



## Government sets new directives to increase forest cover

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The government has set new directives to increase tree and forest cover in the arid and semi-arid Kinango Sub County of Kwale County.

The new regulations require landowners to mark boundaries with trees instead of erecting parameter walls.

Also, part of the regulations requires homesteads, schools, and other social institutions to at least cover 10% of their compounds with trees.

Kinango is one of the sub counties in Kwale severely affected by the ongoing drought that has exposed 26,000 residents to food crisis.

Speaking during the launching of the Kenyans for Green World Organisation in Kinango Sub County, the area Assistant County Commissioner (ACC) Charles Wesamba said the government and its stakeholders are concerned with the severe drought experienced in the area.

Wesamba added that the dream to make the sub-county green is an initiative that should be advocated by all stakeholders for the country to achieve the national target of 10 percent forest cover.

"This youth-based organisation has set the bar on the government agenda of increasing tree covers in the county at large," Wesamba said.

The administrator noted forests contribute immensely to economic development and the country's livelihoods adding that they support diverse economic sectors, including agriculture, horticulture, tourism, wildlife, and energy.

The ACC sounded a warning to all people engaging in charcoal business that the law will not spare them.

"We have recommended hefty fines on individuals who will be found violating the environmental laws. We have instructed our local administrators in the area to monitor our roads and nearby forests. Anyone who will be found to have logs and charcoal shall be arrested and charged in a court of law," Wesamba said.

The founder of the Kenyans for Green World Organisation, Omar Weko, asked the community to join hands in the effort to transform the sub county that has been ravaged by drought.

Weko added that his organization is targeting to plant over one million Xerophyte species such as Neem Tree and Baobab tree among others.

“Our nursery yard has over 24,000 seedlings and we want to plant all of them in a week’s time. Let’s everyone take the responsibility of making Kinango,” Weko said.

He said Kinango has experienced a prolonged drought that has affected agricultural activities for over one year and pastoral activities largely affected.

The environmental activist said there was a need to create awareness among communities on the importance of conserving forests and guarding against degradation of the same.

The prolonged drought has forced government and humanitarian organizations such as the Kenya Red Cross Society to initiate Cash Transfer and Livestock Off take Programs.

The cash transfer programme which has been in existence for three months has benefited over 900 families across the semi-arid Sub-County with each homestead receiving Sh3, 000 monthly.

In December 2021, the government announced that it has set aside Sh40million for the livestock off take program.

To add on, the Kenya Red Cross Society which is jointly executing the livestock transfer program with the national government is targeting over 500 pastoralists across the county.

Source: <https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/government-committed-to-increase-tree-and-forest-cover/>