

# Good Wood News



*Newsletter for carvers by the WWF EARPO, People and Plants campaign to promote sustainable woodcarving in Kenya*

## **Good Wood Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification success: hope for Kenya's indigenous forests and livelihoods**

*Susanne Schmitt (Project Leader, WWF-UK)*

After six years of hard work, 'Good Wood' carvings produced from farm-grown neem (*Azadirachta indica*) can now be FSC certified. It is the first FSC certification in Kenya and only the third in East Africa!

FSC certification of 'Good Wood' carvings contributes to the conservation of threatened East African forests and helps improve livelihoods for poor farmers – living on the coast of Kenya. The woodcarving industry in Kenya supports up to 60,000 carvers and their dependants and generates an income of over US\$10 million per year, but has contributed to the decline of threatened hardwoods and the degradation of the globally important East African coastal forests. FSC certification is being used as a tool to promote responsible wood consumption within the Kenyan woodcarving industry by potentially offering new market opportunities.

*Kenyan 'Good Wood' carvings  
can now finally carry the FSC-logo!!*



The pilot co-operative of the Akamba Handicraft Society (c. 3000 carvers) and the newly set-up company Kenya Coast Tree Products (CTP) have been awarded the FSC Chain of Custody certificate by the FSC accredited certifier Soil Association - Woodmark. The certified neem wood is sourced through the newly formed Coast Farm Forestry Association, which has been certified under a FSC Group certification. 576 farmers have so far joined the group which is set to grow to over 1000 farmers. These small farmers are growing neem on their farms and sell the certified logs to Akamba to produce certified carvings. This has opened up a totally new income source to coastal farmers, 60% of whom live below the poverty line. As Patience Kahonzi from Ganda, states: "for a long time, neem grew like a weed on our land, but we never attached any value to it. This project started and we realised that neem could be sold to the woodcarvers for some income."

One major UK importer of African crafts and carvings (BESMO) is already waiting to import the first shipment of certified carvings! We hope that through active marketing by the CTP we can find many international buyers committed to buying certified 'Good Wood' carvings. We also hope that Kenyan-based buyers will make the switch, not only to 'Good Wood', but also to certified carvings.

*People  
and  
plants*

Working in partnership with Oxfam GB and Oxfam Kenya and their partners Kwetu, and Kenya Gatsby Trust (KGT) was crucial for success. It has helped to combine conservation and certification expertise with knowledge in business, marketing, quality control and farmers' organization and training. This partnership has made it possible to deliver a holistic



Photo credit: Susanne Schmidt

Patience Kahonzi on her farm.

programme of training and capacity building, bringing together the strength of conservation organizations (WWF EARPO and CFCU) and livelihood oriented organizations.

### **The achievement**

Being awarded FSC certification is a major achievement. *The achievement for livelihoods* is the fact that a large number of farmers now have the opportunity to earn extra income from the sale of neem timber to the carving co-operative Akamba. At the same time Akamba carvers maintain their source of livelihood through carving Good Wood rather than rapidly disappearing hardwoods, and have benefited from a streamlining of their production and business practice, making theirs a more

competitive business. *The conservation achievement* is that during the process of becoming FSC-ready and the continued promotion of Good Wood use for carving, Akamba's use of neem has risen from 60% to over 80%. For Malindi co-operative, who will be the next candidate for certification, already almost all carvings are made from Good Wood. This both reflects the success of the Good Wood Campaign project and greater clamp down on the movement of illegally sourced hardwoods. Overall, forests should benefit.

### **The challenge ahead**

The challenge for the Akamba co-operative, the Coast Farm Forestry Association and the Kenya Coast Tree Products now is to maintain FSC certification. This requires continued compliance with the standards and criteria of FSC and the conditions set by the certifier. The first audit will be carried out in early 2006. However, one of the main challenges is to have a big enough market for certified carvings to provide the incentive for carvers and farmers to comply with the certification rules and to bear the costs of certification when external support finally seizes.

### **The opportunity**

The opportunity now exists to learn from the experiences of the Good Woods project and its long journey to reach certification. This learning should be used wisely to design a replication of this approach in other carving co-operatives in Kenya and elsewhere in eastern and southern Africa. WWF-EARPO has made a commitment to research the requirements for replication of the approach in Tanzania under the new East African Coastal Forest Programme. The consolidation of the work at the coast in Kenya will also take place under this new programme.

### **Acknowledgements**

Our success is due to the dedication of my Kenyan colleagues, first and foremost, David Maingi of WWF-EARPO, Severinus Jembe & Anthony Githito of the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit (CFCU), David Bright of the Market Access Team of Oxfam GB, Ada Mwangola & Elizabeth Mueni of Oxfam Kenya, French Vibar and Wendy Foster of Kwetu and Constantine Kandie of Kenya Gatsby Trust and Meshack Muga, wood technologist from the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI). Special thanks are also due to my People and Plants Programme colleagues Dr Tony Cunningham and Dr Robert Höft who had the foresight to start the work on sustainable Kenyan woodcarving in the mid-1990s and managed it until 2002. We are grateful for funding from UK Darwin Initiative and the Department for International Development.

## FSC CERTIFICATION - a first for Kenya!

David R. Maingi (Project Manager, Good Woods Project WWF EARPO) and Susanne Schmitt (Project Leader, WWF-UK)

In January 2005, Soil Association - Woodmark an FSC accredited certifier carried out full certification assessment of neem and mango trees grown by groups of farmers belonging to the Coast Farm Forestry Association. This Forest Management (FM) certification established if the trees are sustainably produced following the FSC standards and criteria. At the same time Kenya's largest carving co-operative, Akamba Handicraft Cooperative Society, and the new Kenya Coast Tree Product (CTP) were assessed for chain of custody (COC). An FM certificate was issued to CFFA and a COC certificate was issued to Akamba and CTP respectively. This means that carvings produced from neem or mango Good Wood can now bear the FSC-logo! This is **the first FSC certification** (both for FM and COC) **for Kenya**, the first COC certificate for East Africa, and only the third FM certificate issued in East Africa. See the last Chonga (April 2003) on explanations of FSC

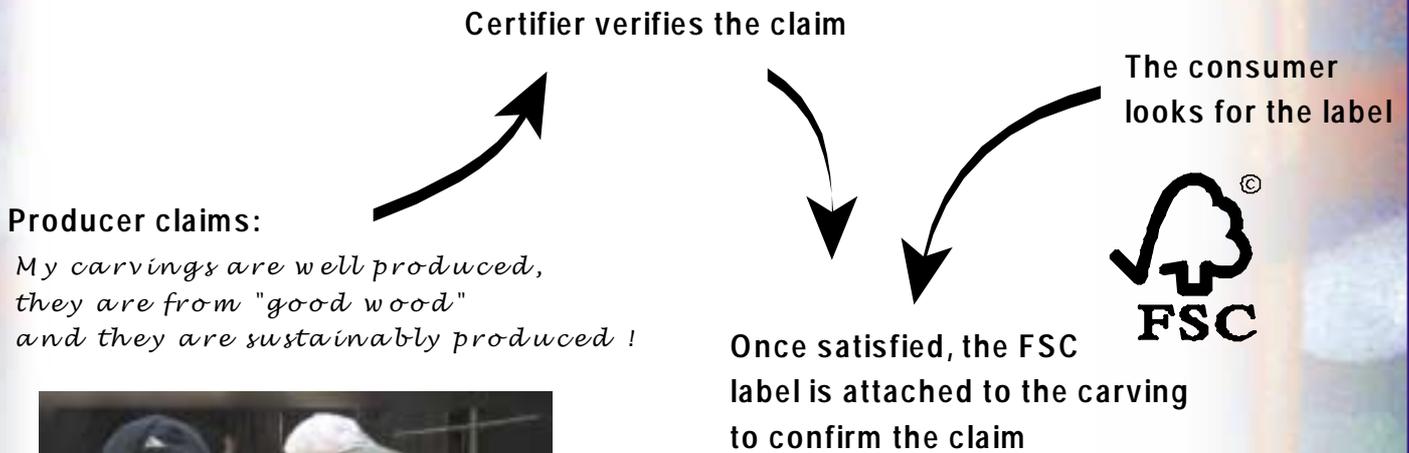
COC and FM certification in relation to Kenyan woodcarving (<http://people-andplants.org/pdf/chonga3.pdf>).

