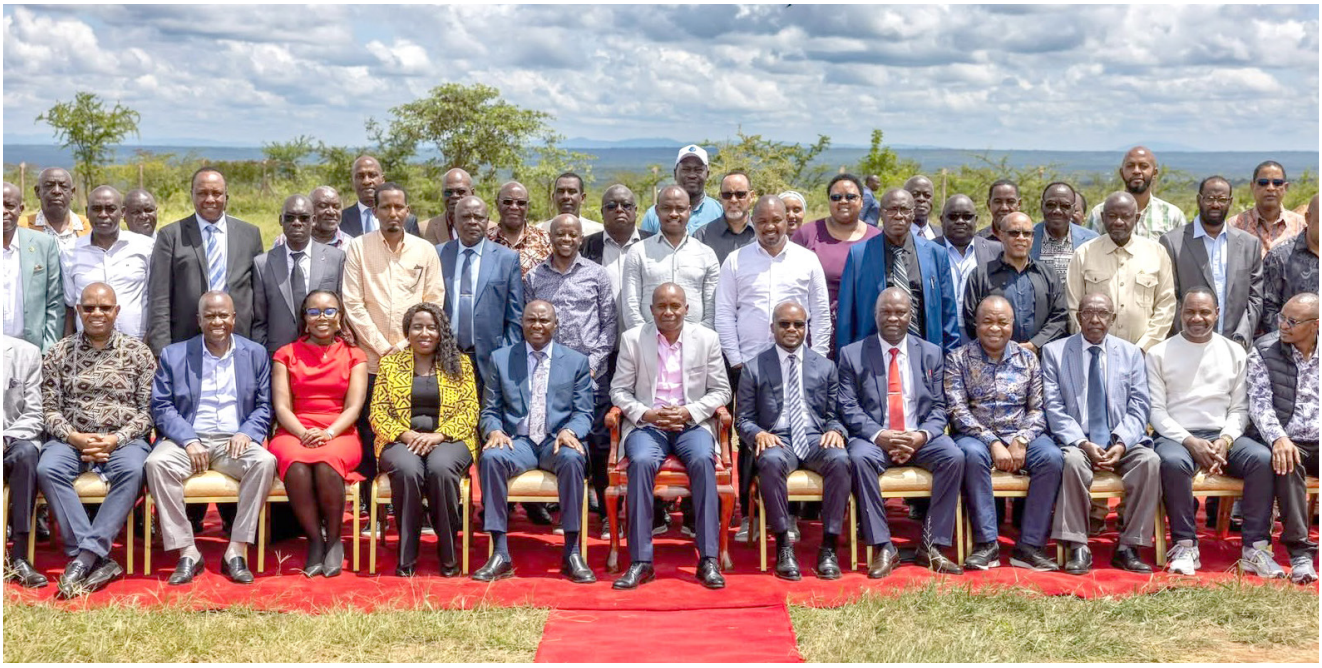
X & YouTube: @KephisKe

Happy Reading!

Kellen Karuti

Deputy Director, Corporate Communications - KEPHIS

KEPHIS PARTICIPATION IN THE 3rd ANNUAL REGULATORY AUTHORITIES AND AGENCIES (RAA) CONFERENCE AT THE SOUTH EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY (SEKU) CAMPUS, KITUI



The 3rd Annual Regulatory Authorities and Agencies (RAA) conference was held at SEKU, Kitui campus from 4th to 8th May 2026, bringing together 129 Regulatory agencies and Authorities under 40 State Departments. The conference was officially graced by Deputy President H.E. Prof. Kithure Kindiki and hosted by the Head of Public Service, Hon Felix Kosgei.

KEPHIS was represented at the conference by Board Chairperson Hon. Joseph M'eruaki, Board Member Prof. Albert Kimutai, Managing Director Prof. Theophilus M. Mutui, and several Directors.

Discussions at the event highlighted persistent challenges facing regulatory agencies, including funding constraints, staffing shortages, manual processes, policy uncertainty, obsolete legal frameworks, and mandate overlaps. Recognition and awards among agencies still remain low, with only 31.5% of agencies being acknowledged in the current financial year. Speakers at the conference recommended zero tolerance for regulatory infractions.

The central theme for the conference was the need for ***"citizen-centered regulation"***. Prof. Makau Mutua, a key note speaker during the conference urged agencies to decolonize their mindsets, move away from colonial-era command-and-control approaches, and treat citizens as sovereign rather than subjects, in line with the 2010 Constitution.

Another dominant focus was the shift by regulatory agencies and authorities from activity-based reporting to measurable outcomes and impact. The work of government agencies would only be of importance if it made a difference and the outcomes experienced by the Citizenry. Delegates strongly advocated adopting Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning (MEAL) frameworks and developing shared indices covering service delivery, efficiency, and prevention effectiveness.

The conference also emphasized collaboration to reduce fragmentation, enhancement of mandate clarity, technology adoption, and lowering the cost of doing business. RAAs were reminded that they represent the most visible face of government and must endeavor to build public trust through fair and effective regulation.

The Head of Public Service (HoPS), Hon, Felix Kosgei emphasized RAAs to embed MEAL in institutional performance frameworks, develop a common impact measurement framework for all RAAs, broaden assessment scopes to prioritize effectiveness and mandate delivery and to focus on tangible service delivery to citizens.

The conference outcome charts a clear direction for Regulatory agencies and authorities to transition from bureaucratic controllers to enablers of development by demonstrating measurable impact, reducing overlaps, and placing citizens at the center of their operations. KEPHIS as a key player in the regulatory space commits to integrate MEAL into existing systems, contribute to the proposed common indices, and strengthen stakeholder perception tracking. The KEPHIS Board and Management shall ensure these commitments are realized in the foreseeable future and before the next 4th RAA conference.

TRANSFORMING KENYA'S LIVESTOCK SECTOR: KENYA GAINS PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FOR NEW PASTURE SEED VARIETIES FOR IMPROVED ANIMAL NUTRITION

At the heart of Kenya's livestock transformation agenda is a quiet but powerful enabler, seed systems that determine what animals eat, how they grow, and ultimately how productive the sector becomes. Building on this foundation, a high-level Kenyan delegation of twenty-two (22) officials from both the public and private sectors, led by the Principal Secretary for Livestock Development, Hon. Jonathan Mueke,CBS undertook a Strategic Livestock Trade Mission to Brazil, with the Managing Director Prof. Theophilus M. Mutui representing KEPHIS.

The Livestock Trade Mission, organized by the Brazilian Zebu Breeders Association (ABCZ), covered technical visits across São Paulo and Minas Gerais States in Brazil and attendance at the 91st Edition of Expo Zebu and the 31st Edition of AgriShow.

The primary objective of the Livestock Trade Mission was to foster business opportunities and strengthen commercial linkages with Brazilian producers and companies, while providing participants with direct exposure to key Brazilian institutions, production systems, and private sector stakeholders in the livestock and agribusiness sectors.

Facilitated by the Embassy of the Republic of Kenya in Brasilia, the mission also advanced ongoing efforts to establish the Kenya-Brazil Joint Livestock Project, focused on four thematic areas: genetics improvement, pasture seeds and animal nutrition, capacity building and training, and export trade with technology transfer.

