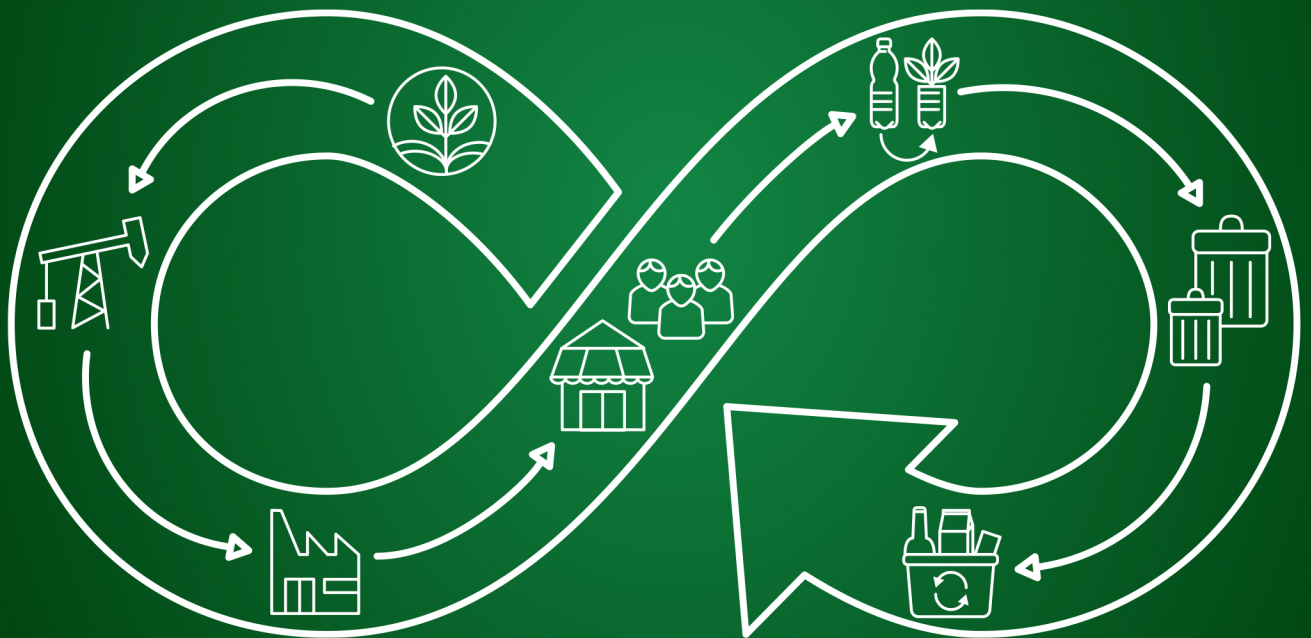


CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING

VOLUME 2



EDITED BY

ALEXANDROS STEFANAKIS
IOANNIS NIKOLAOU

Circular Economy and
SUSTAINABILITY

VOLUME 2

Circular Economy and **SUSTAINABILITY**

VOLUME **2**

Environmental Engineering

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Preface

Circular economy is today a rising and widely discussed topic among professionals, academics, and the public. The trigger for this increasing attraction to this new concept is the gradual realization that the way our economies and societies have grown over the last 50 years has caused global environmental problems. We have experienced an unforeseen and continuous increase in materials extraction and consumption in our societies, doubled the production of goods, and quadrupled our economic development, reaching the smallest ever recorded percentage of people living under the poverty threshold. However, this much-desired growth and improvement of our global living standards has also resulted in 90% biodiversity loss, increasing water stress and greenhouse gas emissions, and ever-progressing climate change.

While the necessity to tackle these global environmental issues effectively is now recognized, we are still trying to identify the means to do that, i.e., to reach the goal of a truly sustainable society. While the discussion on sustainable society and economy is ongoing, it is clear that we need a new narrative, i.e., a new direction and scientific and epistemological theoretical frameworks. Circular economy is essentially an upcoming concept that could create the conditions to overcome the limitations of the existing linear economic model (take–produce–dispose) and focus on more efficient use of materials and flow optimization through engineering advances to preserve natural resources.

