

Kenya eyes blue economy to net more from fishing

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The government is enforcing measures to land fish caught in Kenya's Exclusive Economic Zone to raise its processing capacity from the current 2,500 metric tonnes to 18,650 metric tonnes within the next 18 months.



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Agriculture Cabinet Secretary (CS) Willy Bett said the move will also increase annual per capita fish consumption from the current 4.6 kilograms to the African average of 10 kilograms and progressively to the global average of 20 kilograms. "This will increase investment opportunity, create more jobs and enhance food security for the country. But key to all this is adding value to our fisheries products. Fish can address food and nutritional security," he said.

The CS said Kenya's marine has a potential of producing up to 300,000 metric tonnes. He said sufficient attention has not been given to the potential that the aquatic resources can generate towards socio-economic development.

Speaking during the official opening of the blue economy stakeholder's sensitisation workshop at Whitesands Hotel in Mombasa, Bett said the whole fisheries value chain has not been adequately explored and developed.

Critical infrastructure, comprehensive maritime security needed

He urged the technocrats and stakeholders to deliberate on the mechanisms of safeguarding the border posts by eliminating some of the porous entry points that compromise the environment in which Kenyans live, trade and conduct their business.

"We should take stock of where we are and the desired status that can be a catalyst for fisheries development," he said adding, "But this would not be possible without comprehensive maritime security, development of landing and post-harvest infrastructure, which include fish port and cold chain facilities, appropriate jetties, potable water supply and power supply to the premises," he said.

Bett said critical infrastructure such as jetties, landing facilities, fishing and fish handling equipment such as cooler boxes, reefer containers should be provided.

Furthermore, the CS said a security mechanism should be developed to ensure the safety of Kenyan fishermen. "Landing sites constitute a vitally important interface between land and sea where many economic, as well as illegal activities such as tax evasion and other crimes related to fisheries occur. They are also tourism entry points, a platform for immigration and trade as well as rescue routes," he added.

Sustainable development of coast and coastal communities

He said the blue economy will benefit the fishermen organised into Beach Management Units to the tourism investors and those earning a living from maritime transport services.

He added that the government will build capacity so that Kenyans can benefit from its resources.

He urged the Blue Economy Committee to focus on the development of Kenyan's sustainable development of the ocean. "The vast coastal and marine water resources Kenya is endowed with is geared towards the sustainable use of the oceans for societal benefits. The fisheries sector will be one of the key pillars of economic growth in Kenya and culminate in opportunities for major investments, additional livelihoods for the coastal communities," he added.

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