



NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP
FAIR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS BASED ON LOCAL
KNOWLEDGE: TAMARINDUS IN KENYA

CONCEPT NOTE

23 - 24 SEPTEMBER 2026, MOMBASA, KENYA

1. INTRODUCTION

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is a pan-African non-governmental organization headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. It brings together individuals and institutions committed to the sustainable management, use and conservation of Africa's forest and tree resources for the socio-economic wellbeing of its people and environmental sustainability. The AFF provides a platform for independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice on policy and technical issues related to forests and trees, with particular attention to poverty reduction, gender equity, inclusive development and the empowerment of marginalized groups, including women and youth.

The AFF, in partnership with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), and with funding from the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (FORMAS), implemented the research project *Fair Business Development for Non-Timber Forest Products Based on Local Knowledge: The Case of Tamarindus* in Kenya. The project analyses local knowledge, production systems and value-chain relationships and business models associated with *Tamarindus indica* in Kenya to identify opportunities for fair, inclusive and sustainable business development.

Through stakeholder consultations, participatory value-chain mapping, community engagement and capacity development, the project has generated evidence on tamarind production, harvesting, processing, value addition, marketing and consumption. It highlighted tamarind's contribution to food security, household incomes, urban diets, climate resilience and environmental conservation, as well as its potential to support sustainable forest-based enterprises. The research has also identified constraints, including inadequate processing technologies, post-harvest losses, limited value addition, weak market linkages, insufficient aggregation facilities and uneven access to finance and business support. Gender is central to the analysis because women play a significant role in the collection, processing and trade of tamarind and other non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Some of the findings have been published (find list of the publications below ¹²³)

The *Tamarindus* research is complemented by Sida-supported AFF country studies on traditional and indigenous knowledge relating to the status, utilization and management of forest- and tree-based food species, as well as strategies for developing climate-resilient value chains for biodiversity products and services in Africa's forest biodiversity hotspots. These studies underscore the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in identifying, conserving, managing and sustainably using forest and tree-based food resources. Taking into account women's deep knowledge about the productive activities carried out in the forests especially on NTFPs and the youth's creativity, energy, and innovation the studies indicate that

¹Roos, A., Mutta, D., Wekesa, C., Avana, M. L., and Mark-Herbert, C. (2026). Tamarind Value Chains for Small-Scale Producers: A Review of Opportunities, Challenges, and Development Pathways *Ethnobotany and Economic Botany*, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12231-026-09691-3>

² Jesus dos Santos, B., Wekesa, C., Roos, A., and Mark-Herbert, C. (2026). Negotiating Trees and Trade: Women's Agency, Capabilities and Value Chains for Tamarind and Coconut in Kenya. *Society & Natural Resources*, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2026.2700713>

³ Roos, A., Mutta, D., Wekesa, C., Abubakar, S., Mwanahalima, S., Avana-Tientcheu, M. L., and Mark-Herbert, C. (2026). Leveraging urban consumer perceptions to strengthen marketing for baobab, coconut, and tamarind in Mombasa, Kenya. *Trees, Forests and People*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tfp.2026.101269>

strengthening forest biodiversity products and services value chains that are socially inclusive is essential for achieving sustainable social, economic, and conservation outcomes. Together, these strands of work provide a strong evidence base for a joint national stakeholders' workshop to review the findings, bring diverse value-chain actors into dialogue and identify practical pathways for action.

Integrating AfricanYouth4Forests

The proposed Tamarind stakeholder workshop, scheduled for 23–24 September 2026, will also explore synergies with *AfricanYouth4Forests* (AY4F), another initiative implemented by AFF, SLU and KEFRI with support from FORMAS. Both the *Tamarindus* research and AY4F emphasize conservation, innovation and sustainable business models within the forest bioeconomy. The AY4F enables young people aged 18–30 to engage with scientific and indigenous knowledge, contribute to forest governance and pursue opportunities in sustainable forestry.

The AY4F contribution will build on the 2025 Kenya National Workshop, '*From Science to Youth Action for Sustainable Forestry*,' held from 28–30 April 2025 in Kitui County. That workshop demonstrated strong youth interest in green innovation, employment and entrepreneurship, while also highlighting barriers to translating ideas into viable initiatives. Tamarind and other NTFP value chains provide a practical context in which to explore these opportunities and challenges.

Six participants from the 2025 workshop will also share brief reflections on how they have applied the knowledge, skills and networks gained through AY4F. These reflections, supplemented by short interviews conducted alongside the workshop, will contribute to documenting their learning and impact stories.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Africa's forests and woodlands continue to decline, contributing to biodiversity loss, increased climate vulnerability and deteriorating livelihood conditions, particularly among rural and forest-dependent communities. Alongside conservation and restoration, sustainable forest management requires approaches that recognize the knowledge, needs and economic aspirations of local communities.

Indigenous tree species provide food, income, medicine, fodder, cultural value, soil fertility and ecosystem services. NTFPs are especially important to rural households and women and can create economic incentives for conserving indigenous trees and sustainably managing forest landscapes. When supported by fair markets, appropriate technologies, policies and inclusive institutions, NTFP value chains can connect conservation with enterprise development, employment, income generation and climate resilience.

Despite their importance, the commercial potential and wider socio-economic contribution of many NTFPs remain underdeveloped. Producers and other local value-chain actors face constraints related to sustainable harvesting, product quality, processing technologies, storage, aggregation, market information, finance, value addition and access to reliable markets. Local and indigenous knowledge is also not consistently recognized or incorporated into research, enterprise development and policymaking.