However, to achieve feasible sustainable solutions, the interface between economy, policy, and engineering, and implementation and production should be viewed from a different angle. A single environmental or technical approach is not sufficient, and a wider view is needed of the way we deal with environmental issues and industrial processes, to include goals such as social justice, poverty alleviation, and global and local connections. Hence, to get the answers and the solutions we seek, we see circular economy as a necessary vehicle to achieve the concept of sustainability, i.e., we believe that these two terms go hand-in-hand, thanks to social equity, economic growth, and environmental protection.

The new concept of circular economy and sustainability should be built on three main pillars: (i) environmental engineering, (ii) business, management, and economy, and (iii) society. The challenge now is to investigate the interconnections, interrelations, interactions, and synergies between these three pillars and how these relations are or can be realized in the real world. This is exactly the main motivation and the rationale behind this book. With this book we wanted to explore this new approach of circular economy and sustainability through chapters that would touch on and discuss different solutions and concepts to implement circular economy, viewed from multiple different angles.

The response was excellent, with more than 100 chapter proposals received. Therefore, we consulted Elsevier and they happily agreed to publish a second volume of this book, so that more chapters could be accepted. Thus, after the initial screening of the chapter proposals, the overall outcome is impressive: 63 chapters written by 198 authors from 33 different countries from all continents. The separation into two volumes was based on the contents: the first volume of the book includes chapters that focus more on the management and policy aspects, while the second volume deals mostly with the engineering and technology aspect. This two-volume book is the first to present an integrated approach of circular economy in various fields and disciplines, and to relate it to the goal of a sustainable society.

We hope that the readers, including professionals, academics, engineers, consultants, researchers, scientists, government agency employees, industrial stakeholders/entities, and students, will find the information provided here valuable for their work and tasks and useful for the fulfillment of their goals. We also hope that this book will contribute to a better understanding of the circular economy concept and to a clear definition of its contents.

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CHAPTER 15

Constructed wetlands' application for flower farms wastewater treatment in developing countries: Case study in Kenya

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1. Description of constructed wetlands

Constructed wetlands (CWs) are naturally designed systems that utilize ecological processes such as physical, biological, and chemical processes. The CWs' components such as wetland plants, soil, and associated macrocosms influence these processes to strip pollutants from wastewater (EPA, 2000; Kadlec et al., 2000).

1.1 Classification of constructed wetlands

Constructed wetlands are classified based on: hydrology (open water surface and subsurface); plant growth (submerged, emergent floating leaved plants, and free-floating plants); and the flow path of water (horizontal or vertical) (Gorgoglione and Torretta, 2018; Kadlec et al., 2000).

Based on the above classification, CWs are of four different types. They include; (i) free water surface (FWS), which are shallow wetland water areas dominant with submerged and floating plants (Fig. 1A); (ii) vegetative submerged bed (VSB), which are subsurface flow wetlands with plants rooted on surface gravel with wastewater flowing through the gravel (Fig. 1B); (iii) hybrid systems, which are a combination of different types of CWs; and (iv) floating CWs systems (Fig. 1C), which encompass free-floating macrophytes (Kadlec et al., 2000; Tilley et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2014).

1.2 General overview of application of constructed wetlands

Constructed wetlands technologies have been applied in different types of wastewater treatment. They include:

1. Secondary treatment of domestic and municipal wastewater where water is introduced to constructed wetlands after mechanical pretreatment for removal of debris, rags, and coarse suspended matter (Kadlec et al., 2000; EPA, 2000; Wu et al., 2008).