Key highlights of the mission experience included Biotechnology Leadership: Visits to Zebu embryo, Alta Genetics, Genex, and Pecplan ABS illustrated Brazil's export-standard quality control. Industry-Academic Collaboration: FAZU and ESALQ were identified as pivotal in applied research bridging laboratories and farm-level technologies. Technological Convergence: Agrishow showcased machinery integrated with digital monitoring tools, AI-based production analysis, and precision feeding systems.

The Way Forward includes ABCZ's planned Business Mission to Kenya in June 2026 to conduct production diagnostics, SWOT analysis, capacity building workshops on genetics, and B2B meetings between Kenyan and Brazilian firms. In addition, ABCZ expressed commitment to establish a Modern Demonstration Farm in Kenya as a technology testing and dissemination hub. Kenya will fast-track identification of land for the proposed facility and develop an investment framework, while also prioritizing capacity building programmes for breeders and extension officers using Brazilian expertise and initiating regulatory alignment on genetics import protocols for semen, embryos, and pasture seeds.

The mission successfully exposed the Kenyan delegation to Brazil's advanced livestock systems and secured concrete commitments for technology transfer. Delegates gained practical insights into sustainable cattle breeding, new varieties of pasture seeds and animal nutrition, animal health, and biotechnological advancements, as well as valuable contacts to strengthen future international cooperation.

Brazil's model combines environmental adaptation, animal welfare, and productivity, serving as a benchmark for developing efficient, sustainable livestock systems globally.

KEPHIS LAUNCHES MODERN VEHICLE FLEET FOR ENHANCED FIELD SURVEILLANCE

The Board of directors and Management pose for a group photo during the flagging of ceremony

A 30th April 2026, marked a significant milestone for the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) as the Board, led by Board Chairman Hon. Joseph M'eruaki, alongside the management team, officially flagged off a new fleet of KEPHIS vehicles at the headquarters in Karen. The acquisition and deployment of the vehicles represent a major boost to the institution's operational capacity and reaffirm KEPHIS' continued commitment to efficient and responsive service delivery across the country. The fleet is expected to significantly enhance mobility for technical teams, enabling faster and more effective field operations in support of Kenya's agricultural sector. The vehicles will strengthen critical functions including field surveillance, inspection, and monitoring. Improved accessibility to farming zones, border points, inspection sites, and agricultural production areas will ensure timely interventions in plant health management and quality assurance processes.

The leadership emphasized that the investment is aligned with KEPHIS' mandate of safeguarding plant health, assuring the quality of agricultural inputs and produce, and facilitating safe trade. The enhanced logistical capacity will also support efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of plant pests and diseases, while promoting compliance with phytosanitary standards.

The new fleet comes at a time when efficient agricultural inspection and certification services remain critical in supporting food security, protecting livelihoods, and strengthening Kenya's competitiveness in regional and global markets.

By investing in operational efficiency and staff facilitation, KEPHIS continues to demonstrate its dedication to excellence, innovation, and reliable service delivery for stakeholders across the agricultural value chain. The flag-off not only symbolized the launch of new vehicles, but also renewed commitment towards protecting Kenya's agriculture and supporting sustainable trade growth.

KEPHIS AND NAMIBIAN AGRONOMIC BOARD STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COLLABORATION ON PLANT HEALTH AND AGRICULTURAL REGULATION

The Regional collaboration in plant health and agricultural regulation continues to play a key role in strengthening Africa's agricultural systems. This was evident during a courtesy visit by the Namibian Agronomic Board to the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) Managing Director, Prof. Theophilus M. Mutui, on 15th May 2026 at the KEPHIS Headquarters in Karen, Nairobi.

Led by Chief Executive Officer Fidelis Mwazi, the Namibian delegation was received by Prof. Mutui alongside Dr. Macharia and a team from KEPHIS for discussions focused on institutional cooperation, knowledge sharing, and potential areas of collaboration between the two institutions.

The meeting provided an opportunity for KEPHIS to showcase its mandate as Kenya's National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO), highlighting its role in phytosanitary regulation, seed certification, laboratory services, and import and export inspection. The delegation also shared insights into the mandate of the Namibian Agronomic Board as the regulatory body responsible for agronomy and horticulture matters in Namibia.

Discussions centred on areas of mutual interest, including technical knowledge exchange, institutional learning, regulatory cooperation, and future collaboration in capacity building initiatives through the Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence (COPE).

The engagement marked an important step towards strengthening partnership between KEPHIS and the Namibian Agronomic Board, while promoting stronger phytosanitary systems and safer agricultural trade within the region.

CURTAIN RAISER BREAKFAST CEREMONY AT ICONIC PLAZA HOTEL

In a proactive move to protect the breadbasket of the region, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, though 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.

On 5th May 2026, the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service proudly participated in the Curtain Raiser Breakfast Ceremony held at Iconic Plaza Hotel, a significant milestone that officially launched preparations for the 12th Edition of Agri-Tech Africa.

The event served as a strategic platform, bringing together key stakeholders to align priorities, foster collaboration, and ignite momentum towards one of Africa's most impactful agricultural technology forums.

Agri-Tech Africa plays a vital role in advancing innovation across the agricultural value chain, an objective that closely aligns with KEPHIS' mandate. By showcasing cutting-edge technologies in seed systems, plant health, diagnostics, and quality assurance, the forum strengthens KEPHIS' mission of safeguarding plant health, ensuring the quality of agricultural inputs, and facilitating safe trade.

The event was graced by the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Dr. Paul Kipronoh Ronoh, whose insights underscored the importance of innovation, partnerships, and sustainability in transforming the agricultural sector.

KEPHIS was well represented by Mr. Simon Maina, Deputy Director of Seed Certification and Variety Protection, on behalf of the Managing Director. His participation reaffirmed KEPHIS' commitment to advancing resilient seed systems, enhancing regulatory frameworks, and promoting the adoption of modern Agri-technologies.

For KEPHIS stakeholders, Agri-Tech Africa offers immense value by providing access to emerging innovations, strengthening compliance with phytosanitary standards, opening up market opportunities, and fostering partnerships that drive productivity, sustainability, and food security.

KEPHIS CONDUCTS MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2027

A strong and effective strategic plan plays a key role in driving institutional excellence, measuring impact, and ensuring sustainable service delivery. Through such reviews, organizations are able to reflect on milestones achieved, identify existing gaps, and realign priorities to respond to emerging needs and national development goals.

In this regard, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), led by the Managing Director Prof. Theophilus M. Mutui, conducted its Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan 2023–2027 at NITA Athi River from 19th–21st May 2026. The exercise has brought together the Senior Management Team to assess the progress made so far, evaluate implementation strategies, and identify areas that require strengthening as the institution continues to deliver on its mandate.

The review provides an important platform for open engagement, reflection, and collaborative planning among the institution's leadership. Discussions focused on evaluating achievements realized under the current strategic period, addressing operational challenges, and exploring practical approaches that will enhance efficiency, innovation, and service delivery across all areas of the organization.

The session allowed departments to share experiences and lessons learned during implementation, while aligning institutional priorities with emerging trends in agriculture, plant health, seed systems, trade facilitation, and regulatory services. By reviewing progress collectively, the management team better positioned to make informed decisions that will support the successful realization of the institution's strategic objectives.

