

KMFRI in Pursuit of Regional Excellence

Institute braces to be recognized a regional centre of excellence as evaluators conduct detailed assessment of human resources, research programmes and infrastructure

By Melckzedek K. Osore



Cross-section of the KMFRI Panel participating in the evaluation discussion

When the East African Community (EAC) recently announced a Call inviting countries in the region to identify appropriate national institutions for nomination as regional Centers of Excellence, KMFRI was among 12 institutions from Kenya that submitted applications for consideration. Among the five main categories to be filled, KMFRI submitted a proposal for consideration in the category of Research and ICT.

KMFRI's detailed proposal highlighted the status of on-going research, existing partnerships at the national and international levels, the management strategy and the target clientele. Since it was established to take over the activities of the defunct East African Marine Fisheries (& Freshwater Fisheries) Research Organizations in 1979, KMFRI's research on the rivers and lakes of Kenya, and across the borders including the Indian Ocean has continued to thrive. A state of the art Enhanced Fish Market Information System (EFMIS) developed recently relays real-time data about landed fish quantities, species, prices and weather conditions and relay it from landing beaches to markets around Lake Victoria, the rest of Kenya and East Africa.

The Institute is renowned for the high caliber multidisciplinary research it conducts in collaboration with other national, regional and international research and academic institutions. The multifaceted

partnership in research and development is continuously enhancing human capacity and infrastructure. KMFRI boasts of a strong research force comprising over 22 PhDs, 50 Msc, 20 Bsc and numerous highly skilled technical teams with diploma qualifications. In a few months, completion of a new wing under construction in Mombasa will substantially expand KMFRI's infrastructure with a new conference facility, Ocean Centre, research accommodation for visiting experts, additional laboratories and offices.



Evaluators appointed by the EAC Onesmus Kiminza (Left) and James Mwangi listening attentively

On Friday 25th, March 2011, evaluators appointed by the EAC lead by Mr. Onesmus Kiminza from the Ministry of Education and Mr. James Kiburi Mwangi from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology arrived at KMFRI armed with a vetting scheme to conduct the assessment. The assessment was an elaborate process conducted in form of series of discussions and presentations. The evaluators were looking for indicators that demonstrate that KMFRI meets the criteria that would enable it to compete against other similar institutions in East Africa.

KMFRI was represented by a select Panel lead by the Deputy Director responsible for in-land waters, Dr. Enock Wakwabi and comprised senior researchers, heads of Finance, Human Resource and Planning. In the evaluation discussions, the KMFRI Panel was required to present documentary evidence that demonstrates the institutional cooperate focus, its relevant governance organs, the management tools including adequacy in infrastructure and quality assurance.

The Panel had to present to the evaluating team documentary evidence of KMFRI's research innovations as well as describe and defend the institute's policies are on issues related to gender sensitivity, HIV/AIDS among others. It was a very thorough vetting exercise; nevertheless, KMFRI Staff are confident that the institute will be nominated for the next level of evaluation. No doubt, it is a matter of time before KMFRI is formally recognized as the undisputed centre of excellence in aquatic research, ICT and related disciplines not only in Kenya but in the entire eastern Africa region.

Viva KMFRI!

Melckzedek K. Osore, E-mail: mosore@kmfri.co.ke