

SEAWEED DAY REPORT JULY 2024

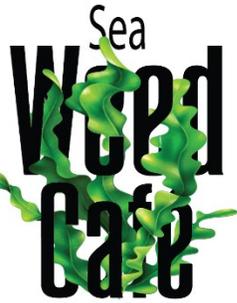


Milele Zanzibar Foundation
Kuongeza Maendeleo, Accelerating Progress

SCHMIDT MARINE



TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS



I. Zanzibar Seaweed Background

Zanzibar began exporting seaweed as early as the 1930s when red seaweed, under the genus *Eucheuma*, was harvested from naturally occurring wild stocks and exported to Europe. By the 1950s, some 4,000 tons of dry seaweed had been exported to France, the USA, and Denmark (Lirasan and Twide 1993). Commercial farming began in Zanzibar in 1989, and by the early 1990s, farmed seaweed was commercially exported. The industry has become increasingly important by bringing foreign revenue into Zanzibar's economy and raising farmers' and communities' living standards.

However, recent changes in the world market and the farming environment are threatening this industry. For example, *Cottonii* – the most profitable seaweed species – is now failing to grow in areas where it used to, due to changes in environmental conditions. These changes include rising seawater temperatures, epiphytism, and fouling (Largo et al. 2020; Msuya et al. 2022). Some farmers, especially men, leave seaweed farming while others, mostly women, carry on with lower expectations.

ZaSCI emerged to link farmers from different villages so they can work together to add value to the seaweed and use new innovative farming methods such as the deep-water floating rafts. Thus, in addition to farming seaweed, groups have learned to make products such as seaweed soaps, body creams, massage oils, and foods like cookies, cakes, juice, salads, etc.

2. Seaweed Day

ZaSCI in its endeavor to innovate and advocate for the seaweed sector, started to hold the Zanzibar Seaweed Day in collaboration with the Milele Zanzibar Foundation since 2016. During the event day, the 7th regime under His Excellency Dr. Ali M. Shein, who was the then President of the Revolution Government of Zanzibar, declared 23rd July of each year to celebrate Seaweed in a special way considering the contribution and the impact the Seaweed sector has on the economy as well as on the people of Zanzibar and the world at large. Also, to focus on the challenges and jointly discuss solutions, bringing together the government, the farmers and other players in the value chain.

This year (2024) marks the 9th Seaweed Day commemoration. The number of participating stakeholders increased (local, regional, and international organizations) and made the event more impactful, especially in sharing best technological practices as well as markets and financing opportunities. The theme for this year is ***“Nurturing communities to sustainable seaweed farming and protecting the ocean”***.

The 9th seaweed day was a very structured event divided into two main sections: the Seaweed Tour, and Seaweed Climax and it included the Seaweed Exhibitions. The Seaweed Day in general had different stakeholders from outside Tanzania, Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar. The total participants were about 300 including seaweed farmers and seaweed processors from Unguja, Pemba, Kilwa and Tanga, government officers from Ministry of Blue Economy and Fisheries, Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development and Zanzibar Seaweed Company (ZASCO), to mention a few, Non-government organizations included Milele Zanzibar Foundation, Zanzibar Maisha Bora Foundation, Pamoja Youth Initiative, Practical Permaculture Institute Zanzibar and Zanzibar Climate Change Alliance just to mention a few. National and

International Organizations representatives included KOICA, IFAD, UN WOMEN, TRADEMARK AFRICA, AU-IBAR, SEAWEED CAFE, FAO and ZNCC.

3. The Funders

The sponsors of the event for this year are

TRADEMARK AFRICA, SCHMIDT MARINE TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS, KOICA, IFAD, Milele Zanzibar Foundation, AU-IBAR, UN WOMEN, ZASCO and Seaweed Café. In addition, ZNCC funded and brought participants using their budgets. We take this opportunity to thank all our sponsors for making this event happen and we are requesting you to continue supporting this sector in our country for the development of the blue economy and improved livelihood of the seaweed farmers and processors where the majority of them are women.

4. Objectives of the Seaweed Day 2024

The ZaSCI Seaweed Day 2024 intended to uniquely honor seaweed farmers and processors who employ technology, innovation, and creativity in their work, all while prioritizing environmental preservation. The event also showcased a variety of seaweed products. The specific objectives were:

- 4.1. Raise awareness about the importance of sustainable seaweed farming in coastal communities.
- 4.2. Convene relevant government authorities and discuss on best policies and approaches to support the Seaweed value chain thrive;
- 4.3. To bring financial and innovation experts to share valuable information to help seaweed farmers and players in the value chain grab the opportunities associated with it;
- 4.4. To explore, share and learn new markets opportunities especially local markets by increasing awareness on the importance of seaweed to health and economy

4.5. Expand the network of players in the value chain by also inviting participants from outside Tanzania.

4.6. Recognize the resilience of seaweed farmers in adapting to climate change impacts

5. The Event

The event of this year was divided into two sections which were learning visits and seaweed day peak. In 2024 Seaweed Day was held at Golden Tulip Hotel Airport, Zanzibar and commemorated by the Honorable Minister of Blue Economy and Fisheries, Shaabani Ali Othman

5.1. The learning visit (the tour)

Learning from the previous events, it was observed that diseases such as ice ice and epiphytes, caused by increasing warming conditions, pose significant obstacles to producing quality seaweed in Zanzibar. Currently, the majority of farmers use the off-bottom method in shallow seawater areas, where temperature and salinity variability are high, leading to physiological stresses on farmed seaweed. This results in slow growth rates and low production.