As Kenya continues to strengthen agricultural productivity and food security, KEPHIS remains committed to providing quality regulatory and phytosanitary services that support safe trade, sustainable agriculture, and access to quality agricultural inputs. The Mid-Term Review reflects the institution's dedication to continuous improvement, accountability, and responsive leadership in serving farmers, traders, and other stakeholders within the agricultural sector.

KEPHIS JOINS OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY CELEBRATIONS IN KERICHO COUNTY

KEPHIS officials pose for a group photo during the International Tea Day celebrations held in Kericho County.

On 21st May 2026, KEPHIS Nakuru Region joined stakeholders in commemorating International Tea Day 2026 held at Momul Tea Factory in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, under the theme ***"Fostering Growth and Inclusion."*** The event brought together tea farmers, government institutions, industry players, and other stakeholders to discuss the growth, sustainability, and future of Kenya's tea sector.

The celebrations were graced by the Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, Kericho Senator Hon. Aaron Cheruiyot, KTDA National Chairman Enos Njeru, Agriculture Principal Secretary Dr. Paul Rono, and Tea Board of Kenya CEO Willy Mutai, among other leaders.

Speaking during the event, CS Mutahi Kagwe highlighted ongoing government reforms aimed at improving farmer earnings through expansion of export markets, strengthening local tea processing, and enhancing the global visibility of Kenyan

tea. He also emphasized the importance of climate-smart agriculture, environmental conservation, and increased youth participation in agribusiness to ensure long-term sustainability within the tea sector.

Additionally, Hon. Kagwe further commended Momul Tea Factory for its leadership in tea production, modernization, and commitment to maintaining high quality standards within the industry. In support of sustainable farming initiatives, the CS donated 100,000 tea seedlings and 100,000 coffee seedlings to farmers in Kericho County.

Kericho Senator Hon. Aaron Cheruiyot speaks during the International Tea Day celebrations held at Momul Tea Factory in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County.

In his speech, Kericho Senator Hon. Aaron Cheruiyot called for unity and enhanced collaboration among stakeholders in strengthening the tea sector and improving farmer livelihoods. He further underscored the importance of expanding employment opportunities for young people through innovation, modernization, and increased investment within the agricultural sector.

KEPHIS officers engage farmers and stakeholders at the KEPHIS exhibition stand during the International Tea Day celebrations at Momul Tea Factory in Kericho County.

KEPHIS participated as one of the exhibitors, where officers sensitized farmers and stakeholders on the institution's mandate in promoting plant health, facilitating safe trade, supporting market access, and enhancing agricultural productivity. The team also provided guidance on pest and disease management, phytosanitary services, regulatory compliance, and sustainable agricultural production practices.

The KEPHIS exhibition stand attracted over 70 participants, the majority being tea farmers seeking information on plant health standards and services offered by the institution. Male participants constituted the higher proportion of visitors compared to female participants.

The event provided an important platform for stakeholder engagement, knowledge sharing, and awareness creation on sustainable agricultural practices, environmental stewardship, and the importance of maintaining quality standards within Kenya's tea value chain.

PLANT BIOSECURITY: THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

International Day of Plant Health

On 12th May 2026, KEPHIS joined the world to mark the International Day of Plant Health under the theme ***"Plant Biosecurity for Food Security & Nutrition".***

This year's observance highlighted plant biosecurity as the frontline defence for our food systems, raising global awareness of how protecting plant health helps end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity, and boost economic growth.

At KEPHIS, plant biosecurity is not just a statement; it is our everyday agenda. From inspections at entry and exit points, Phytosanitary certification, pest risk analysis, seed certification, and testing, we work continuously to protect Kenya's plant resources from harmful pests and diseases.

Plant biosecurity involves measures, regulations, policies, and actions aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of harmful pests and diseases that threaten crops, ecosystems, and safe trade. It serves as a safety net against crop losses, helping safeguard food security and livelihoods.

KEPHIS marked the day by conducting various plant health outreach activities, including plant health clinics in Naivasha, Nakuru, and Mombasa; a plant pathology session at the Plant Quarantine and Biosecurity Station with students from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology; an exporter sensitization forum on documentation and herbs at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport; and tree-planting activities in Kitale and Embu.

The Kisumu office also established demonstration plots, offering farmers practical insights into improved and resilient crop production practices in the field.

How can citizens support plant biosecurity efforts?

- Declare all plants and plant materials at entry and exit points.
- Use of certified seeds
- Sourcing planting materials from certified suppliers
- Report on new pest incidences to the nearest agricultural office.

By protecting plants today, we secure food, livelihoods, and nutrition for generations to come.

KEPHIS SENSITIZATION FORUM FOR EXPORTERS OF BEANS WITH PODS AND CHILLIES ON 30thAPRIL AT JACARANDA HOTEL, WESTLANDS.

Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) successfully held a sensitization forum for exporters of beans with pods and chillies on 30th April 2026 at Jacaranda Hotel, Westlands.

The forum sponsored by Trademark Africa (TMA) convened key players in the horticultural export sector, offering a platform to share critical insights on compliance with export market requirements, market standards, and emerging export regulations. Participants engaged in meaningful discussions aimed at enhancing quality assurance, improving market access, and strengthening Kenya's position in the global fresh produce market.

This engagement underscores KEPHIS' continued commitment to supporting exporters through capacity building, ensuring safe trade, and promoting sustainable growth in the horticulture industry.

KEPHIS PARTICIPATES IN COFFEE VARIETY DUS EXAMINATION EXERCISE IN BUSIA COUNTY

From 13th–14th May 2026, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) Kisumu region participated in the Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) examination exercise of coffee varieties in Busia County, in collaboration with Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) Coffee Research Institute.

The exercise is an important process in evaluating new crop varieties to ensure they are unique, uniform, and stable over time. This supports KEPHIS' mandate of promoting quality planting materials of superior varieties, protecting plant health, and supporting agricultural innovation for improved productivity and food security.

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.