Demel Teketay, Regional Director of FSC Africa, commented: "*This Kenyan woodcarving certification sets an important example for other Eastern and Southern African countries with a growing woodcarving industry, and also to countries in Asia where woodcarving is an important industry. It also sets a precedent for a new type of certification - of Small / Low Intensity Managed Forests in a group system; specifically addressing the livelihood needs of low income families in the developing world, while protecting some of the worlds most threatened forests.*"

In general, independent forest certification was developed, because conservationists and wood products consumers have become increasingly aware of the negative impacts resulting from irresponsible harvesting of



From left to right: proud FSC certificate holders Constantine Kandie, Kenya Coast Tree Products (COC certificate), Jimmy Kabwere, Chairman of Coast Farm Forestry Association (FM certificate) and Rose Otieno, Manager of Akamba Handicraft Co-operative Society, Mombasa (COC certificate).



CTP Quality Assurance Officer, Alex Kubi, shows the traceability label for a certified rough carving.



timber. Forest certification is a market-led approach that allows the ethical consumer to buy an environmentally and socially sustainable wooden product. The demand for sustainable products sends a signal that there is a market for certified products and may therefore encourage other timber and wooden product producers to get certified. The idea is that over time this should result in more and more sustainably managed forests based on voluntary certification.

**What is FSC?**

FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) is an independent international organisation for certification of forest management through its (FSC) accredited certifiers. Members of FSC include environmental organisations as well as indigenous people groups from all over the world, and also forest companies and secondary buyers. The FSC has a total of 200 members and through the memberships broad

scope achieves strong support from many distant stakeholders.

**Components of certification**  
**Forest Management (FM) Certificate**

Forest management certification involves an inspection of the forest management unit by an independent accredited certification body to check that the forest complies with the internationally-agreed standards or principles of Responsible Forest Management. Once successfully verified the forest owner can sell his products mainly logs bearing FSC logo.

**Chain of Custody (COC) Certificate**

Chain of custody certification provides a guarantee about the certified production process. It ascertains the good practices employed in the production or the path taken by raw materials from the forest to the consumer, including all successive stages of processing, transformation, manufacturing

and distribution. This is important if product originating from certified sources is to be eligible to carry the certified Trademark, the certified logs or raw material has to be tracked, traced and identified from the forest through all the steps of the production process until it reaches the end user.

### **FSC Principles and Criteria**

The FSC has a defined set of 10 principles, criteria, and indicators aimed at evaluating whether forests are well

managed. The number and specificity of indicators in the FSC program are defined at the national or regional scale and are quite detailed and specific. The FSC has, therefore, encouraged the formation of regional working groups to further develop field indicators and performance standards tailored to forest types, ecological conditions, and social conditions particular to a region. The final approval of the regional FSC standards rests with the FSC General Assembly.

---

## **HOW TO GET CERTIFIED: THE FSC CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

*David R. Mainji (Project Manager, Good Woods Project WWF EARPO)*

This is a summary of what forest owners are required to undertake in order to achieve certification under the Forest Stewardship Council. After the general description of the process the specific action carried out by Good woods project is explained in *italics*.

**STEP 1.** Contacting/selecting a recognised certifier. If FSC certification it is selecting an FSC-Accredited Certifier who understand forests management practices in the area in question.

*In 1999 we approached the FSC certifier Rainforest Alliance - Smart Wood. Our understanding of FSC requirements was insufficient at the time and the FSC system was still unsuited to our requirements. We could not agree on a process with Smart Wood as a result. In 2001 the Good woods project approached the FSC certifier Soil Association - Woodmark, who were interested in the Good Woods project as an atypical case of crafts producers using timber from fast-growing alternatives to hardwoods, which are produced on small farms.*

**STEP 2.** Initial Discussions between the Certifier and the Potential applicant on what changes the applicant is likely to make to achieve certification.

*Initial discussions were held in 2001 when Soil Association visited the Malindi Handicraft cooperative society and neem farmers in Malindi. The need for a group certification of neem farmers group was identified. Activities to organise the farmers and carvers at the same time building capacity to enable them to meet the certification standards started shortly afterwards.*

**STEP 3.** Submission of an application to the certifier, including documentations of the applicants operations. Once agreed through negotiations on the operations to be assessed (budget of the whole process between the two parties) for the certification to be done; the next step is signing a contract with Certifier.

*After a business assessment by Kenya Gatsby Trust and discussions with Oxfam GB in 2002 it was realised that due to the financial constraints facing the Malindi Handicraft society certification could not be achieved within the project period and certification preparation efforts were diverted to the certification of Akamba Handicraft Cooperative Society alone. The certifier was notified of this decision.*

**STEP 4.** A Pre-audit Visit by Certifier to the Forest Management Unit is made. This visit made by the certifier to the site is sometimes called scoping visit. The resulting scoping report identifies all issues to be addressed including documentation review by Certifier before full certification assessment can be undertaken.

*In February 2004, a scoping visit by Soil Association - Woodmark was carried out in Akamba Handicraft Society and the neem farms. A scoping report detailing of what was to be done by the project before submitting a full certification assessment application was produced during this visit*

**STEP 5.** Field Assessment by Certifiers is carried out that includes on the ground field assessment and required consultations with local stakeholders. They also carry out the Chain of Custody Audit. The team prepares a draft assessment report.

*In August 2004, an application was submitted to Soil Association to carry out a full certification assessment on the farms targeted to produce neem*

*wood for the carvers (FM assessment) and also in Akamba to check on its production process (COC assessment).*

A full certification assessment which includes farm assessment, consultation with local stakeholders and within the Akamba Handicraft Cooperative Society was carried out in January 2005.

**STEP 6.** Review of the report by two or three independent specialists followed by discussion of possible terms and conditions of certification with this applicant.