The 2024 Seaweed Day I - 22nd July, a Tour was held at Pwani Mchangani, northern Zanzibar, and was designed as a learning visit for visitors, other seaweed farmers & processors and other stakeholders. The tour was organized in a way that the experienced seaweed farmers and technical experts provided detailed information on seaweed farming technologies, climate change and environmental impact on seaweed farming as well as marine biology lessons and exploring on how seaweed grows, its life cycle and its interaction with other marine organisms. Through the learning visit, the participants had a chance to discuss, ask questions and share experiences concerning seaweed farming.

After Pwani Mchangani, the visitors traveled to Bweleo (South West Coast) to observe seaweed value-addition processes of the *Ukweli ni njia safi group*. They had an opportunity to see how different products are processed from drying of the bleached seaweed, how it is grinded and making products; the visitors also had a chance to purchase some products. The tour provided valuable insights on the seaweed value chain and its role in mitigating climate change.

Key learnings from the study tour include:

- The tour showcased shallow water farming and value-addition processes, offering visitors a comprehensive view of the seaweed value chain and its role in mitigating climate change.
- Understanding gender dynamics in seaweed farming, including the participation of women and how to support their involvement in the industry
- Learning how seaweed farming can contribute to community livelihoods, providing income and employment opportunities, especially in coastal areas.
- Learning that the women were confident while in the ocean to conduct seaweed farming because they have been capacitated on sea safety and swimming skills
- Learning the importance of collaboration and exchange visits in advancing the seaweed farming and value addition activities

5.2. Seaweed day climax

The second day, July 23rd, featured the climax of the event, with the Guest of Honor being the Minister of Blue Economy and Fisheries Hon. Shaabani Ali Othman. Before visiting the exhibition venue, the minister learned about seaweed farming

technologies and viewed various seaweed value-added products made by processors from different parts of Zanzibar and Tanzania Mainland.

Booths Visitation and Exhibition; The seaweed day had an element of booths which were well settled and organized, the booths were occupied by different organizations like Seaweed Cafe, KOICA, MZF, Sea Power, Milele Zanzibar Foundation processors and ZaSCI seaweed Processors to mention but a few. The exhibitors showcased different seaweed farming techniques and a variety of seaweed value-added products like cosmetics (seaweed soaps, sea moss), and food (gel, juice, snacks etc). The guest of honor, the Minister of Blue Economy and Fisheries, visited the booths and heard explanations from the seaweed farmers and processors. Again, through these visits, the seaweed processors used the golden chance to present their concerns about the challenges of markets of their seaweed products and packaging and issue of low price for dried seaweed.

After the visitation to the exhibition, all participants gathered in the conference room for further discussions. The director of blue economy from the ministry of blue economy and fisheries, in his remarks elaborated on the mechanisms towards low price of seaweed by providing directives to call all export companies to follow government directives on seaweed business including looking at seaweed prices.

After that the Chairperson of ZaSCI, Dr. Flower Msuya, briefly outlined the history of ZaSCI and Seaweed Day in Zanzibar, followed by acknowledgements to donors and partners. The program continued with presentations from the Ministry of Blue Economy and remarks from the sponsors.

In his speech, the Guest of Honor highlighted the effort of the government in pushing forward the seaweed sector mentioning that the government provided about 500 boats for seaweed farmers to facilitate them to undertake deep water

seaweed farming. He also mentioned the effort of government that took advantage of seaweed value addition and established a seaweed processing industry at Chamanangwe in Pemba expected to commence its operation in this year and insisted for seaweed stakeholders to put effort in the industry for producing animal feed and bio stimulants which will increase further the value of seaweed. The Minister addressed the issue of low price and the price exploitation by the seaweed companies and provided directives to inform all the export companies to comply with government regulations. He urged seaweed stakeholders to work with the government to ensure that the seaweed value increases. He acknowledged the challenge of lack of seaweed policy and that the ministry is looking at how this can be sorted out. Additionally, he urged stakeholders to convince the youths to identify the opportunities in the seaweed sector and grab the opportunities for being employed in this sector.

He gave a directive that the commemoration of seaweed day in Zanzibar should be hosted and organized for 80% by the Ministry of blue economy and fisheries and directed ZASCO to fully participate because they are responsible for value addition. He also said that this is because there are many issues needed to be addressed policy-wise so the government is responsible. He said that next year the government should take over the commemoration of seaweed day.

More so, he directed the ministry through the principal secretary to ensure the seaweed policy and its strategy and seaweed stakeholders including the ZaSCI seaweed day organizer to provide training and searching for the market. Lastly, he directed that the seaweed export companies are not allowed to purchase seaweed below 1000 TZS (per kg of dry seaweed).

5.5. Panel discussion

During a panel discussion, the following topics were covered: Panel I: Seaweed farming and climate change mitigation; Panel II. Seaweed Sector in the Ocean Decade and global market. Panelists gave their opinions about the two topics highlighting how climate change is affecting the seaweed industry and what can be done to lessen the situation. Also, the panelists aired their opinion about the importance of addressing the global seaweed market so as to encourage farmers to continue producing seaweed and utilizing the ocean decade actions as a platform.

6. Recommendations

To achieve all that was discussed during the two days and the event as a whole, we suggest the following:

- There should be close collaboration by all stakeholders in order to address the challenges facing the seaweed sector and especially the farmers and processors.
- Policies and regulations need to be revised to have those that deal directly with the seaweed sector so as to focus on the industry.
- Seaweed processing should be the top priority of the sector to avoid exporting raw materials

7. Conclusion

The seaweed day was very successful this year. It attracted a larger number of people from different types of stakeholders than all previous events from 2016-2023. The participation of stakeholders from abroad (e.g. Kenya) and known organizations such as UN Women shows that the event is gaining wider recognition. There was also very high financial and technical support from our funding organizations which shows a bright future for the Seaweed Day.

Annex I; photos during the seaweed tour and seaweed day climax

Seaweed day climax







Study tour