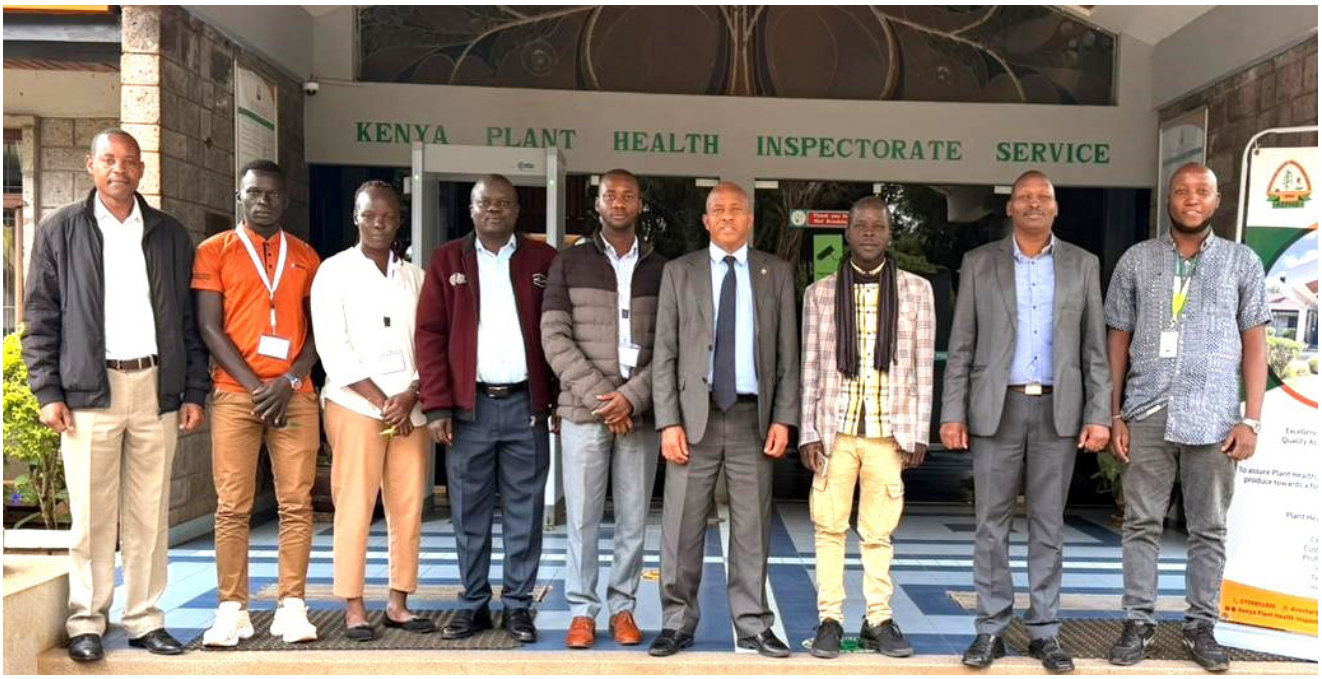
The DUS examination process plays a critical role in variety evaluation

and registration by assessing whether a candidate variety can be clearly distinguished from existing varieties, maintains consistent characteristics, and remains stable after repeated propagation. Through this process, stakeholders are able to identify and promote superior coffee varieties with desirable agronomic traits such as improved yield potential, disease tolerance, adaptability, and enhanced quality attributes.

The collaborative exercise brought together technical experts from KEPHIS and KALRO Coffee Research Institute, providing an opportunity for knowledge exchange and strengthening institutional collaboration in crop variety evaluation and regulatory processes. The engagement also highlighted the importance of scientific assessment in safeguarding farmers and the agricultural sector from substandard or unstable planting materials.

By participating in such initiatives, KEPHIS continues to support research and innovation in the coffee sub-sector while ensuring that farmers access quality, certified planting materials that contribute to increased productivity, sustainable agricultural development, and improved livelihoods.

STRENGTHENING SEED SYSTEMS THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING: SOUTH SUDAN SEED INSPECTORS UNDERGO COPE TRAINING



Building resilient seed systems requires more than policy it demands skilled professionals with the competence to implement and enforce standards. Strategic investment in training is therefore essential to ensuring quality seed, strengthening regulatory systems, and supporting agricultural growth.

From 5th–19th May 2026, seed inspectors from South Sudan's Ministry of Agriculture are undertaking an intensive 11-day training under COPE, aimed at strengthening expertise in seed certification systems, regulatory frameworks, variety testing and registration, and phytosanitary compliance. Through a combination of theory, practical sessions, and field exposure, participants are gaining the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement and enforce national and regional seed standards.

The programme was officially opened by Mr. Simon Maina, Director of Seed Certification and Plant Variety Protection, alongside Mr. Ephraim Wachira, Mr. Jacob Cheptaiwa, Dr. Moses Oyier, and Mr. Amos Mulonzia (ICRISAT), underscoring the critical role of capacity building in advancing resilient and credible seed systems.

The certification of participants at the end of the training marks a strategic investment in institutional strengthening one that will directly contribute to improved seed quality assurance, regulatory compliance, and agricultural productivity in South Sudan.

KEPHIS STRENGTHENS SEED QUALITY COMPLIANCE THROUGH CAPACITY-BUILDING TRAINING FOR SEED GROWERS AND MERCHANTS IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY

On 5th May 2026, KEPHIS conducted a capacity-building training session for seed growers and seed merchants in Tharaka Nithi County aimed at strengthening compliance and enhancing the quality of seed production in the region. The training brought together key stakeholders in the seed value chain and provided an opportunity for participants to better understand the KEPHIS mandate in regulating and assuring the quality of agricultural inputs and produce.

During the session, participants were sensitized on the importance of certified seed in improving agricultural productivity and ensuring sustainable food systems. The training also covered the seed certification process, field inspection requirements, varietal purity, disease and pest management, and best agronomic practices necessary for quality seed production.

The interactive engagement allowed participants to share experiences, ask questions, and discuss challenges affecting seed production and marketing within the county. Through such trainings, KEPHIS continues to equip seed sector players with technical knowledge and guidance to promote access to quality seed and improved agricultural productivity.

KEPHIS HEADQUARTERS ENTOMOLOGY LABORATORY HOSTS AN INTER-LABORATORY TRAINING ON ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INSECT REFERENCE COLLECTION

From 4th to 8th May 2026, KEPHIS Entomology laboratories conducted an internal training, focused on the establishment of a curated systematic insect reference collection for the KEPHIS Headquarters Entomology Laboratory.

The joint activity, which involved participants from KEPHIS Plant Quarantine and Biosecurity Station, JKIA and KEPHIS Headquarters Entomology laboratories, was mostly practical covering key techniques for building a comprehensive entomological collection. The participants were trained on establishment of a dry insect collection, involving use of both direct /single pinning, indirect/double pinning methods including use of minutens and insect cards. Emphasis was placed on proper specimen handling, mounting, and preservation techniques which will ensure long-term integrity of insect specimens for diagnostic purposes and future reference.

The training also addressed establishment of a wet insect collection, where participants learnt how to preserve all stages of insects of different families using appropriate techniques.This component highlighted best practices for maintaining morphological features essential for future identification, reference and research.

In addition, the program included detailed instruction on slide preparation for soft-bodied insect groups such as scale insects, aphids, whiteflies, and thrips. These techniques are critical for accurate microscopic examination and taxonomic identification.

During the thrips slide preparation and identification session, the team was honored with a visit by Dr. Subramanian Sevgan, a Principal Scientist and Head of the Environmental Health Department at ICIPE, and one of the authors of the East Africa Thrips online identification Lucid key, titled ***"Identification and Information Tools for Thrips in East Africa."***

In his engagement with the team, Dr. Sevgan provided an in-depth walkthrough of the Lucid key, demonstrating its application in identifying thrips to species level. His guidance enhanced the participants' understanding of digital taxonomic tools and their role in strengthening entomological diagnostics and pest management capabilities.

FROM DETECTION TO ACTION: KEPHIS AND PARTNERS STRENGTHEN AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO POTATO CYST NEMATODE

When a pest reduces an expected potato harvest from 100 bags to just 20, that's a major blow, affecting farmers' income, food security, and overall agricultural productivity.

In 2016, Kenya confirmed the presence of potato cyst nematode (PCN) following a national survey by KEPHIS, making it among the first countries in the region to detect the pest. What followed was action. As the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO), KEPHIS developed measures to contain its spread and continues to implement them, including import regulation, pest risk analysis, and farmer-focused management practices such as planting resistant varieties, practicing farm hygiene, managing water runoffs, and the use of certified seed.

