

Murang'a to increase forest cover to 17 per cent by 2022

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Water and Irrigation Principal Secretary Joseph Wairagu planting a tree in Kiambicho forest on Friday.

Murang'a is seeking to attain 17 per cent forest cover by 2022, county deputy ecosystems conservator George Nduati has said.

The county's forest cover is currently at 14.5 per cent, which over the globally recommended 10 per cent.

Kenya is working to achieve the 10 per cent in two years.

Nduati said about 11 per cent of the trees are in public forests, while the remainder is in private and corporate farms, and include fruits trees.

Partnerships with forest community associations, he said, have played a major role in conservation and preventing deforestation.

Locals assist in reforestation programmes and are allowed to graze their livestock in the forests in a controlled manner.

"The erection of a live fence around Gatara, Kimakia and Wanjerere forests in the Aberdare Ranges has also helped to control logging," he said.

A logging moratorium imposed by the government in 2018 to rehabilitate public and community forests has seen many saw-millers resorting to buying trees from private farms to keep their businesses going.

This, Nduati said, has however not had a major effect on the county's forest cover, especially with the numerous seedlings planting programmes by partners.

Kenya Forest Service planted over 200,000 tree seedlings last year.

But with increased trees came monkeys, which have been wreaking havoc in farms and destroying crops.

This has discouraged a section of farmers from planting more trees not to attract the animals into their farms.

“We will work with Kenya Wildlife Service to come up with a solution that will help control the monkeys,” Nduai said.

He spoke on Friday during a tree planting event in Kiambicho Forest in Kiharu subcounty, which was led by Water and Irrigation PS Joseph Wairagu in celebration of the African Public Service week.

The PS said Murang’a county provides 82 per cent of the water consumed in Nairobi county and that the only way to replenish the resource is to conserve the environment.

Over 2,000 tree seedlings were planted, while locals benefited from 2,000 avocado seedlings.

Wairagu said the government is in the process of implementing numerous domestic and irrigation projects to increase water coverage in the county.

He cited the Sh900 million Maragua Dam, which will provide water to over 170,000 homes in Maragua, Maragua Ridge, Kambiti, Saba Saba and Kamahuha areas.

National Irrigation Authority ICT officer Nancy Muthoni said farmers are being encouraged to engage in agribusiness as they plant more trees.

“We have issued hass avocado seedlings, which produce high-quality avocados that will empower farmers financially,” she said.

Muthoni said the authority has dug numerous water pans to encourage irrigation and deter farmers from rain fed agriculture.

Source: <https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/central/2020-06-27-muranga-to-increase-forest-cover-to-17-per-cent-by-2022/>