



# Shipping & Logistics

Researchers aboard RV *Mtafiti*, the vessel sent on a study voyage in the North Coast to find out what ails the fisheries sector. [Robert Menza]



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## Kenya's bumpy road to salvaging fisheries sector

**SH42**  
BILLION  
WORTH of fish Kenya has potential to yield annually.

Study estimates the country loses Sh10 billion to illegal fishing in the Indian Ocean every year

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**S**ometime in March 2019, the government commissioned the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute (Kmfri) to conduct a study on the untapped resources in our waters.

The institute sent the research vessel, *RV Mtafiti*, on an expedition in the North Coast beyond Malindi with dozens of researchers on board.

A year before, Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Mwangi Kiunjuri had revealed that the country was losing over Sh440 billion annually by failing to fully exploit the fisheries sector.

Following the expedition, a new study

titled "RV *Mtafiti* Marine Research: Towards Food Security and Economic Development in Kenya" was published.

Kmfri reveals that Kenya produces 2,500 metric tonnes of tuna annually, accounting for a paltry 0.75 per cent of the total volume caught by other nations along the same tuna corridor in the West of the Indian Ocean.

Kenya has the potential of yielding 300,000 metric tonnes of fish worth Sh42 billion every year from the ocean.

Studies estimate that Kenya loses Sh10 billion to illegal fishing in the Indian Ocean every year.

The figures capture the sorry state of the country's marine fishery plagued by post-harvest losses, lack of modern fishing gear and outdated legal framework.

Until the 1990s, Kenya had a vibrant marine fishing industry spearheaded by

the defunct Kenya Fisheries Industry, which ran a training institute at Liwatoni in Mombasa.

The government is now reviving the Liwatoni Fisheries Complex at the coast of Sh1 billion. The facility will have six berths, storage and an auction yard. It has also awarded Sh20 billion tenders for the re-modelling of the Shimoni Port into a fishing port.

Kmfri says in the past few years, *RV Mtafiti* has provided a platform for oceanographic research and training for Kenya and the Western Indian Ocean Region.

"RV *Mtafiti* allows scientists to undertake surveys to collect information for national and regional research on the aquatic environment," Kmfri said.

"It has enabled researchers to access hitherto uncharted waters on the Ken-

yan Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)."

Two Kmfri marine scientists, Nina Wambiji and Edward Kimani, who were on the study voyage, said only proper research will save the sector.

"The broad disciplines of marine science undertaken during the cruises include fisheries, biological, physical and chemical oceanography, sea bottom bathymetry, macro and micro plastics pollution and benthic ecology," said Mr Kimani.

"The research addresses the national and global concerns of a rapidly changing ocean environment driven by climate change, pollution as well as the use of fisheries and other non-living ocean resources."

Ms Wambiji said the vessel has been

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