Since then, Kenya has built valuable experience in the detection and management of PCN. Today, that experience is shaping the region.

From May 4th–8th, 2026, at the Plant Quarantine and Biosecurity Station in Muguga, KEPHIS, through the Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence (COPE), with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization through Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) funding, conducted a week-long training for laboratory technicians from 13 countries across Eastern and Southern Africa on the detection and identification of Potato Cyst Nematode, a major threat to profitable potato production in the region. The participants join the growing list of more than 5,000 stakeholders from Kenya and beyond who have been trained under COPE.

Through hands-on sessions and expert-led discussions, participants are strengthening their capacity to identify and manage the pest accurately, an essential step towards safeguarding potato production, enhancing food security, and promoting safer regional trade.

The impact of such training extends far beyond the laboratory. It means better disease prevention and surveillance systems, improved agricultural productivity, safer regional and international trade, and ultimately enhanced food security for Kenya and Africa at large.

SURVEILLANCE OF INVASIVE PESTS IN NURSERIES AND MOTHER-BLOCKS

As part of intensifying its efforts in safeguarding Kenya's agriculture through monitoring and surveillance of invasive pests in nurseries and mother-blocks across the country, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) carried out an exercise aimed at ensuring production and distribution of healthy, pest-free propagation materials while preventing introductions and spread of destructive invasive pests that pose a major threat to crop productivity, food security, biodiversity, national economy and international trade.

Through regular inspections and certification systems, technical assessments, and close collaboration with nursery operators and farmers, KEPHIS is strengthening early pests detection and rapid response mechanisms that are essential in protecting the country's agricultural sector. Healthy mother-blocks and certified nursery seedlings form the foundation of sustainable agriculture, quality yields, and resilient farming systems.

This initiative also served as an important platform for awareness creation and capacity building among stakeholders on plant health. best agronomic practices, pest management strategies, and the importance of adhering to phytosanitary standards.

KEPHIS remains committed to its mandate of assuring quality agricultural inputs and produce towards a food secure nation and safe trade.

KEPHIS NAKURU HOSTS DIRECTORS FROM THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT

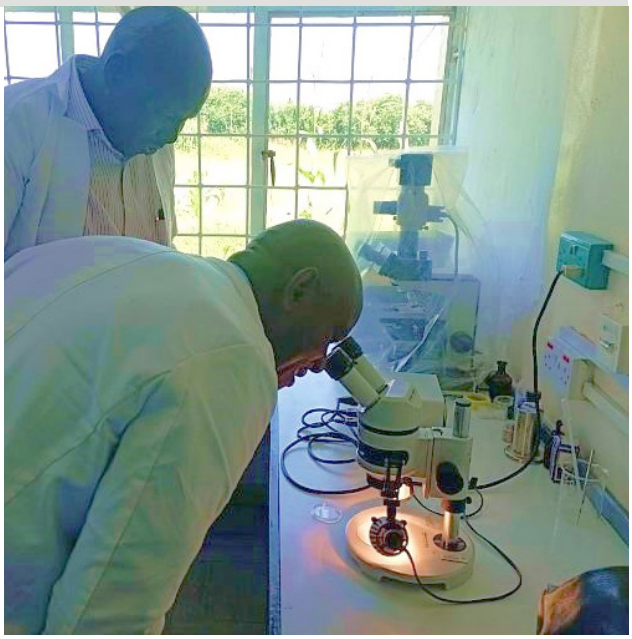
KEPHIS senior officials and Ministry of Agriculture directors pose for a group photograph outside the Plant Health Laboratory during the visit.

Directors from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development visited to the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) Nakuru Regional office on 25th May 2026, for an appraisal of the station's operations and service delivery, aimed at getting deeper insight into the institution's technical and operational capacity.

In the Seed Testing Laboratory, the team learnt about the aspects of seed testing including germination, purity and moisture testing processes and the role of seed testing in seed quality assurance and trade facilitation.

In the Plant Health section, (Molecular and Pathology laboratories), the team received an overview of the diagnostic procedures, laboratory operations, and analytical processes undertaken to safeguard plant health and agricultural productivity through rigorous plant health diagnosis.

The Section Head of the Seed Lab leads visiting officials through practical demonstrations at the germination section.



Photos showing Ministry of Agriculture officials receiving practical demonstrations and briefings at the Plant Health Pathology Laboratory.

The team visited post control and variety testing plots where they appreciated the immense field trials conducted by KEPHIS in bid to ensure farmers get quality seed of superior crop varieties for sustainable and enhanced agricultural productivity,

The directors expressed keen interest in the work being undertaken at the station, with discussions also focusing on client handling procedures, operational efficiency, and achievements realized through the high number of samples tested across the various laboratories.

The delegation commended KEPHIS for its continued commitment to promoting plant health, quality assurance, and sustainable agricultural development, expressing admiration for the institution's level of excellence and professionalism.

Directors from the Ministry of Agriculture and KEPHIS senior officials pose for a group photograph during a tour of the station farm.

KEPHIS TRAINS WEIWEI SEED GROWERS ON MANAGEMENT OF MAIZE LETHAL NECROSIS DISEASE

Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease (MLND) continues to pose a significant threat to maize farming and seed production in Kenya. The disease is caused by a combination of two viruses, Maize Chlorotic Mottle Virus (MCMV) and Sugarcane Mosaic Virus (SCMV), which together can cause severe yield losses and compromise food security.

To safeguard seed quality and protect farmers' investments, all certified seed production fields are required to remain free from MLND-related viral infections. However, irrigated production areas such as Weiwei, Marich, KVDA Weiwei, and Katilu have continued to report high incidences of the disease, resulting in the rejection of some seed crops during certification.

In response to this challenge, KEPHIS Kitale organized a targeted training session for seed growers at the Weiwei Irrigation Scheme on 21st May 2026. The training focused on practical disease management strategies aimed at reducing the spread and impact of MLND in seed production areas.

Farmers were sensitized on the importance of crop rotation and the implementation of a closed season as key interventions to break the disease cycle. These measures are expected to significantly reduce virus carryover between planting seasons and contribute to improved maize health and productivity in future production cycles.

KEPHIS CONDUCTS REFRESHER TRAINING FOR KENYA SEED COMPANY AUTHORIZED INSPECTORS AND ANALYSTS TO STRENGTHEN SEED CERTIFICATION COMPLIANCE

From 18th–20th May 2026 at Kitale Club, KEPHIS Kitale facilitated a refresher training for Kenya Seed Company Ltd Authorized Inspectors and Analysts under the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act and the KEPHIS Act No. 54 of 2012.

The Seeds and Plant Varieties Act empowers the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) to undertake seed certification activities as well as regulate the importation and exportation of seeds. The Act also provides the legal basis for authorization of competent private or public persons to undertake specified certification activities in order to complement KEPHIS and enhance efficiency in the seed certification process.

Authorization creates an enabling environment for effective participation of both public and private sectors in the production, inspection and testing of quality planting material, while promoting sustainable access to certified seed.