*This was completed in February 2005.*

**STEP 7.** Final certification decision, certificate issuance, processing of final payments then a press release.

*Certificates were issued in March 2005.*

**STEP 8.** Random annual follow up.

*The first audit will take place in early 2006.*

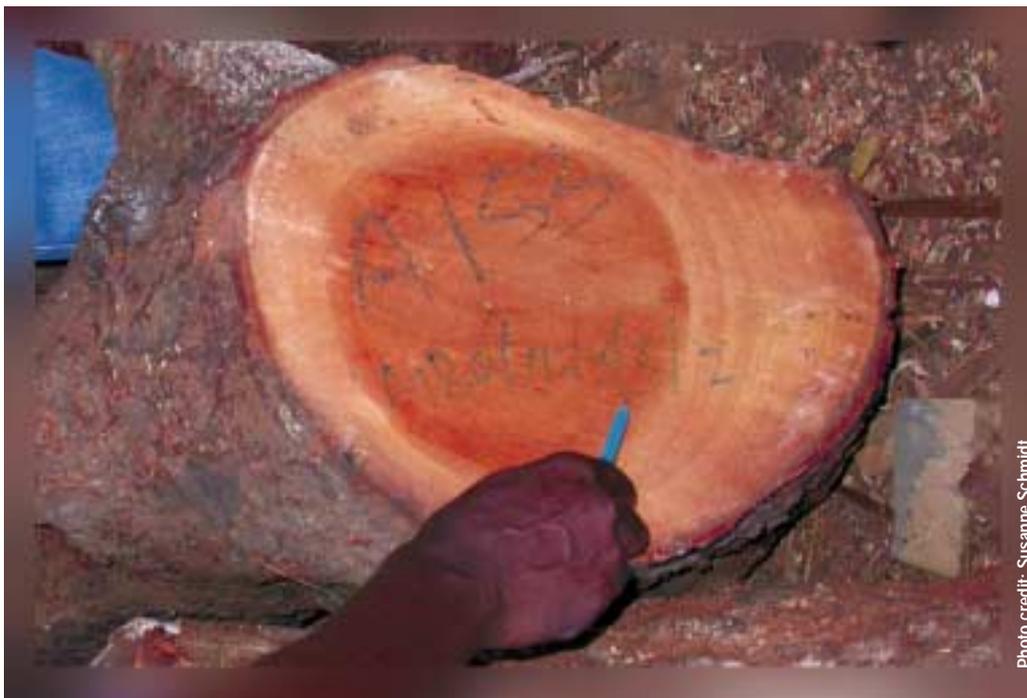


Photo credit: Susanne Schmidt

FSC certified neem log displaying the full log number for COC traceability; MBO = abbreviation for village name; 1179 = farmers number; 3 = tree number; 2 = log number.



Photo credit: Susanne Schmidt

Although the CFFA scheme is still too recent to give much monetary benefit to farmers, the Tubariki CFFA farmers group explains that joining the scheme has brought together old and young and men and women. This provides a platform for exchange of information and opinions on many aspects of farmers livelihoods, which was previously not easily possible.

## **BENEFITS OF FOREST CERTIFICATION**

*David R. Maingi (Project manager Good woods Project, WWF EARPO)*

Forest certification is a voluntary process. For organisations, companies or resource owners incentives must exist to comply with the rigorous certification standards. Some of these benefits are monetary, but increasingly non-monetary benefits are recognised. Some of the benefits are analysed below.

1. Certification promotes conservation of biodiversity whereas in previous forest management practices it may have had no prominence.
2. Price premiums on certified products may be realised and act as an incentive for producers, traders and retailers of certified products.
3. Certified products can access new markets, increase an existing market share or re-capture market shares (main benefit expected for Kenyan certified carvings) by being able to differentiate themselves from other products in an increasingly environmentally and socially conscious market place.
4. Certification attracts donor money for forests, because it is an independ-

ent check on the sustainability of forest management and treatment of workers. Certification is sometimes given as a condition before donor money can be received.

5. Certification guarantees continued supply, because the timber resource is harvested sustainably. Guarantee or supply is important for companies as they need to guarantee a product line for a number of years.
6. Forest certification creates a new standard for the management of community forest resources and businesses in areas with many problems of poor management.
7. Certification requires the involvement of members of the production chain making it a vehicle to promote national dialogue on associated issues of sustainable forest management, such as forest tenure, worker rights and community participation in the allocation and management of public resources.

# CHALLENGES TO FSC CERTIFICATION OF SMALL PRODUCERS IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

David R. Mainji (Project manager Good woods Project, WWF EARPO)



Photo credit: Susanne Schmidt

Mwanajuma Chungwa of the Tubariki CFFA farmers group in Kwale District, shows one of her young neem trees managed under the FSC certification scheme.

Forest certification sounds a good tool to guide forest conservation and management practices in response to market-led demand for sustainable wooden products. Such market demand exists, but is it big enough and does it pay a sufficient premium to provide enough incentive to bear the cost and administrative burden for small producers to get certified? Considering how much time and money it has taken to certify Good Woods, FSC certification becomes a more questionable endeavour.

Most farm owners, forest product processing or carving centres and regulators support certification but major challenges must still be overcome to make certification a useful tool for small producers of timber and wooden products in Africa and elsewhere.

a) The cost of certification evaluations and annual auditing are high and may not be compensated in the short-term by more efficient operations, or adequate benefits from access to a better market, higher prices, more secure tenure, or a needed public image.

b) Need for intensive training and capacity building in certification practice among farm owners or Forest owners and wood processors within the region, often requiring foreign technical support. The Good wood certification scheme comprises of 1500 farmers, 2000 carvers, 2 cutters and about 12 board members who have to be trained in order to sustain certification.

c) Need for interdisciplinary skills; to achieve certification the Good woods project had to find partners with skills in community mobilization, wood technology, marketing, business development and forest management. It is often not an easy task to source all the required skills and for partners to effectively work together.

d) Expectations of price premiums: these have often been seen as the main incentive for certification. Recent research has shown that these expectations have often not been borne out. The cost of certification (time & money) if there is an economic benefit for the producer, unless certification is a requirement for, e.g., forest concession renewal or donor acceptance.

e) Sustained support to achieve and maintain certification in the African context is needed. In most cases donor projects that provide the initial

subsidies for certification of forests are relatively short-lived (3-5 years) and often results in the withdrawal of the certificate once the financial support ceases. Some of the certification requirements are of questionable value leading to the NGOs or certification bodies advising them to solve management problems in externally-determined ways that risk enterprise failure or undermine the capacity for self-help.

f) Greater market share is not automatically guaranteed: although certified Kenyan carvings should have a competitive advantage in a growing ethical market place, cheaper and often better designed wooden crafts from Asia are still difficult to compete with.

g) Existing policies and forest management practices do not support certification: certification is a new concept in the region being implemented in a policy environment formulated long before the concept of certification was introduced.

h) High expectations of certification benefits. These are often disappointed due to a lack of understanding of the rigours of certification and without adequate knowledge of the market demand and supply chain of the product.

i) Lack of national or regional standards for certification is a challenge to certification in most areas. Instead international standards are used with minimal modifications. This has constrained adoption and progress of certification within the East African region.

k) Dependence on illegally sourced logs. Most of the wood processing centres like carving centres rely heavily on illegally acquired logs. This is one of the major problems that disqualify most potential organisations from achieving certification.

l) Lack of inventory data: such data is crucial for determining harvesting plans. Forest inventories are expensive. Particularly small producers lack the financial resources to undertake this activity regularly.



Neem tree management on CFFA member farm in Kwale District.

## FARMER TRAINING AND ORGANIZATION

*Severinus Jembe (Resource Manager, Good Woods Project)*

After a successful campaign to sensitize farmers to the potential benefits of joining the FSC group certification in the Project area, interested individuals were recruited to join the group certification scheme. A total of 1570 farmers were registered and they were further taken through two training levels.

The 1st training component which was referred to as 1st generation training, entailed awareness on neem and its management for wood and other products, tree management, farmer group formation and management, introduction to Certification, gender issues in tree growing, conflict management in the certification scheme, neem seed collection and storage.

After the first generation training farmers organised themselves into 30 groups and registered with the social services department in their respective Districts of Malindi, Kilifi and Kwale. With support from the project, they further organised themselves into one larger organization called the Coast Farm Forestry Association (CFFA). CFFA is an umbrella body for the farmer groups with each being represented by two delegates. The delegates came up with a Constitution and elected office bearers in mid 2004. The CFFA is the institution charged with sensitisation of farmer groups, ensuring smooth running of the tree business as well as linking the farmers with buyers. CFFA will also help in resolving any conflicts arising among farmers and will hold the FSC forest management certificate in the scheme. Towards the end of 2004, CFFA was registered with the Registrar of Societies.