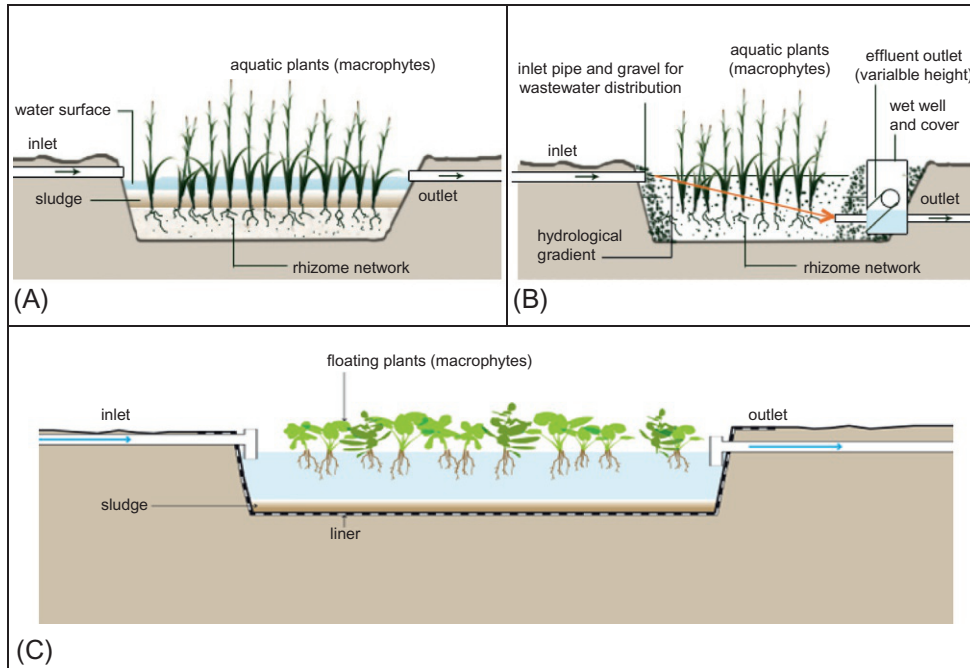


Fig. 1 (A) Free water surface constructed wetland; (B) subsurface flow treatment wetland (SSF); (C) floating CWs systems (Tilley et al., 2014).

In this application, CW is mainly used to remove major pollutants such as , total suspended solids (TSS), total nitrogen (TN), total phosphorus (TP), and fecal coliforms (FC) (Kadlec et al., 2000; EPA, 2000).

2. Sewer overflow treatment, especially during rainy seasons, where excess sewer flow due to rainwater is channeled through a normal domestic flow to constructed wetlands. The principal contaminants in this wastewater are pathogenic bacteria and suspended solids, which are reduced before release to the receiving water bodies (Kadlec et al., 2000; EPA, 2000).
3. Stormwater originating from a variety of land sources have also been channeled to constructed wetlands for the removal of pollutants. Biochemical processes are used to remove targeted pollutants (Kadlec et al., 2000; Persson et al., 1999).
4. Metal amine waters, i.e., water from lead, zinc, silver, gold, copper, nickel, and uranium mines (Kadlec et al., 2000; Stefanakis, 2018; Noller et al., 1994; O’Sullivan et al., 2000).
5. Wastewater from food processing such as vegetables and meat (Bustillo-Lecompte and Mehrvar, 2015; Kadlec et al., 2000; Puchlik, 2016).

6. Petroleum industry for the treatment of refinery effluents, spills, and water from natural gas pipelines, oil, and sand processing water (EPA, 2000; Kadlec et al., 2000; Stefanakis, 2020).
7. Wetlands have also been utilized in pulp and paper industry effluent treatment (Abira, 2009; Choudhary et al., 2011; EPA, 2000; Kadlec et al., 2000).
8. In Kenya, it has been applied in wastewater treatment from Naivasha flower farms (Kimani et al., 2012).

2. Constructed wetlands for Naivasha flower farms' wastewater treatment

2.1 Naivasha's description, environmental setting, and economies

Lake Naivasha is a shallow freshwater tropical lake located in a semiarid environment with scarce surface and underground water resources. It is an important tourism and ecological site due to its biodiversity, and is the main economic resource for horticultural production. The lake supports a thriving fishery, extensive flower-growing industry, and geothermal power generation (Otiang'a-Owiti and Abiya, 2007). The Naivasha Basin is home to a wide range of aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna, including birds, fish, mammals, and vegetation. The basin plays a very important role in Kenya's national development, contributing about 70% of Kenya's flower exports, 15% of Kenya's electric power, and is home to attractive tourist sites (Otiang'a-Owiti and Abiya, 2007). The area adjacent to the lake is ideal for horticulture, which plays a crucial role in the development of both the local and national economies, employing more than 30,000 people (Otiang'a-Owiti and Abiya, 2007).

