

MURANG'A COUNTY ASSEMBLY THE HANSARD

Wednesday, 1st April, 2015

The House met at 2:33 p.m.

(The Speaker Hon. Nduati Kariuki in the Chair)

PRAYERS

PAPERS

REPORT ON THE VETTING OF THE NOMINEES TO THE SUB-COUNTY ALCOHOLIC DRINKS REGULATION COMMITTEE

Hon. Charles Kirigwi: Mr. Speaker, I beg that the Report of Trade, Industrialization, Tourism, Wildlife, Youth, Culture, Social Services and Health Services committees on the vetting of the nominees to the sub-county Alcoholic Drinks Regulation committee be laid on the table of the Assembly.

(Hon. Charles Kirigwi laid the paper on the table)

Thank you.

NOTICE OF MOTION

REPORT ON THE VETTING OF THE NOMINEES TO THE SUB-COUNTY ALCOHOLIC DRINKS REGULATION COMMITTEE

Hon. Charles Kirigwi: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following motion:-

That; this Assembly adopts the Report of the Trade, Industrialization, Tourism, Wildlife, Youth, Culture, Social Services and Health Services committees on the vetting of the nominees to the sub-county Alcoholic Drinks Regulation committee laid on the table of the Assembly on April, 1st 2015.

MOTION

REPORT OF THE AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE'S VISIT TO MERU

Hon. James Kariuki: Mr. Speaker sir, I beg to move the following motion:-

That, this Assembly notes the contents of the report of the Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries committee on the committee's visit to Meru, laid on the table of the Assembly on 31st March 2015.

Mr. Speaker sir, the committee of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries went to Meru sometimes in the month of February, I don't see the date and I cannot remember. We were welcomed by a certain Father Mbiko of the Catholic Dioceses of Meru and sisters of that particular diocese. We visited several places. We chose Meru because, Meru just like Murang'a, is an agricultural County, whose headquarter is Meru town

Meru is home of the Ameru people which is sometimes described as being related to other communities living around Mt. Kenya region like the Kikuyu, Embu, and of course the Kamba on the other side. They are a Bantu group, just like us. It is mainly an agricultural county and that was why we chose it.

Mr. Speaker, the committee went to various places, I do not want to read the whole of it. On the first day, the delegation was received by the Catholic Women Association and the sisters who received us were a Ms. Jemimah Gatubu, Anastasia Wanja, Grace John and Felisia Cyrus.

The first place that we visited was a bakery that was set up in the year 2004. This bakery was originally started by 20 members but to date, it has grown to 115 members.

Mr. Speaker, the bakery produces up to 600 loaves of bread on normal days and 1000 in peak periods like in the month of December. This group has grown exponentially from 20 to 115 members to date. The loaves of bread are sold to the local community and the association nets a profit of about 30,000 per month.

The original cost of the project was about Kshs. 8 million. The only thing that we learnt which I can say can be emulated by our women groups here is that, since we have women Sacco, they can also try and emulate them by coming up with income generating activities that would help them uplift their living standards.

Mr. Speaker sir, on day two, we went to a sacco that specialises in producing herbs. The delegation was received by a Mr. Gilbert Mbae who is the Project Manager and a Mr. Joseph Mwai, an Organic Agricultural officer. The farm specialises in herbs growing organically. They do not use inorganic fertilisers. The herbs that are commonly grown are hibiscus, chamomile, and lemon grass.

Mr. Speaker, the Meru herb is the trade name of the herbal teas grown and packaged in the Meru region. This project was founded in 1991 to alleviate the financial constraints faced by the local farmers, so they thought of diversifying to herbs since it is a very lucrative area.

Mr. Speaker, the activities of the project are production, processing, and packaging of teas, jams and sauces. They also do product marketing and sales, both for export and local consumption. They also do irrigation and of course education. The first herb is chamomile. This particular herb is a very ancient one. It is a very old one and its common use since ancient times is for conditions ranging from hysteria, to nervous disorders, indigestion, fever, and stomach upsets. It is a very remarkable herb. It is very effective in treating those particular conditions.

Mr. Speaker, we also have herbal tea, chamomile, which is highly prized for its calming effect in relieving stress and for cleansing and antiseptic properties. It is also known to aid in digestion and also improve appetite. With a spoonful of honey, it makes a delightful soothing health tonic or night cup for the entire family. The Meru Herbs Site in Kenya, Mr. Speaker, exports most of these herbs and very little is consumed locally. They also do not use any chemical fertilisers. They only use organic manure.

The other one, Mr. Speaker, is lemongrass. Lemongrass is made in ready to use neat packets of dried leaves or teabags. The benefits of lemon grass are, mainly, to ease liver complains and, of course, it is also popular as a flavour.

Mr. Speaker, we also had another herb which is called carcade. This one seems to have a lot of benefits to the body. The carcade herb contains no caffeine or other stimulants. It is very effective in alleviating stress. It is also a good substitute for coffee and tea, particularly among people who are known to have neurological conditions or hypertension. It also aids in digestion. It is also beneficial in activating the body's hepatic and gastric secretions and it is also good in alleviating problems that are associated with urinary tract infections.

