

## East African seaweed farming at a crossroads: implications for a regional seaweed resource management

C. Halling, S. Tano, M. Eggertsen, F. Msuya & A. Buriyo

Department of Ecology, Environment and Plant Sciences, Stockholm University, Sweden

Department of Ecology, Environment and Plant Sciences, Stockholm University, Sweden

Department of Ecology, Environment and Plant Sciences, Stockholm University, Sweden

Institute of Marine Sciences, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Department of Botany, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

[christina.halling@su.se](mailto:christina.halling@su.se)

Seaweed farming has been the largest contributor to aquaculture production in the East African WIO region since it was first introduced from the Philippines in 1989. Due to high productivity and straightforward procedure seaweed farming was soon considered as an important measure to reduce poverty in rural coastal communities. Still today, the expansion potential in East Africa is immense, especially as seaweed farming is rapidly expanding globally by the continuous demand for seaweed and seaweed extracts. East African seaweed farming is, however, at a crossroads. Decreased profitability and productivity and changing environmental conditions urges the need for vitalization of stock. The fact that our research shows that introduced South East Asian seaweed haplotypes have spread from the seaweed farms and are now well established and highly abundant in the wild outside farms, with uncertain ecological consequences, disputes further introduction of foreign stock. Future seaweed farming will therefore be highly dependent on the identification and commercialisation of indigenous East African seaweed resources. Further recognizes our research on macro algae dominated habitats the seaweeds' considerable ecological importance as a part of the East African coastal ecosystem. Together this point significantly, at the urgent need for continuous and increased knowledge on East African seaweeds and their ecological role. But also for establishing a regional strategy with the aim to secure the native East African seaweed resources maintaining its ecosystem services and secure future needs. Such seaweed strategy is also to be implemented in the overall East African coastal management