Apart from contributing to the gross domestic product and foreign exchange earnings, approximately 60 flower farms line the entire lakeside providing employment and amenities to communities through their employees and families (Bolo, 2008). Handling of Lake Naivasha as a free "common pool" resource is considered the cost of the lake's sustainability and relates to the corporate image of the commercial farms. There is, therefore, need for sustainable management of the lakes' water resources. Ennis Killen (1999) suggests that a valuable resource such as freshwater cannot simply be left untapped, as the ability to develop and utilize water resources is linked to a nation's ability to develop and prosper (Walmsley, 2002).

Kenya's cut-flower industry is recognized as an economic success, which contributed 70% of Kenyan export value over the period 1996–2005 (Mekonnen et al., 2012). The total virtual water related to the export of cut flowers from the Lake Naivasha Basin was 16 Mm³/yr, during the period 1996–2005 (22% green water; 45% blue water; 33% grey water) (Mekonnen et al., 2012).

2.2 The problems in Lake Naivasha's ecosystem

Rapid growth in population, human settlement, intensive commercial farming, tourism, and geothermal production have put intense pressure on natural resources, thereby threatening the sustainability of the Lake Naivasha Basin (Otiang'a-Owiti and Abiya, 2007). Increased demand for scarce environmental resources such as water and biomass has led to the increased abstraction of surface and groundwater resources, depletion of forestry resources, pollution of water bodies, and siltation of the lake (Mireri, 2005).

The Lake Naivasha ecosystem is acknowledged as fragile and faces increasing threats from irrigated agriculture, water abstraction, and a fast-growing human population (Otiang'a-Owiti and Abiya, 2007). The irrigated horticultural area consists of an estimated 4467 ha, with approximately 20,000 m³ of water being extracted from the lake each day for use by nearby flower farms. Excess water abstraction—both from the lake itself and throughout its wider catchment area—is often perceived to be the most important conservation issue for this habitat (Mekonnen et al., 2012). The commercial farms have been blamed for causing a drop in the lake level, polluting the lake, and for possibly affecting the lake's biodiversity. Research has shown that, although the decline in the lake level can be attributed mainly to the commercial farms around the lake, both the commercial farms and the smallholder farms in the upper catchment are responsible for lake pollution due to nutrient loads (Mekonnen et al., 2012; Mireri, 2005).

A summary of these challenges concludes that severe environmental problems as a result of pollution from agricultural effluents and urban water surface runoff, uncontrolled water abstraction, improper land-use practices in the catchment area, and proliferation of invasive wetland species are the most pressing issues (Otiang'a-Owiti and Abiya, 2007). It has been observed that these problems are exacerbated and compounded by changes in climate and inadequate conservation interventions. In 2002, pollution from organochlorines, organophosphates, and DDT (which is illegal) was identified in Lake Fauna (Gitahi et al., 2002). These problems are further exacerbated by climate change and inadequate conservation interventions (Kimani et al., 2012). To control this problem, CWs have been used by Naivasha flower farms as a sustainable option for flower farm wastewater treatment (Kimani et al., 2012).

2.3 CW a preferred option to address pollution problems in Lake Naivasha

We provide a case study of environmental challenges being addressed through CW interventions. The Naivasha scenario involves a freshwater lake receiving agricultural effluents emanating from intense flower farming activities, with uncontrolled water abstraction, which services irrigated farms, geothermal power generation, and the urban populations' domestic needs. In addition to effluents, urban water surface runoff adds to pollution, while in the upper reaches, improper land-use practices provide additional nutrients, pesticides, and sediments.



Fig. 2 Flower farm in Salokidogo.

To mitigate against pollution, flower farms have adopted constructed wetland technologies for effluent treatment before release back into the lake's ecosystem (Fig. 2). In one of these scenarios, Home Grown Limited's CW demonstrates improved water quality (inlet to outlet) released back into the lake. In this scenario, the Kingfisher CW was designed to receive approximately $45 \text{ m}^3/\text{day}$ of wastewater. The Kingfisher wetland is a combined (hybrid) system of a subsurface flow system known as gravel bed hydroponics (GBH) section, and a surface flow system with three sequential treatment cells. It uses a variety of aquatic plants including hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), *Cyprus papyrus*, and *Typha domingensis* for treating wastewater. The final treated water is used to culture fish in a fish pond. In this effort, the larger commercial farms are becoming more sustainable through the use of hydroponics and irrigation systems which decrease water consumption, thus increasing economic benefits.

