

Official Launch of the Bio Kenya Project at Kisumu Hotel

The official launch of the Bio Kenya Project took place on September 23, 2024, at Kisumu Hotel, marking a significant milestone in Kenya's push towards sustainable agricultural practices. The launch was officiated by the Principal Secretary for Higher Education and Research, Dr. Beatrice Inyangala and brought together 126 stakeholders drawn from national and county governments, the private sector, research institutions, academia, and farming cooperatives. The workshop sought to foster a collective understanding of the project's objectives, secure stakeholder commitment, and build a unified vision for its implementation.



Above: The Principal Secretary, State Department of Higher Education and Research, Dr. Beatrice Inyangala

In her keynote address, the Principal Secretary highlighted the transformative potential of the Bio Kenya Project in addressing critical agricultural challenges, particularly in Western Kenya. "This project signifies a major step forward in revolutionizing our farming practices to become more sustainable and environmentally friendly," she said. The Principal Secretary praised the project's research efforts on biochar and insect-composted organic fertilizers, led by Dr. Kwena Kizito, Coordinator of Component I of the project. She also acknowledged the contributions of Dr. Dennis B. (Coordinator, Component II) and Dr. Mogaka Hezron (Coordinator, Component III), whose work focuses on the development and implementation of sustainable soil management techniques.

The Principal Secretary emphasized on the workshop's core objectives. i.e., (i) enhancing stakeholders' understanding of its focus, (ii) seeking commitment from various partners, and (iii) building a common vision for sustainable agricultural solutions. These objectives were central to the launch workshop, which fostered a collaborative spirit among the attending participants.

Dr. Lauric Cecillon, representing the French Ambassador to Kenya, reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation in agricultural research and innovation. He noted that the Bio Kenya Project, with its focus on environmentally sustainable farming practices, aligned closely with France's development priorities in Kenya. French institutions such as the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) were acknowledged for their technical contributions to the project. Dr. Cecillon emphasized France's continued support for initiatives that promote innovation, research, and sustainable development in Kenya.

The launch also saw participation from high-level representatives, including the Director General of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and the Director of the National Research Fund (NRF). Other institutions represented at the event included the University of Embu, the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), IRD, and CIRAD. Their involvement highlighted the broad, multi-institutional collaboration that the Bio Kenya Project embodies, with each partner contributing expertise to different components of the project.

The Principal Secretary further stressed the importance of involving both national and grassroots stakeholders in the project's implementation. He pointed out that sustainable agriculture would only be achieved through the collective efforts of researchers, government bodies, private sector players, and farming communities. This multi-stakeholder approach was a key theme throughout the workshop, with discussions focusing on the need to support smallholder farmers in adopting biochar and insect-composted organic fertilizers as tools for enhancing soil health and boosting crop yields.



Above: Dr. Mogaka Hezron, component III coordinator

As the workshop drew to a close, there was a palpable sense of excitement and optimism among the participants who engaged in robust discussions on how the project could align with Kenya's broader agricultural development strategy, which includes supporting smallholder farmers particularly women and in promoting innovative soil management techniques. The Principal Secretary's closing remarks reiterated the Kenya

Government's commitment to supporting research initiatives such as the Bio Kenya Project, which have the potential to transform the country's agricultural landscape.

With strong partnerships and a clear vision in place, the Bio Kenya Project is set to pave the way for a more sustainable, resilient, and productive agricultural future in Kenya. The project's focus on biochar and organic fertilizers offers promising solutions to the challenges of soil degradation, climate change, and food security, making it a critical component of Kenya's agricultural development agenda.