The 30 farmer groups were given the 2nd generation training component which entailed the certification scheme structure, chain of custody, tree measurement and sales procedures in the scheme, neem oil pressing and neem soap making.

The training team with a total of 30 trainers was composed of Extension staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest Department, Kwetu Training Centre, Department of Social services and Coastal Forest Conservation Unit. The project team developed training manuals and trainers were asked to discuss and refine the manuals further before the actual training events started. The manuals can now be used repeatedly to train new members who join the FSC group certification scheme.



Certified carvings.

## A FRESH GOLD MINE

*Benjamin Dadu Mumba (Vice chairman CFFA)*

By June 2004 the largest farmers representative body in the coast region was formed. This organization, the Coast Farm Forestry Association (CFFA) has begun to spearhead and put in place strategies that will not only work at ensuring proper utilization of timber products but also create awareness amongst its members to ensure that the knowledge acquired is used to create a variety of non timber forest products (NTFP) that will go a long way in improving the livelihoods of its members in the region.

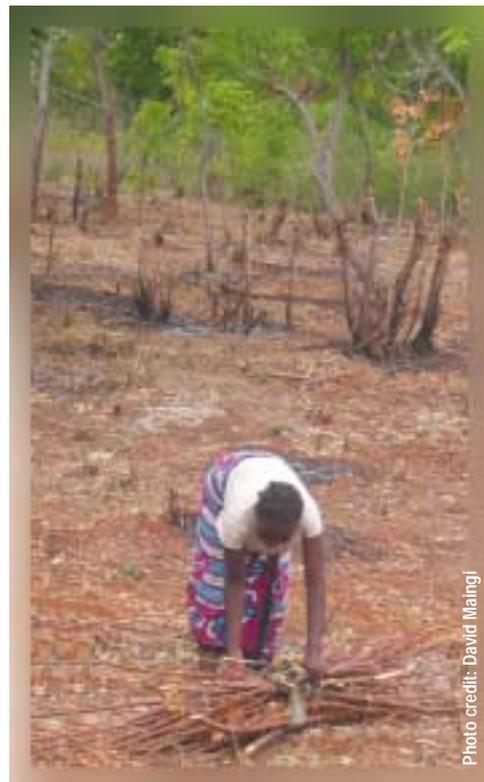
Shortly after the formation of the CFFA, we participated in a trade fair in Mombasa organized by various donors. Our sales during this trade fair contributed 0.4% of the total trade fair sales. This sounds small, but for us this was a significant step towards the creation of wealth among our members. The products we had on display included neem seeds, herbal soaps, brooms, table mats and several other products from neem trees and other good woods. These were products from individual farmers collected and marketed by the parent body CFFA.

The work towards acquiring certification status from FSC has been a major challenge for us. Thus, the recent announcement that we have passed the FSC certification assessment and can sell our neem logs as FSC certified has been a major achievement for us. We are happy to note that our efforts will not only benefit and improve the lives of our members, but we will be contributing to our countries earning of foreign exchange through the wood carving industry. Our logs,

herbal products and other NTFPs will begin to earn respect in the local and international arena. Every carving or NTFP sold will have helped to improve the life of not just the producer but a chain of people who have come into contact with these products.

The ultimate joy for CFFA is that our indigenous forests will have a chance to regenerate and to preserve their uniqueness and integrity. In another decade or so we look forward to a rich biodiversity around us that has been brought about by our willingness to conserve and also an improved economic status for our members.

The benefits from the neem tree are so diverse, for us it's a fresh Gold Mine.



Collecting neem prunings for firewood.

Photo credit: David Maingi

## **NEGOTIATING! CFFA LEADERS DISCUSS THE LOG PROCUREMENT PROCESS & PRICES WITH AKAMBA CO-OP EXPORT MANAGER AND THE LOG CLERK**

*Tom Were (Kenya Gatsby Trust)*

The Coast Farm Forestry Association (CFFA) farmer representatives visited Akamba in March to discuss several issues related to log procurement and pricing both at the farm gate and at the log yard at Akamba. Several farmers believed that the co-op was going to pay too little for the certified neem trees they purchase for carving from the carvers in Malindi, Kilifi and Kwale

For the certification process to work, prices offered by the Akamba co-operative for certified neem-logs have to be reviewed every 6 month. That way, carvers are not turned back by high prices and farmers are also not disappointed by what the coop has to offer. The co-op buys the logs which are to be stored and seasoned in the log yard, and in turn sells the logs to the carvers.

Two important milestones are achieved out of these simple discussions. One, traceability is reaffirmed. In practice, the traceability of the logs (COC) is ensured through clear labelling of the logs, sales records and receipt. Secondly, transparency is created, and no party misunderstands the other. In this case, the farmers have always considered Akamba as a 'big brother', who has always offered lower than he can give, hence disenfranchisement.

In the farmer representative's own words, she said *"Now we know what happens before you come to us to buy neem logs."*

### **What the carvers say**

Normally the carvers are very jovial, be it under their low roofed sheds or on the busy streets inside the Akamba

co-operative yard on their way for a break or to deliver some products to the export or show room.

### **Peter Munguti: master carver**

He is one of the most experienced (master) carvers. He had just walked into the export office, and began to try his hands on a computer. We set out to ask him a question or two on certification, only a few days after we got the communication on successful application for FSC certification for the chain of custody (COC) by Akamba co-operative.

Alex Kubi (QA assistant with KGT) asks him whether he remembers what it is and how the certification program has been of benefit to him as a person. This is what he had to say while sketching a new range of products, *"my strongest fear was how we were to get rid of brokers .....We worked hard and from what I have seen, we at least managed to remove the middle man...."* and why is that so...? *"You know, they paid us very little money claiming that our products were not very good, yet they made good money"* he pauses then continues, *"Now, I make good products and get a good price without being cheated"* You have helped us a lot (referring to KGT/WWF partnership) that took them through the certification and quality assurance programme.

### **Festus Ndzeki: master carver**

Then as we take a walk through the shades, we stop suddenly and admire a product one carver was working on. He looks up and then retreats back to work. Alex remembers his name and starts by saying hallo. He is Festus Ndzeki.



James Mutua carving the 'Big Five' from FSC certified neem. James is one of the carvers benefitting from carving FSC certified neem for an export order.

Mr Ndzeki is also one of the master carvers and a member of the Health and Safety committee, which was set up as result of the FSC certification requirement. This is what he has to say. *"Many thanks to WWF for sure, I know Mr. Maingi (Good Wood Project Manager, WWF EARPO) has been trying to enlighten us for the last two years on certification. I am seeing a new approach to improve my working*

*environment and my livelihood. For example, before, I never knew I was endangering my life by not wearing safety gear! But now I know. Things have change around here ..."* His sentiments were repeated by at least four other carvers interviewed at random.



Timothy carving 'lovers dancing' from FSC certified neem.

---

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR WOODCARVING AND SETTING UP KENYA COAST TREE PRODUCTS (CTP) COMPANY: USING BUSINESS AS A CONSERVATION TOOL**

*Constantine Kandie and Tom Were (Kenya Gatsby Trust)*

The market-led approach to production of carvings, a concept promoted by KGT, was not the usual process of doing business at Akamba cooperative. Normally, the carvers carve and stock the showrooms to await walk-in buyers. This essentially has resulted in tons of "cannot-be-sold" carvings over the years. KGT's market-led approach to business, first locates an interested consumer, and then produces what the consumer desires.