Kenya Seed Co. Ltd is authorized to undertake Seed & Field Inspection, Seed Sampling & Testing. The refresher training entailed the principles and practical aspects of the authorized activities and was intended to reduce non-compliance and increase availability of certified seed for enhanced food security and economic growth.

KEPHIS CONDUCTS FALSE CODLING MOTH SYSTEMS APPROACH (FCMSA) TRAINING IN NAKURU COUNTY TO STRENGTHEN COMPLIANCE IN KENYA'S CUT FLOWER INDUSTRY

Group photo of participants and KEPHIS officers at Florenza, Solai

Agriculture remains a key pillar of Kenya's economy, with cut flower production contributing significantly to export earnings, employment, and agro-based livelihoods. However, continued access to international markets depends heavily on strict compliance with phytosanitary and quality requirements.

To strengthen this compliance, the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) conducted a capacity-building training on the False Codling Moth System Approach (FCMSA) in Nakuru County on 27th & 28th April 2026. The trainings were held across four Megaspingroup farms which included, Roseto, Sierra Flora, Florenza Rongai, and Florenza Solai, with a total of 80 participants in attendance. The sessions were facilitated by KEPHIS trainers Mr. Bernard Odanga and Mr. Wabwayi Ndalira.

The training was driven by the need to improve Kenya's competitiveness in export markets, particularly the European Union, where strict phytosanitary standards apply. According to the KNBS Economic Survey 2025, horticultural export volumes have slightly declined even as value has increased, highlighting the growing importance of compliance and quality over quantity. Most export challenges are linked to quarantine pests, making pest-free production essential for market access.

Participants were trained on key export requirements, including EU quarantine pest regulations, and phytosanitary certification procedures. Emphasis was placed on avoiding non-compliance cases such as interceptions and rejection of exports through strict adherence to established protocols.

Central to the training was the FCMSA system, which is based on three principles: identification of non-compliance, communication of the issue, and corrective action. Farms were guided on maintaining proper documentation, implementing Good Agricultural Practices, and ensuring traceable production records.

Key operational areas included greenhouse integrity, pest monitoring using pheromone traps, and regular scouting. A threshold of one moth per hectare per day was emphasized, with mandatory corrective action when exceeded. Participants were also reminded that scouting must be done at least twice a week, with weekly reporting to KEPHIS.

FCMSA training at Roseto.

Post-harvest controls were also reinforced, including 100% inspection at harvest and strict packhouse quality checks. A zero-tolerance policy for live pests was emphasized, with rejection of entire consignments where non-compliance is detected.

Participants reported high satisfaction with the training, noting its practical relevance and clarity. Many indicated improved understanding of pest management, monitoring systems, and compliance procedures, as well as better appreciation of KEPHIS inspection processes.

Going forward, farms were encouraged to apply the knowledge gained, strengthen monitoring systems, improve record keeping, and conduct regular internal audits. Continued collaboration with KEPHIS and ongoing capacity building were highlighted as key to sustaining compliance and protecting Kenya's export markets.

In conclusion, the training successfully strengthened awareness and practical implementation of FCMSA requirements. It enhanced participants' ability to manage pest risks and reinforced the importance of compliance in maintaining Kenya's competitiveness in the global cut flower industry.

Participants during the FCMSA training at Sierra Flora.

TRAINING OF KEPHIS INSPECTORS ON SCALE INSECT IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT

From 25th to 28th May 2026, the Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence (COPE) hosted KEPHIS inspectors at the KEPHIS Headquarters for a training on scale insect identification and management. The training brought together inspectors, facilitators and partners from different institutions with a shared goal of improving knowledge on pest detection and management.

The sessions combined classroom learning and practical activities. Participants were taken through the biology, life cycle, symptoms and spread of scale insects. They also learned about surveillance, safe pesticide use and inspection procedures at entry and exit points.

Inspectors collected samples with, prepared slides and used online identification keys to identify pests. The practical work helped participants gain hands-on skills that will support their field inspections.

The training ended with a final assessment and closing remarks from KEPHIS management. Participants appreciated the knowledge gained and expressed confidence in applying the skills to strengthen plant health inspection and pest management across the country.

STRENGTHENING PLANT HEALTH SYSTEMS IN EAST AFRICA

KEPHIS has achieved a major milestone with the establishment of the Root Tuber Banana East Africa Germplasm Exchange Laboratory (RTB EAGEL) at the Plant Quarantine and Biosecurity Station (PQBS). This state-of-the-art facility is set to enhance safe germplasm exchange, strengthen plant health systems, and build regional capacity in vegetatively propagated crops.

To ensure optimal utilization of the newly installed laboratory equipment, KEPHIS, in collaboration with CGIAR and SLS Engineers, successfully conducted a hands-on training for Tissue Culture and Molecular Biology teams. Staff were equipped with practical skills in equipment operation, calibration, maintenance, and troubleshooting, key to ensuring accuracy, minimizing contamination risks, and maintaining high-quality standards.

This initiative marks a significant step toward the full operationalization of RTB EAGEL, supporting standardized laboratory procedures, enhancing staff competency, and reinforcing KEPHIS' role as a regional center of excellence in germplasm health, diagnostics, and exchange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THE PEST INSIGHT REPORT

Asenath A. Koech
Ag. Deputy Director, Pest forecasting, Pest Risk Analysis and surveillance.

What is a pest insight report?

"A pest insight report is a structured document that provides timely, evidence-based information about plant pests or diseases to support decision-making in agriculture, biosecurity, and pest management. It is meant give highlights pest situation awareness and early warning report focused on pests.

A pest insight report Supports early warning systems, guides pest risk analysis (PRA), helps policymakers and agencies in agriculture make informed decisions and assists farmers and extension officers with timely management actions. It is meant to help KEPHIS update its stakeholders on the pest threats that may affect the country."

In this month's newsletter, we focus on Khapra Beetle (Trogoderma granarium).

The Khapra beetle, Trogoderma granarium, is one of the most destructive pests of stored products globally and is recognized as a quarantine pest of major concern in many countries. Its ability to survive under harsh conditions, coupled with its highly invasive nature, makes it a significant threat to food security, trade, and biosecurity systems. This pest insight report provides an overview of its biology, distribution, pathways, impacts, and recommended measures for awareness and prevention among stakeholders.

The risk of Khapra beetle introduction remains high due to increasing global trade and movement of agricultural commodities. Warm and dry climates favor its survival and establishment, making many regions vulnerable. If introduced and not detected early, the pest can become extremely difficult and costly to eradicate.

Stakeholders in agriculture are encouraged to immediately report any suspected infestations to plant health authorities for implementation of containment and eradication measures.

In Kenya, stakeholders are encouraged to work closely with regulatory bodies such as the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service to ensure compliance with phytosanitary requirements and to report any suspicious findings promptly.

PEST INSIGHT REPORT FOR KHAPRA BEETLE (Trogoderma granarium)

What is Khapra Beetle?

Khapra beetle (Trogoderma granarium) is a highly destructive pest of stored grains and dried foodstuffs worldwide. Although not present in Kenya, its introduction would pose a potential risk to the nation's grains industry. The pest's feeding can cause direct losses of up to 75% of stored grain, and infestations result in contamination by adult beetles, cast larval skins, and hairs. Such contamination not only damages the product but also creates health risks and complicates cleaning of storage facilities and transport vessels. With Kenya importing grains from regions affected by this pest, strict monitoring and preventive measures are essential.

