

# KEFRI marks silver jubilee and ISO certification

By Stephen Ndegwa Mwangi

**T**he Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) turned 25 last December and also acquired ISO 14001:2004 Environment Management Systems (EMS) certification.

The organisation marked the two events in a ceremony officiated by the Minister for Forestry and Wildlife, Dr Noah Wekesa, on December 15, 2011.

The Minister congratulated KEFRI for developing forestry technologies and disseminating its research findings, thus contributing greatly to forestry restoration efforts in Kenya and within the region. Since its inception in 1986, KEFRI has developed in research, infrastructure and human resource to become a recognised institution of forestry research in Africa.

Dr Wekesa urged citizens to plant more trees and increase forest cover from 1.7 per cent to 10 per cent of the total land area. He noted that trade in carbon credits is one way of empowering people to benefit from tree planting initiatives.

"There are many organisations and corporations looking for trade in carbon credit in Africa," he said, adding that this is the time to take advantage of programmes such as the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) to sell carbon credits to developed countries.

"The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife is collaborating with organisations offering good payment and also with communities in Mau Forest Complex and other water towers to benefit from these emerging opportunities," said the Minister.

However, he lamented the harassment of farmers trading in wood products harvested on-farm and urged the experts to help in differentiating

wood products gathered on-farm and those illegally harvested from natural forests.

The Chairman of the KEFRI Board, Dr James Onsando, said KEFRI attained ISO 14001:2004 EMS status in June 2011, after demonstrating high environmental management standards in its operations, facilities and a commitment to maintaining these standards. He congratulated the Institute's management and staff for their continued hard work.

The Deputy Chief of Mission in the Japanese Embassy, Mr Yoichiro Yamanda, said KEFRI has grown like a tree, with support from the governments of both Kenya and Japan. He praised the government of Japan for supporting forest projects for Arid and Semi Arid Lands in Kenya through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

"Japan has worked with Kenya since independence to promote sustainable development. In forestry as in other areas, Japan wishes to remain Kenya's quality partner," said Mr Yamanda, stating that the support has enabled KEFRI become an authority in social forestry and climate change initiatives.

KEFRI Director Dr Ben Chikamai led the guests through an exhibition showing KEFRI's key achievements within the 25-year period. He thanked the donor community, development partners, stakeholders and collaborators for supporting KEFRI during the 25 years of its existence.

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Forestry and Wildlife Minister Dr Noah Wekesa releases balloons to mark the twin events held at KEFRI headquarters in Muguga, Kiambu County. On his left is the chairman of the KEFRI board, Dr James Onsando and KEFRI Director Dr Ben Chikamai.



Forestry and Wildlife Minister, Dr Noah Wekesa, plants a tree to mark the occasion.



Children from neighbouring primary schools attended the celebrations.

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