Akamba management and carvers were familiarised with these new ways of doing business. However, a major challenge existed and had to be overcome - cracking and moulding of neem carvings. These quality issues had to be dealt with patiently and painstakingly, because without good quality carvings no export market for certified 'Good Woods' could be facilitated by KGT or now the Kenya Coast Tree Products (CTP)

Neem carvings tend to crack and mould unless treated and carvers had no solutions to these new problems. As there was no existing information on how to solve these quality issues of neem, wood technology research by Meshack Muga of Kenya Forest Research Institute (KEFRI) was commissioned to overcome this crucial bottleneck (see article by M. Muga). Initially, he was supported by Mr Victor Burclaff, a wood technologist from the UK. This process took over a year and the delay in being able to complete the training on quality assurance meant no buyers could be introduced as long as we were not sure to be able to deliver a quality product.

sacked by members at any time? After discussing these issues with all project partners it was recognised that a separate business owned by 'Good Woods' stakeholder would have the independence to enforce these new rules and provide vital services that Akamba and the CFFA need - marketing, quality assurance, design and oversight over the resource management and capacity building in all of these matters.

This has led to the establishment of the Kenya Coast Tree Products, which was the culmination of over two years of work and close partnership between the Good Wood farmers of the Coast



Bowl carved from neem.

Finally, by early 2004 we had confidence that quality neem carvings could be marketed. This meant that production training of carvers and design work could be completed and overseas buyers could be introduced (see Susan Lusega's article). Yet, there was still the issue of who could enforce the new production process and make sure quality assurance was adhered to by individual carvers when the export manager has no power within the co-operative to reject bad quality products? Similarly, who would enforce the Chain of Custody requirements, or make sure that certification costs are borne if the management of Akamba can be

Farm Forestry Association (CFFA), Akamba Handicraft Cooperative Society and Good Woods Project Partners (WWF EARPO, OXFAM, KGT, CFCU, and KWETU). For now CTP is a registered trademark of KGT. Setting up CTP as a company jointly owned by all stakeholders was intended but is not possible for several reasons: carvers and farmers prefer not to be involved in the company and WWF charity rules does not allow it to be involved in the company. However, the current solution appears workable and acceptable to all partners until an alternative can be found. CTP now holds one of the two FSC Chain of Custody (COC) certificates to be able

to handle certified carvings. Akamba, of course, holds the other COC certificate. The Coast Farm Forestry Association (CFFA), as the umbrella organisation for all farms participating in the FSC group certification, holds the Forest Management certificate. For Akamba, CTP acts almost as an independent, external audit facility to make sure that they comply with the FSC requirements.

KGT is helping to firmly establish CTP on behalf of all partners, particularly by utilizing its strength in the Business Development Services sector to establish market linkages for products made from certified wood. WWF EARPO is helping to build the capacity of the CFFA, mostly through supporting the position of the CFFA resource manager, Mr Severinus Jembe. However, over a period of two years CTP is supposed to self-sustain itself from the profit it generates. This means the cost to run CTP, to assure quality, develop new designs and to market products and cover the costs of certification will have to be covered through charging a 10% commission on all sales facilitated through CTP. CTP will also plough back certain portions of its annual income to build the capacity of its partner cooperatives and farmers in areas of technology, entrepreneurship and business management concepts.

Some fruits have already been borne of CTP's efforts. Since August 2004, when most of the product quality issues had been dealt with, CTP has been able to bring orders from international buyers of up to KSh 1.5 million to Akamba cooperative (approximately 4500 pieces). The value of the orders is expected to double by the end of the year 2005. CTP still continues to work with Akamba cooperative by following production from the procurement of logs, to seasoning, carving, drying and finishing. As

part of the COC requirements, a unique identification is attached, starting with the logs. In this way the COC requirement of traceability is ensured, which means that a carving can be traced back to the farmer, and even a specific tree stump, whether in Kwale, Kilifi or Malindi district. In a nut shell CTP's function is to guarantee traceability, quality and delivery both on time and the correct designs, size, and quantity.

CTP is located in Mombasa. It is currently being supported by its key partners in the Good Woods project. The support will go on for another one to two years, after which CTP is expected to stand on its own. The partners in the good woods project recognize that they are not in the core business of trading in carvings, but rather facilitating sustainable utilization of natural resources for mutual social and economic livelihoods, and would like to continue to do that. It is hoped that, such an initiative will be replicated elsewhere not only in Kenya but also in the region.

We shall be happy to listen to your enquiries or help you develop a sustainable business linkage with Akamba cooperative and other cooperatives in the region, or in the event that you require a supply of logs or other non wood products from Neem.

Examples of quality-assured FSC certified Good Wood carvings available through CTP.

Should you wish to get in touch with CTP, please write to:

twere@kenyagatsby.org or  
Ckandie@kenyagatsby.org or  
call 254-722-208612.

While in Mombasa you could pay us a visit at the:

Planet Plaza, Shop Number 24, near Nakumatt Nyali, on the Mombasa-Malindi road.