What does it look like?

Adults are 1.6–3mm long, oval shaped and light yellowish brown to dark brown in colour. Adult beetles have many fine hairs and indistinct markings on their wings. When viewed from the side, the adult beetle's partly concealed head and downward facing mouthparts can be seen (Fig.1 &2) Eggs are less than 1mm long and milky white to pale yellow in colour.

Fig 1. Khapra beetle, Adult and Larva (C) Degesh America

Figure 2. Side view of Khapra Beetle note the downward facing head*

Larvae are 1.6–4.5mm long, golden brown in colour, and have distinctive hairs across the body, including longer hairs at the end of the body that resemble a tail (Fig 1 &3). Pupae have a similar appearance to late-stage larvae except that they are slightly shorter and more rounded.

Figure 3. Khapra Beetle on Rice. (C) DAFF

What can it be confused with?

Khapra beetle can be confused with the warehouse beetle (Trogoderma variabile) and native Trogoderma species. (Fig.4)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

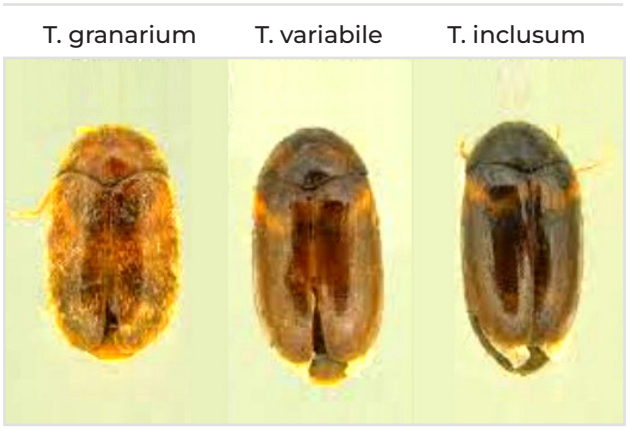


Figure 4. Some Trogoderma beetles likely to be confused with Khapra beetle(c) Nature.

What to look for?

Khapra beetle can be found in stored products and around places where stored products have been kept or transported, including between cracks and under floors of storage containers and packaging material. The most common signs of infestation are larvae and the presence of cast larval skins (Fig. 5)

Figure 5. Larval castings of Khapra Beetle. (C) US Customs and Border Patrol.

There may also be visible signs of damage and waste. To check for infestations, inspect all cracks and crevices in storage areas, and under bags. For shipping containers, pay attention to any residual contaminants, e.g. grains, as these are a food source for khapra. For bagged consignments, pay particular attention to the inner corners or ears of the bags.

What is its life cycle?

Mating between adult male and female beetles occurs around 2–3 days after emergence. Shortly after mating, adult females begin laying eggs after mating in or near host material and generally lay 50–100 eggs during their lifetime. Eggs hatch within 5–7 days into larvae, which are the major feeding stage and therefore the most damaging. Larvae moult four or more times, resulting in numerous cast larval skins. The larval development period can be as short as 30 days, but larvae can also survive in a dormant state for several years in unfavourable conditions. The larva finally develops into an immobile pupa, from which the adult emerges. Adults are short lived, do not feed much, and although they are winged, they are not known to fly. There can be up to ten generations per year during warm, dry conditions, which can quickly result in damaging infestations.

How can this pest enter Kenya?

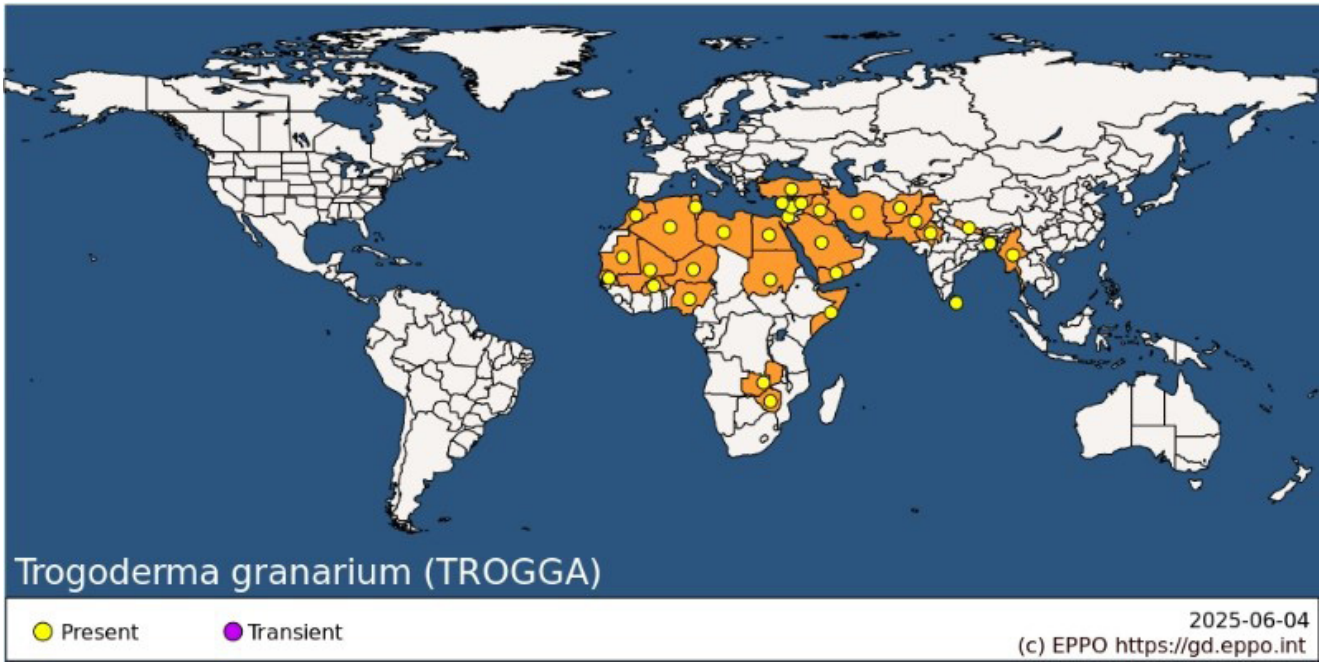
Khapra beetle can be introduced into Kenya through:

- **International Movement of infested grains and dried products**: It can be inadvertently transported in infested grain consignments or dried foodstuffs. It has been recorded infesting grains such as wheat, maize, barley, rice, millet, sorghum, pulses, cotton, sunflower, sesame and spice seeds, and some dried animal products.
- **Infested Materials:** It may enter via infested seed, machinery, or straw..

- **Hitch-hiking in Transport Cargo:** Sea vessels, shipping containers, pallets, and packaging materials often serve as inadvertent carriers.

Global distribution

Khapra beetle is native to India, but has spread to some parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In Asia, the pest in present in Nepal, India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the Middle East the pest is present in Israel, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. In Africa, the pest is present in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Somalia. Khapra beetle is not present in Kenya.



Pre entry prevention?