2.4 Design types of the CWs in Lake Naivasha flower farms

Among constructed wetland types observed in Naivasha, horizontal subsurface flow wetlands are most widely used (Fig. 3), followed by surface flow and hybrid wetlands. Most of the reported hybrid wetlands (like Kingfisher CW) are reported to be more efficient. Some studies have been done on Naivasha flower farms CWs, which indicate that they are efficient in removal of organic matter (biochemical oxygen demand and chemical oxygen demand) and suspended solids (Mekonnen et al., 2015). Despite this telling situation, Mekonnen et al. (2015) opines that nutrient removal efficiency appears low.



Fig. 3 Horizontal CW in Naivasha, hyacinth and salvinia plants in use.

2.5 Effectiveness of CWs in Naivasha flower farms: Case study—Kingfisher CW

Some of the key functions of constructed wetlands include mitigating against increased conductivity, total dissolved solids (TDS), TSS, biological oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD), TN, TP, and toxic metals, which would otherwise be harmful to humans and other aquatic organisms including eutrophication of the recipient water bodies. A study conducted between October 2009 and March 2010 measuring water quality parameters at Kingfisher CW demonstrated that constructed wetlands are highly efficient in wastewater effluent treatment by significantly reducing the levels of most physical-chemical constituents, nutrients, and heavy metals from the wastewater (Kimani et al., 2012). The effectiveness of the CW in wastewater treatment became most visible when temporal variation in concentration of most parameters was compared. Most parameters showed wide temporal variations in their concentrations at inlet but stabilized at the outlet throughout the study period. The temporal variations of pollutants at the inlet were attributed to heightened farm activities and prevailing weather conditions (Kimani et al., 2012).

Table 1 shows the inlet to outlet water quality parameters changes. The table shows that Kingfisher CW effluents meet most of the East African discharge standards. On heavy metals, lead effluents concentrations changed from undetectable to 0.15 ± 0.13 mg/L with no significant variation in mean concentrations. Copper concentrations rarely exceeded 0.08 mg/L with means of 0.06 ± 0.03 mg/L with a slight general decrease

Table 1 Inflow and outflow water quality parameters at King Fisher flower farm CW.

Parameter	Inflow (mg/L)	Outflow (mg/L)	P-Values	East African Standards (EAS) effluents discharge limits (mg/L)
TSS	233 ± 26.47	23 ± 3.94	<0.05	100
BOD	138 ± 15.09	72 ± 5.49	<0.05	30
TDS	357 ± 30.92	260 ± 7.06	<0.05	2000
COD	569 ± 175	186 ± 62	<0.05	60
TN	5.1 ± 0.65	2.0 ± 0.34	<0.05	10
TP	5.5 ± 0.82	2.6 ± 0.24	<0.05	5
Lead (Pb)	0.04	0.03	<0.05	0.01
Copper (Cu)	0.06	0.03	<0.05	0.5
Manganese (Mn)	0.26	0.07	<0.05	–
Other parameters				
Conductivity	722 µS/cm	514 µS/cm	<0.05	–
PH	6.81 ± 0.17	6.65 ± 0.10	<0.05	6.0–9.0
Temperature	23.1 ± 0.35° C	18.3 ± 0.38° C	<0.05	–

East African Standards (2012).

in outflow concentration at 0.03 mg/L, and manganese outlet concentrations averaged 0.07 ± 0.01 mg/L (Kimani et al., 2012).

2.6 What next on application of CW on Naivasha flower farms?

A Previous study shows that constructed wetlands are an important intervention strategy in dealing with the pollution threats of Lake Naivasha from the estimated 300 horticulture farms (Kimani et al., 2012). The study emphasizes the need to encourage other flower farms to adopt the Kingfisher constructed wetland technology to deal with their wastewater (Kimani et al., 2012). In addition to these efforts, the World Wildlife Fund has launched a massive “payments for watershed services” (PWS) program designed to promote sustainable agriculture programs in the hills surrounding Lake Naivasha. By 2018, two major flower-grower associations had joined the program, but it will have to be scaled up tenfold to achieve meaningful results.