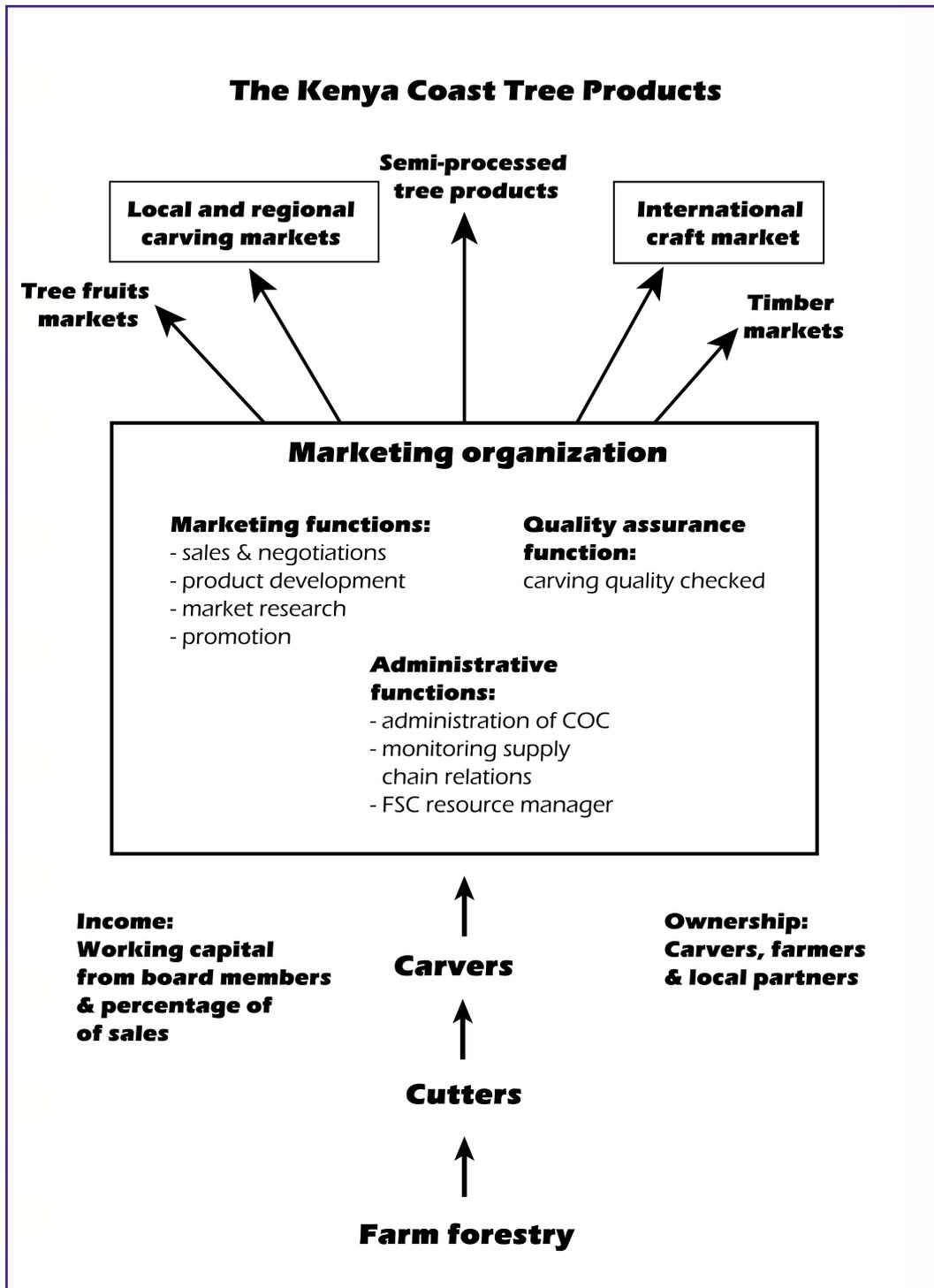


Figure : Diagram illustrating the business model of the Kenya Coast Tree Products Company, set up to be a fair-trade and environmentally sound enterprise by farmers, carvers and project partners. Existing targets for marketing are framed. In the near future CTP is likely to market neem products and could eventually market a number of tree products including fruits (mango) and timber for the furniture industry for example

## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN IMPROVEMENT & MARKET ACCESS

Susan Maina Lusega (*Information Co-ordinator, Kenya Gatsby Trust*)

For Kenya Gatsby Trust, the product development process starts with the preparation of storyboards where new product ideas in pictorial form are given to producer groups. The storyboards are made after an intensive research is made on the market trends and designs expectations of potential buyers. This is followed closely by the interpretation and the production of initial designs. A digital imaging exercise then follows where digital images of the new products are sent to potential buyers in the target market, their main role at this point being to provide feedback on the products based on the target market's requirements. Based on this feedback more prototypes are developed.

KGT then develops a marketing strategy that includes a buyer-seller matchmaking exhibition that aims at linking the producer groups to the buyers.

Catalogues are also made and sent to potential buyers.

Through the buyer matchmaking exhibitions and catalogue marketing, KGT approaches the two types of buy-

ers; fair trade and mainstream buyers.



Photo credit: David Maingi

For Akamba Co-operative, the same process was followed and so far the co-operative has had two big orders from Besmo Products Ltd - Besmo is a UK based buyer of wood carvings and other crafts (www.besmo.com).

The proprietor of Besmo products, Mr. Yunib Siddiqui was invited to Kenya for a buyer matchmaking event that took place at the Royal Court Hotel in Mombasa in 2004. He was particularly interested with the products because they are made from the Good Woods and because they were soon to be FSC certified.

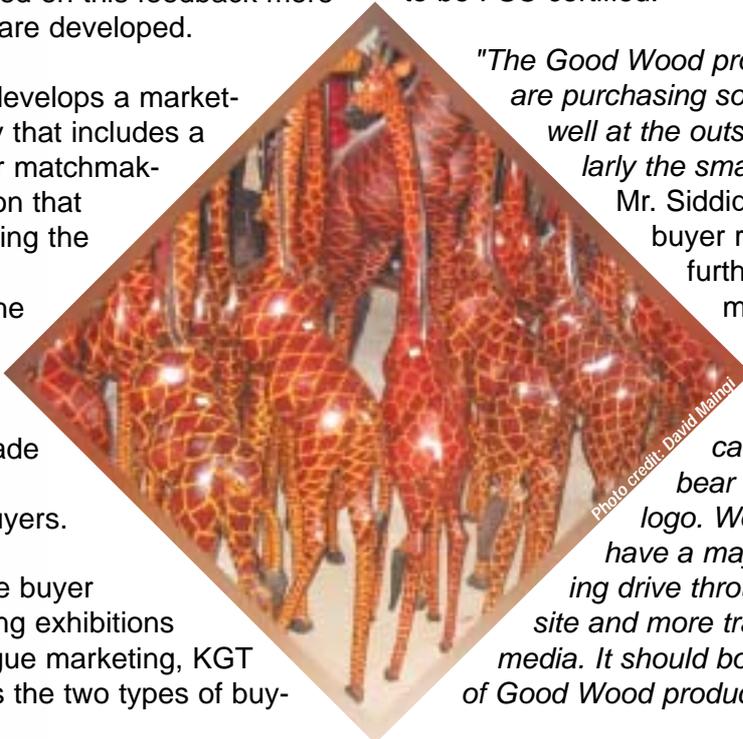


Photo credit: David Maingi

*"The Good Wood products we are purchasing sold extremely well at the outset, particularly the smaller items".*

Mr. Siddiqui, the buyer reported. He further commented "We are now urgently awaiting carvings that bear the FSC logo. We can then have a major marketing drive through our web site and more traditional media. It should boost the sale of Good Wood products."

## **AKAMBA HANDCRAFT COOPERATIVE SOCIETY**

*Joshua Muli, Chairman & Rose Otieno, Manager of Akamba Handcraft Cooperative*

### **Background of the Akamba Handicraft Society**

Akamba handicraft industry has seen a steady growth since it was established as a cooperative society in 1962 by about 100 members. The cooperative was strategically positioned at Changamwe, right on the way to Mombasa International Airport. The location has been key to success, as tourist passing by on the way from and to the airport can easily stop to buy carving souvenirs.

The Handicraft Society has 102 employees who are carefully recruited from amongst the members. The membership has grown enormously with a total of around 3000 member with another 2000 persons who are either directly or indirectly beneficiaries of activities around the industry. The cooperative's activities are guided by an able and vibrant management team who are motivated by the common goal of giving quality services to the cooperative's esteemed customers.

### **Products and Services - Responding to the Market needs**

There has been constant and growing attempt over the years to ensure Akamba Handicraft products are authentic and original in all aspects. Their quality standards in both the products and service have continued to attract local and international demand. Product ranges are wide in scope and variety giving all customers room to select from the diversity in price, taste and functionality.

### **Capacity**

The Cooperative occupies an area of nine acres with the requisite infrastructure in place. The carving skills

have been well developed over the years, with senior or master carvers nurturing younger or upcoming experts in all specialized products. With the kind of experience in the industry, it has been able to meet growing customer demand in the volumes required. With a capacity of 1,000,000 pieces of carvings a month, the cooperative is able to meet high volume demands.

### **Products, Pricing and Certification**

Demands from buyers are varied. Some have requested repetitively, products from indigenous trees like Meru oak, mahogany among many more, and Akamba has over the years responded very well to these demands. As they all say, the customer is always right! However, with the increasing awareness over the impact of such activities on the environment, the market has started evolving and informed customers have started accepting other species of wood. Over the last two years, WWF EARPO in partnership with Kenya Gatsby Trust has been working with the management and staff to introduce alternative wood for carving, now known as Good woods, and includes readily available wood from neem and mango.