Given Kenya's import of grains and dried food products and proximity to risk regions, continuous vigilance is essential

Regular Inspections. Routinely check stored grains, silos, warehouses, and shipping containers. Examine all cracks, crevices, and inner corners of packaging.

Surveillance: Regular detection surveillance should be done to ensure freedom from this pest

How to Report Findings

If you suspect khapra beetle or observe its signature signs, stop movement of goods, secure the infestation, and report immediately to KEPHIS

Telephone: 0709 891000

Email: director@kephis.org

Website: KEPHIS Website

Disclaimer:

This report is provided for informational purposes only. Always consult with KEPHIS or other qualified plant health professionals before taking any pest management action.

This Pest Insight Report is designed to assist Kenyan regulators, industry stakeholders, and importers in understanding the risks posed by khapra beetle and in implementing effective preventive measures. For further details on inspection protocols, treatment guidelines, or region-specific import procedures, please contact KEPHIS or visit our website.

PICTORIAL

Highlights from the Training for Laboratory Technicians from 13 Countries Across Eastern and Southern Africa On the Detection and Identification of Potato Cyst Nematode


Kenya Plant Health
Inspectorate Service
(KEPHIS)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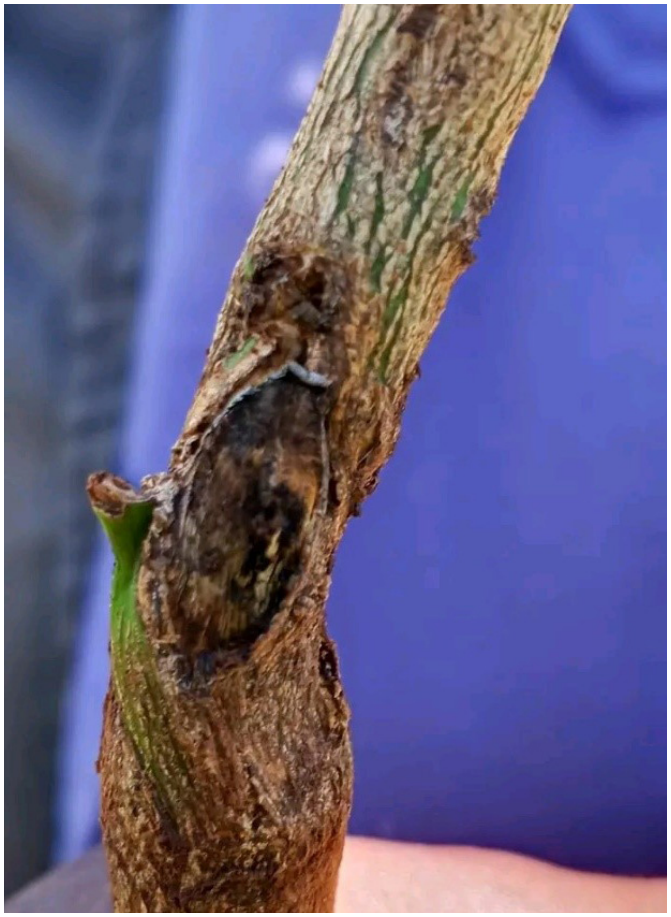
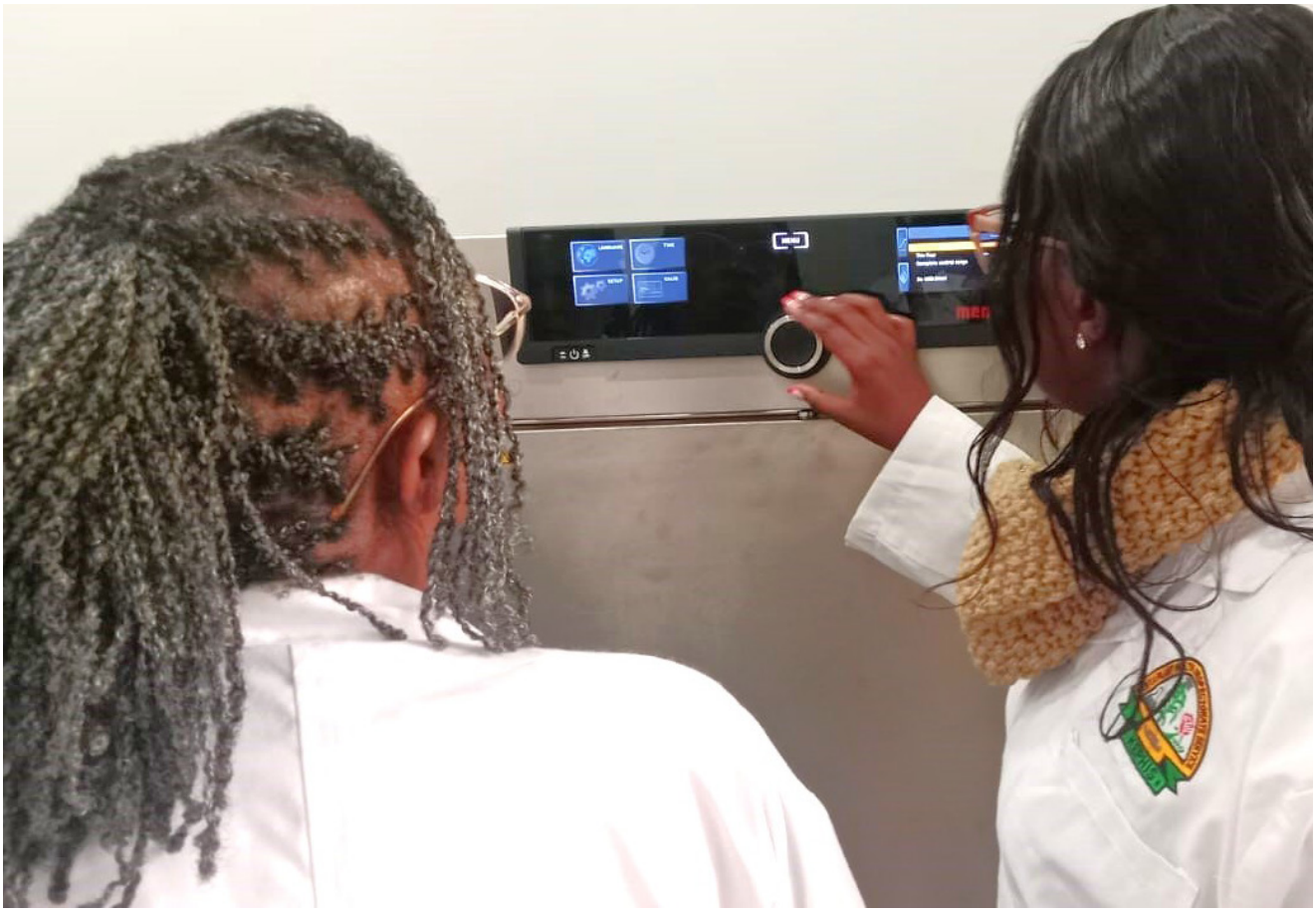
Highlights from the Sensitization Forum for Exporters of Beans with Pods and Chillieson 30th April at Jacaranda Hotel, Westlands.

Highlights from the Surveillance of Inasive Pests in Nurseries and Mother-Blocks



Highlights from the Hands-on Training for Tissue Culture and Molecular Biology Teams.



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