In terms of managing pollution, the flower growers have formed Flower Business Park Management Limited (FBP), which handles common issues for eight flower growers. Members of FBP are green certified for application of CWs in wastewater treatment. However, there is need to expand membership to strengthen the implementation of environmental protection activities. There are efforts to encourage farmers to adopt techniques such as biological controls of pests on flower farms, to reduce their reliance on potentially dangerous chemicals. Through incentive schemes put in place to

encourage farmers to utilize “greener” practices, more farms are utilizing artificially constructed wetlands for wastewater treatment.

Furthermore, [Kimani et al. \(2012\)](#) propose that the efficiency of the constructed wetlands in treating the flower farms’ wastewater can be improved and be used in resolving pollution challenges and help in establishing national guidelines.

3. Sustainability of constructed wetlands

Constructed wetlands are most useful for small communities and remote locations. Key factors to consider for the sustainability of a CW include the plant species, substrate type, water depth, hydraulic load, hydraulic retention time, and feeding mode. These factors define the benefits of using CWs as opposed to conventional wastewater treatment, which mainly results in low-energy use, and reduced operational and maintenance requirements. In evaluating the cost-benefit and sustainability of a typical CW, factors to consider should further include land acquisition, investment and operation costs, energy consumption, and ecological benefits.

Plant species used in both FWS CWs and SSF CWs Naivasha flower farms are sourced locally, hence being readily available and adapted to the environment. The most commonly used plant species in Naivasha flower farms are *Phragmites australis*, *Typha dominicensis*, and *Cyperus papyrus* (emergent plants), and *Eichhornia crassipes* and *Salvinia molesta* (free-floating).

According to [Saeed and Sun \(2012\)](#), the capacity of uptake by plants differs according to system configuration, retention times, loading rates, wastewater types, and climatic conditions. The CW plant species are utilized to remove nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients, while removing toxic elements such as heavy metals and antibiotics in wastewaters. For CWs’ sustainability, selected plants have to be the most tolerant and most efficient in pollutants removal. While there are great differences in ammonia tolerance among plant species, *Typha latifolia* is stressed by ammonia concentrations averaging 160–170 mg/L ([Surrency, 1993](#)). Further evidence suggests that high COD levels (>200 mg/L) could disrupt the normal metabolism of *Phragmites australis* ([Xu et al., 2010](#)), this plant, however, tolerates and removes antibiotics concentrations typically found in wastewater.

[Wang et al. \(2010\)](#) have evaluated substrate types and state that hydraulic permeability increases the capacity to absorb pollutants and ensures long-term removal and performance of CWs. Substrate materials mostly consist of natural materials, artificial media, and industrial by-products. [Albuquerque et al. \(2009\)](#), [Saeed and Sun \(2012\)](#), [Chong et al. \(2013\)](#), and [Yan and Xu \(2014\)](#) have listed gravel, sand, clay, calcite, marble, vermiculite, slag, fly ash, bentonite, dolomite, limestone, shell, zeolite, wollastonite, activated carbon, and lightweight aggregates as commonly used substrates. Dynamic experiments have demonstrated that the adsorbing capacity of combined substrates is

normally higher than that of single substrates (Lai and Lamb, 2009) and that increasing the proportion of decomposed granite in a substrate mix may enhance the phosphorus sorption capacity considerably.

Aguirre et al. (2005) established that the relative contribution of different metabolic pathways varied with water depth. In their experiments, it was noted that beds at depths of 0.27 m removed COD and ammonia and dissolved reactive phosphorus better than 0.5 m. The hydraulic loading rate (HLR) and hydraulic retention time (HRT) have to be optimized due to their importance in removal efficiency in CWs. Ammonium and TN concentrations are known to reduce dramatically with increasing HRT in CWs (Huang et al., 2000). Zhang et al. (2012) have shown that the feeding mode may influence the oxidation-reduction conditions and oxygen transfer and diffusion in wetland systems, thereby modifying the treatment efficiency.