To make 'Good Wood' carvings more marketable, the partners have been building Akamba's capacity for certification through accreditation from Forest Stewardship Council. It is therefore anticipated that in the not so far future, all carvings will be made from good woods and FSC certified.

The capacity of master carvers, such as Festus Ndzeki, has been built by

KGT, an NGO offering business development skill, in the areas of product design and quality, As a result, he and others he has mentored have been producing trendy designs with good success.

### **Exports from Akamba Handicraft**

With customers all around the world, Akamba handicrafts produces and exports approximately up to 65% of all carvings originating from Kenya. The society's increasingly sound and stable management practices, and with

expert help from partners like KGT and WWF during the past two years, has helped reduce customer complaints by about 15% in the year 2004. It is hoped that through hard work in product development and quality assurance, the cooperative can continue to reduce complaints. This is expected to go hand in hand with packaging methods, which will evolve with the changing international standards. Hence the cooperative seeks to readily embrace the challenges of meeting customer needs and to transform them to reality.

---

## **ROLE OF WOOD TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH IN CERTIFICATION OF CARVINGS FROM NEEM (*AZADIRACHTA INDICA A. JUSS*)**

*Meshack Muga (Research Scientist, KEFRI)*

Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) is one of the main 'Good Woods' being promoted to replace the over-exploited indigenous species like Muhugu (*Brachylaena huillensis*) and Mutamaiyo (*Olea africana*) among others.

Neem is an important and widely available species used by the carvers at the Kenyan Coast. A valuable overseas market for neem carvings is also being developed. However, there are two important (and serious) problems associated with this wood. Firstly, neem wood has been observed to crack and check during various stages of carving and in the finished product, and secondly, its sapwood is susceptible to the growth of mould. These quality issues have been a major obstacle to the development of a viable export market, which is a necessary requirement for certification. To address some of these issues, KEFRI has been carrying out research together with the carvers at Akamba Co-operative Society through the support of WWF.

Some of the studies that have been carried out include:

- establishing the basic physical properties of neem and their variation within the log (e.g. moisture content),
- assessing the effectiveness of paraffin wax for control of checks in logs,
- testing the effectiveness of boric acid for control of mould growth,
- determination of optimum drying rates for carvings of different size and design in an experimental solar kiln,
- developing guidelines for log selection, grading and storage that are being applied by the carvers.

The studies show that neem has a moderate density (710 kg/m<sup>3</sup>) implying that it is not hard to carve. It also has moderate green moisture content (60 %) and this tends to vary with the position in the log. The water in the outer part of the log (sapwood) tends to be lost much faster than that at the centre (heartwood) and this non uniform loss causes checking and cracking of the wood. The studies show that



Photo credit: Susanne Schmidt

### Solar kiln

applying paraffin wax at the ends of the logs can help in reducing the rate of moisture loss and hence the checking. 20 % boric acid solution applied on dry carvings for a minimum of 30 seconds appears sufficient in controlling the growth of moulds on neem.

The studies with the experimental drying kiln show that less bulky neem carvings can be dried using a drying schedule developed during the study. By applying this schedule it is possible to dry green neem carvings to a moisture content of 10-12 % within a period of 29-33 days. Carvings do no longer crack when the moisture content has dropped to around 10 - 12 %. Based on the findings from the experimental kiln, a production kiln has been constructed to enable the drying of a larger consignment of carvings (a 20 feet container). In the production kiln and through increasing experience, the drying time of average sized carvings has been reduced to 8-10 days. The drying of carvings in the solar kiln has tremendously improved the quality of the carvings and so far no cases of rejections of these products in the overseas market have been reported.



Photo credit: Susanne Schmidt

Discussing the COC monitoring from farm to carved product with export manager Urbanus Musau and CTP Quality Assurance Officer, Alex Kubi.

As different designs of neem carvings are being developed kiln drying conditions and length will still have to be further researched. The capacity of a small technical team in Akamba has been built to conduct these research tasks, with occasional input from KEFRI.

On the basis of the drying schedule and the design of the kiln, neem drying and treatment can easily be replicated in other carving operations and co-operatives along the coast (e.g. Malindi Handicraft Society).

## NEEM AS A BASIS FOR A VILLAGE-BASED INDUSTRY

KHAMIS O. MAITHA ( *Neem Processing Coordinator, Kwetu Training Centre* )

The botanical name of neem is *Azadirachta indica*. The tree is a member of the mahogany family, Meliaceae. It is growing in large numbers at the Kenya coast where it is also known as *mwarubaini* - the tree of forty cures. Local knowledge about the tree is abundant but limited to its medicinal use of leaves, barks and roots for the treatment of malaria, stomach-aches, fever, colds, chest problems and skin disorders.

Growing opposition to synthetic pesticides has led to a sudden enthusiasm for the pesticidal properties of neem. This is one of its properties that has raised interest in research on commercialisation of neem. However, there are many other neem products that can and already are being commercialised, and which could be produced to create additional income sources for small farmers. Due to this fact the neem department works on developing appropriate techniques for making by-products of neem. With funding from Oxfam Kenya, Kwetu has been able to participate in training of farmers in neem product development within the Good Woods project.

Almost every part of neem has its uses making the neem tree a potential new income source for farmers. Some of the uses of neem to promote village-based industries by the farmers are outlined below.

### **Timber:**

Neem timber is hard and durable and resistant to termites and woodworms. It is now being used in the carving industry replacing the over-exploited indigenous hardwoods such as *muhuhu* and ebony.

### **Leaves:**

Neem leaves possess excellent medicinal properties. In addition to usefulness in pest management and disease control they can be fed to livestock when mixed with other fodder. Neem leaf powder is used as a herbal tea and is now available in supermarkets and herbal stores in Kenya.

### **Neem oil:**

Of all the neem products, neem oil is perhaps the most commercially important. The oil is generally dark, bitter and has a strong odour. Some of its compounds are good for medicinal and agricultural uses of high importance and value. Neem oil is used in production of soaps, cosmetics like facial creams, nail polish nail oils, shampoos and conditioners etc. The oil is also a very effective mosquito repellent.

### **Neem cake:**

Neem cake, a by product of oil extraction, has many uses. It can be used as livestock feed, fertilizer and natural pesticide. It not only provides organic nitrogen but also inhibits the nitrification process, when mixed with urea, before applying in the fields.

### **Challenges facing neem product development**

Despite the many benefits of neem, it faces some challenges in the acceptance of its products. Some of them are:

- A perceived lack of effectiveness of neem pesticides because of its slow effect.
- Time consuming and labour intensive preparation especially for women. This gives them an extra burden of work especially as the harvesting time coincides with the

busiest time in the farm calendar—the onset of the rains.

- Technical problems in the processing and the use as home made product.
- Raw materials can only be stored for a limited period in humid tropical conditions.
- A lack of information and extension services on tree management techniques, seed harvesting and processing.
- Poor access to neem products markets; low prices paid for seeds, mid-

dlemen make the main profit; lack of village industries for neem processing or too stiff competition with more sophisticated manufacturers.

### Way forward

After creating awareness on the management of neem and harvesting and processing of neem products, the next phase should emphasize on product development, quality assurance and marketing of the neem products so as to enable farmers benefit further from this 'new' resource.