Tamarindus indica is widely distributed across Kenya's arid and semi-arid areas. Its fruit and other products are used for food, medicine, fodder and income generation, while the tree contributes to soil health, climate resilience and environmental conservation. Growing demand attributed to increasing urbanization presents opportunities for commercialization, product innovation and enterprise creation, particularly for women and young people. Developing the value chain responsibly could generate economic value while

encouraging the conservation and sustainable management of tamarind trees and the landscapes in which they occur.

Traditional and indigenous knowledge is central to identifying, managing, conserving and sustainably using tamarind and other forest- and tree-based food species. Building NTFP value chains on this knowledge, while incorporating appropriate scientific and business practices, can strengthen socio-ecological resilience and ensure that enterprise development supports rather than undermines conservation. The *Tamarindus* research findings, therefore, require stakeholder review to test them against lived experience, incorporate the perspectives of producers and other value-chain actors, and identify practical pathways for strengthening the value chain.

The workshop will provide a platform for this validation and will include a focused youth-innovation dimension. Young people can contribute digital capabilities, new ideas and emerging enterprise models, while producers and local knowledge holders bring experience in species management, harvesting, processing, markets and community realities. Their interaction can support reciprocal learning and joint problem-solving: producers may gain new approaches to market access and communication, while young people gain insight into indigenous knowledge systems, responsible production and the realities of developing forest-based enterprises.

The workshop will explore potential collaboration between young green entrepreneurs and producer groups in digital marketing and branding; mobile-based market-information systems and producer networks; market intelligence and market-access skills; sustainability storytelling and social media communication; and product development and value addition for urban and international markets. Such collaboration could strengthen local value chains, expand market access, create rural employment opportunities for young people, improve producer incomes and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable forest-based bioeconomy.

3. WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

3.1 Overall Objective

To facilitate stakeholder review and validation of the *Tamarindus* research findings and identify practical pathways for translating local and scientific knowledge into fair, inclusive and sustainable NTFP enterprises, with particular attention to women and youth.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- Present, review and validate findings from the research on fair business development for NTFPs based on local knowledge, with a focus on *Tamarindus indica* in Kenya.
- Facilitate reciprocal learning and exchange among producers, local knowledge holders, researchers, policymakers, youth, entrepreneurs and other NTFP value-chain actors.
- Identify practical measures for strengthening sustainable production and harvesting, processing, storage, aggregation, value addition, marketing and business development.
- Examine how traditional and indigenous knowledge can be recognized, safeguarded and combined with scientific research, innovation and contemporary business practices
- Explore mutually beneficial collaboration between producer groups and young green entrepreneurs, including in digital marketing, market information, storytelling, product development and value addition.

- Capture brief reflections from six returning AY4F participants on how they have applied the knowledge, skills and networks gained through the 2025 national workshop.
- Generate stakeholder recommendations to inform future research, policy support, investment and programming on fair, inclusive and climate-resilient NTFP value chains.

4. WORKSHOP APPROACH AND FORMAT

The two-day workshop will use an interactive and participatory format centred on the presentation and validation of the *Tamarindus* research findings. It will combine plenary presentations, stakeholder discussions, group work and action planning, with selected sessions providing space for producer–youth exchange and exploration of feasible areas for collaboration. Six returning AY4F participants will contribute brief reflections during relevant sessions, with short interviews conducted alongside the workshop to inform their learning and impact stories.

5. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Strengthened stakeholder knowledge and a shared understanding of sustainable forest-based NTFP value chains through the exchange of experiences, lessons and good practices.
- Practical recommendations for improving production, sustainable harvesting, processing, storage, value addition and marketing of tamarind products.
- Stronger networks and collaboration among producers, processors, traders, researchers, policymakers, private-sector actors, youth and other stakeholders involved in NTFP value-chain development.
- A stakeholder-driven roadmap setting out priority actions and strategies for sustaining and scaling inclusive NTFP business development and informing future research, policy, investment and decision-making.
- Greater recognition of the roles of women and youth as producers, processors, researchers, entrepreneurs, innovators and community leaders within NTFP value chains.
- Greater recognition of producers' and local knowledge holders' expertise and of young people's roles as entrepreneurs, innovators, communicators and community leaders.
- Brief insights into the experiences of returning AY4F participants and the opportunities and barriers they have encountered since the 2025 workshop.

6. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Validated *Tamarindus* research findings and consolidated stakeholder recommendations.
- A stakeholder-informed roadmap setting out priority actions, responsible actors and potential producer-youth partnerships for strengthening tamarind and other NTFP value chains.
- A set of feasible collaboration concepts for producer groups and young green entrepreneurs in digital marketing and branding, market information, storytelling, product development and value addition.
- A workshop report documenting the proceedings, validated findings, conclusions, recommendations, collaboration opportunities and agreed next steps.
- Six concise AY4F youth learning and impact stories, informed by participants' reflections and short interviews conducted alongside the workshop, subject to informed consent.

7. WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

The workshop will bring together approximately 50 invited participants, including:

- Tamarind, baobab and other NTFP producer groups and cooperatives;
- Local knowledge holders, collectors, processors, traders and marketers;

- National and county government institutions;
- Research and academic institutions;
- Non-governmental and community-based organizations;
- Private-sector actors and business-development service providers;
- Development partners, financial institutions and potential investors;
- Women- and youth-led enterprises;
- Technical experts working on NTFPs, sustainable forestry and value-chain development; and
- Six selected youth who participated in the 2025 AY4F Kenya National Workshop.

8. DATE AND VENUE

The *National Stakeholders Workshop* will be held from 23-24 September 2026 at Nyali Beach Holiday Resort, Mombasa, Kenya.

9. ORGANIZATION

The workshop will be organized by the African Forest Forum, in partnership with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Kenya Forestry Research Institute, with financial support from the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (FORMAS).