Despite the advantages and CWs' advancement indicated herein, research on CWs needs more focus especially on enhancing technologies (artificial aeration, microbial augmentation, external carbon addition), operations (optimization of hydraulic conditions, manipulation of loading mode), design aspects (plant selection, substrate selection), and maintenance (plant harvest strategies, reclamation, and recycling of plant resources) (Wu et al., 2015).

4. Benefits associated with CWs in Naivasha flower farms' wastewater treatment

4.1 Circular economy/cleaner production

Constructed wetlands promote sustainable development within countries by ensuring the challenges of declining water quality and quantity are addressed. CW benefits countries by: (i) reducing pollution from industries, municipalities and agricultural activities; (ii) enhancing fish catches and other aquatic organisms through improved habitats and sustained fish biodiversity; (iii) reduced eutrophication and improved aquatic health; (iv) reduced land and catchment degradation that may lead to low land productivity; and (v) reduced sediment loading into receiving water bodies.

Adoption of CW technologies and modernizing the processes ensures reduced pollution, thereby greening the production units and making them not only green/sustainable but also competitive through lowered production costs. CWs may play a central role as a key tool for achieving a circular economy and provide enterprises a tool for environmental compliance.

In most developing countries where environmental compliance is low due to untreated industrial discharges, resource efficient and cleaner production (RECP) technologies may be complemented with CWs to achieve low COD and BOD levels. This ensures improved environmental performance and compliance. Apart from the capacity

to manage industrial discharges, CWs can handle hospital and cosmetic wastewater as opposed to conventional wastewater treatment plants.

As a tool for managing effluents, CWs are much cheaper to manage and operate compared to conventional wastewater management systems. Such systems are easier to understand due to less complexity and fewer procedures. They are, therefore, accessible to communities, who have had an ever-increasing role in waste management.

4.2 Impact on markets

Utilization of green growth instruments by engaging private sector support for more sustainable agricultural supply chains of enterprises is particularly crucial in capital markets, especially for essential agricultural and commercial commodities like flowers, sugar, tea, coffee, fish, dairy, mango, honey, leather, paper processing, etc. Local and overseas market responses to products from noncompliant industries are detrimental to industrial success. Evidence points to increasing compliance as environmental regulators shift from traditional command and control (CAC), to market-driven instruments and information disclosure initiatives.

4.3 Impact on biodiversity

Effluents are known to impact negatively on receiving water bodies, especially due to toxic and organic substances. The ability of CWs to remove such substances ensures that habitat integrity is restored and encourages biodiversity in water bodies. The water bodies also support other businesses/industries relying on heavy use of local natural resources (i.e., greening the value chain).

4.4 Impact on the environment

One of the most common challenges in industrialization is pollution to the environment. Efforts to reduce pollution to the environment are boosted through utilization of CWs, with reduced effects of pollutants to all other life forms (humans, macro- and microorganisms, higher animals, and plants). Communities living in riparian water bodies are also less impacted by pollution from wastewater discharge that is treated before release to the environment.

4.5 Wetland products

The harvesting of wetland plants has been carried out for a long time and is embedded in tradition and cultures in many parts of the world. Wetland products include medicinal plants, various food types, furniture, building materials, and artifacts (Fig. 4). There exists a robust business in the region of the Naivasha flower farm wetlands, where markets are generally supported by wetland products and household incomes are enhanced.



Fig. 4 Examples of wetland products (Courtesy, Jembe).

4.6 Compliance to policies, regulations, and standards

For most countries, monitoring and enforcement by regulators and compliance of industries with existing standards and regulations are not achievable. The problem is generally associated with inadequate environmental policies or regulations, inadequate capacity, deficiencies in operational budgets and lack of trained personnel amongst regulators, and costs of wastewater treatment by industries. To mitigate against these challenges, East

African countries have combined three approaches to improve compliance and reduce environmental pollution. The augmentation of command and control (CAC) approaches with market-based instruments (MBI) has not had the desired effect, with noncompliance still high. The introduction of the public disclosure model has had a more profound impact, with most industries struggling to avoid being listed. However, the cost of treating wastewater remains the biggest challenge in developing countries. The proposal to use constructed wetlands offers lower costs in managing wastewater and increases compliance with existing policies, regulations, and standards.

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