Photo credit: Susame Schmidt



Photo credit: David Maingi



Photo credit: David Maingi

From top clockwise: neem products (tea from dried neem leaves, neem oil and neem soap); collected neem seeds, CFFA farmers collecting neem seeds.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING FOREST CERTIFICATION IN FOREST MANAGEMENT

*Anthony M. Maina (Dryland and Forestry Programme, Forest Department KENYA)*

Forest certification ensures responsible forest management. It is a market-led approach that depends on strong demand for certified forest products from ethical consumers who care about the environment. Participation in forest certification is therefore voluntary (i.e. a soft policy) and the decision to participate must be weighed against potential benefits. Certifying forest products is not an easy option because of the initial costs involved, but the potential benefit of greater market-share and premium prices are some of the most powerful economic incentives for its adoption.

It is not easy for rural resource owners with minimal certification awareness to undertake forest certification successfully without assistance from outside, as provided by the 'Good Woods' project of WWF EARPO and its partners. Through the project it has become possible to successfully set up a certification scheme with the aim of certifying farm forests and wood carvings made from them.

The lessons learnt from this pilot project should be used to scale up and potentially achieve more gains from certification. To do this key national stakeholders have to be involved and national structures and initiatives have to be in place. Therefore, a national initiative involving WWF, Forest Department, Kenya Bureau of Standards and other

stakeholders has been initiated under the auspices of World Bank.

The National Forest Certification initiative has a steering committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources while WWF provide the secretariat. Forest certification is private sector driven and therefore includes all stakeholders (Forest Department, NEMA, Kenya Bureau of Standards, Social groups, CBO's dealing with forest issues, NGO's, and Forest industries etc).

Under the steering committee is a technical committee that will deal with all the technical issues. Major activi-



Photo credit: Susanne Schmidt

Neem tree management on CFFA member farm in Kwale District

ties will include review and revision of forest conservation and management criteria which were developed in 2000. Using the forest criteria and indicators, develop national forest management standards based on the FSC international 10 Principles and Criteria.

Forest certification has already been embodied in the new forest policy and to this end, new forest development

projects are being encouraged to embrace it with a view of addressing sustainable forest management and marketing of forest products. It is also important to note that with forest certification, it will be easier to access donor funding. We shall keep you posted through this column on the progress being made under the Kenyan Chapter.

---

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY CAPACITY BUILDING OF AKAMBA CARVERS**

*Catherine Marangu (Assistant to Good Woods Project, WWF EARPO)*

Health and safety measures in the wood carving industry are often ignored potentially leading to massive losses in carver's time and money. Most often the carvers work under unsafe environments; the sheds are too low, have poor lighting, the dust emanating from the production process and the surrounding poses a great risk, risk of injury from improper use of working tools and the grievous body damage both in the short and long term that occurs due to poor working posture.

FSC Principles and Criteria maintain that forest management practices should meet all applicable laws and regulations covering health and safety of employees and their families. Hence intervention measures on health and safety at Akamba Handicraft Cooperative Society were basic requirements and conditions that had to be fulfilled in order to achieve FSC certification. The situation at Akamba Handicraft Co-operative Society therefore called for undertaking of an exercise to reverse a potential disaster if unattended. WWF contracted Hadasa Health and Safety Trainers to carry out the training. The 3000 carvers in the co-operative society and potential members of the certification scheme were the main target

for the training. Training such a large group proved to be too large for the trainers to do effectively and therefore 36 Trainer of Trainers were selected amongst the carvers. The training sessions were mainly interactive with practical demonstration.

The overall aim was to provide the TOT with the basic health, safety, ergonomics, hygiene, first aid and fire fighting skills. Objectives of the training were:

- Enlightenment on the potential hazards in the working environ-



Photo credit: Catherine Marangu

Fire fighting equipment at Akamba

ment, which can cause ill health and accidents at work.

- Enable participants' perception of danger and the necessary knowledge and skills to avoid the same.
- Help them appreciate the importance of good use and maintenance of personal protective clothing and appliances.
- Gain an understanding of the importance of their participation and co-operation in the prevention of accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences.

Knowledge and skills gained were shared and disseminated by the TOT's to their colleagues. Each TOT was made responsible for the carving sheds they represent in terms of delivering information and assisting during emergencies. A major outcome was the magnitude of awareness raised amongst the carvers. It was interesting to note that most did not have prior knowledge on the subject and hence it served as an eye opener.

Practical sessions were organized for fire fighting skills and a tour was conducted round the various carving sheds to discuss work ergonomics. While on the tour it was discovered

that many areas required urgent attention such as the cleanliness of the sheds, poor handling of equipment, poor posture, overcrowding and improvement of basic sanitation facilities. A health and safety committee was established to look into the implementation of these issues.

### **Way Forward**

Several activities have taken place at Akamba Handicraft Cooperative Society as result of the training and recommendations made during the training. These are:

1. Setting up the Health and Safety committee to look into the existing gaps to make the working environment a safe place to work in.
2. Establishment of first aid kits which are conveniently placed at the working sheds.
3. The setting up of a fire fighting equipment point and a fire assembly point for carvers.
4. Purchase and use of protective equipment.
5. Consultation started between the Society ,management and Ministry of Health to start a medical clinic at the site
6. Cleaning up of the working sheds.



Photo credit: Catherine Marangu

Facilitator from Hadasa health and safety trainers conducting the training sessions

## **PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT AND CONTACT PERSONS**

### **OXFAM (K)**

Shelter Afrique House,  
Mamlaka Road,  
P.O. Box 40680, GPO  
Nairobi, 00100  
Tel.: + 254 020 2820000  
Fax: +254 020 2820104  
Contact Person: Elizabeth Mueni  
Email [Emueni@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:Emueni@oxfam.org.uk)

### **KWETU TRAINING CENTER**

P.O. BOX 685  
Mtwapa  
Contact person: Wendy Foster  
Email: [kwetu@sollatek.co.ke](mailto:kwetu@sollatek.co.ke)

### **KENYA GATSBY TRUST**

ACK Garden House  
1st Ngong Ave, 6th Floor, Wing 'D'  
P.O Box 44817, GPO  
Nairobi 00100  
Tel.: 254 020 2720711, 2720703,  
2720571  
Fax: 2721707  
Contact Person: Constanine Kandie  
Email: [Ckandie@kenyagatsby.org](mailto:Ckandie@kenyagatsby.org)

### **COASTAL FOREST CONSERVATION UNIT**

P.O. Box 596  
Kilifi  
Email: [cfcukilifi@yahoo.com](mailto:cfcukilifi@yahoo.com)  
Contact persons : Anthony Githitho  
and Severinus Jembe

### **KENYA FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE (KEFRI)**

Forest Products  
Utilization Division  
P.O. BOX 30241, GPO  
NAIROBI, 00100  
Tel.: +254 020 3761063  
Contact Person: Muga M.O.  
Email: [kefri@wananchi.com](mailto:kefri@wananchi.com)

### **WWF UK**

Panda House  
Weyside Park  
Godalming GU7 1XR  
UK  
Contact Person: Susanne Schmitt  
Email: [sschmitt@wwf.org.uk](mailto:sschmitt@wwf.org.uk)

### **OXFAM (GB)**

274 Banbury Road  
Oxford OX2 7DZ  
Contact Person: David Bright  
Email: [dbright@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:dbright@oxfam.org.uk)



**WWF** *for a living planet*

Published by WWF EARPO  
PO Box 62440  
Nairobi 00100, KENYA  
Tel.: +254 020 532630/631  
[dmaingi@wwfearpo.org](mailto:dmaingi@wwfearpo.org)

Funding from the Darwin  
Initiative and DFID is  
gratefully acknowledged



**DFID**

Department for  
International  
Development

*People and Plants* is a partnership of WWF-UK and UNESCO with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew as an associate.

<http://peopleandplants.org/>

*People  
and  
plants*