Mr. Speaker, the Meru herbs site in Kenya, as I have said before, does not use chemical fertilisers. These products are packaged in a very good way and exported to other countries, especially in Europe, Italy, and France and so on.

We also visited a posho mill. The posho mill is called St Lucy's C.W.A Posho Mill. It is in a place called Riiji Parish. The project was started in 2009. It is owned by the Catholic Women of Riiji Parish and the project benefits the schools nearby and the communities at large. They are the ones who use this posho mill.

Mr. Speaker, we also went to the Grape experimental farm. In this particular grape farm, we found almost all kinds of fruits, including olives. We were told that there were more than 200 farmers that have been contracted to grow grapes in Meru and have different varieties. Each kilogram of grapes is sold at Kshs. 80 when harvested. When harvested, the grapes are taken to a wine factory where they are used in wine processing. Shortly, from the report, I will give the benefits of grape wine.

Mr. Speaker, after that we went to Tuuru water project. This project serves three constituencies; Igembe North, Igembe South, and Igembe Central. These three constituencies are supplied with clean drinking water at about 100% of them, that is, it covers 100% of those constituencies. The Catholic Diocese of Meru is a custodian of the Nyambene forest where this water comes from. It serves approximately 125,000 people with clean drinking water.

Mr. Speaker, what is interesting about Nyambene forest is that there is virtually no human activity in Nyambene Forest, it is a natural forest where no destruction of trees has been done at all. It is the main catchment area for the waters that are supplied to these three constituencies.

We were very impressed by one Fr. Mbiko who has been in charge of this particular forest since the early 1970s. There is virtually no tree that is cut in that forest. I think it is the only forest in this country where no human activity is allowed at all. He even told us that a friend of his who was very senior in government tried to ask him whether he could get some timber from there but he refused, and from that time, the friendship between him and that senior government official seized because he was not willing to bend the rules, so we were very impressed.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular forest where the water is sourced from, they fetch flood water from the source upstream, deep in the mountain and reserve the water in about three reservoirs from where they use gravity to serve the people of these three constituencies in the lower parts and the dry areas. To get this water, they build flood water diverts, then they divert those waters from the small streams to a main stream where it allows the normal capacity of water to flow downstream when there is no rain; thus never interfering with the ordinary flow of the river. But immediately the water rises in the stream, due to the rains, the excess water is diverted to the reservoirs.

Mr. Speaker, we were very impressed with what is happening there because the water that is used downstream by the three constituencies is water that is not allowed to go to the Indian Ocean. So, they reserve that water and, therefore, use it for the benefits of the people.

Mr. Speaker, we also, after that, visited the wine processing factory. It is a very simple wine processing factory and we were told that the wine that is manufactured there is sold locally to Serena and Intercontinental hotels and the rest of it is exported. They also produce honey in this particular place.

Mr. Speaker, the following are the benefits drinking grape wine. Research for the last ten years has indicated that moderate intake of grape wine improves cardiovascular health. That is, if you take a bottle of grape wine every day, then you are almost sure that you have no problem with your heart. Research has also suggested that specifically, grape wine is the most beneficial to your hear health. The cardio- protective effect has been attributed to the antioxidants present in the skin and seeds of red grapes.

Mr. Speaker, antioxidants are very effective in preventing cancers. Grape wine also reduces the risk of coronary heart disease by reducing the production of cholesterol. Two, by boosting good cholesterol and by reducing blood clotting. Drinking

white wine can also help you to avoid headaches, nausea and irritability of hangovers. This particular wine is very popular in Europe and most of the people according to research who are now used to taking grape wine have very few cases of coronary heart diseases.

Our committee findings were as follows; Meru County is much ahead in cash crop farming especially on herbal and grape farming. It has also put a lot of emphasis on value addition. The Catholic Diocese in Meru county has done a great job in preserving the forest by making sure that Meru residents get clean water. Rev. Father Mbiko is willing to train the people of Murang'a County on how to conserve forests and also grape farming.

Meru county residents have taken irrigation farming very seriously. The co-operative societies also Mr. Speaker in Meru County we learned are doing very well. 95% of the County's produce is imported, and about 95% of farmers in Meru County have water tunnels through the main pipe which is free.

Our recommendations as a committee Mr. Speaker is that; the County Government of Murang'a can introduce the growing of non-traditional crops like grapes and herbs especially on the lower drier parts of Murang'a. We have depended very much on our traditional crops that is tea and coffee, bananas, avocados, mangoes and others. I think it is high time we start thinking outside the box and go to other product that are paying and that is grapes and herbs.

The County Government to encourage farmers to embark on organic farming because once we are on organic farming then you are cleaning your water, air and soils. Hence you are making our livelihoods better and healthier.

The County Government must also encourage a lot of value addition in whatever we produce.

The County should conserve its forests especially the Aberdare's since the Aberdare forest is the main water catchment area. I am told that near Gatara a very large acreage of the Aberdare's land does not have the trees. This is extremely dangerous because it is water catchment area that will make us have water down stream and in our rivers.

We will also encourage the people of Murang'a to go full throttle into irrigation farming, mainly because of the effect of the climate change.

The co-operative movements should be strengthened within the County, and Murang'a County farmers to be encouraged to venture into Bee keeping and also into building of water pans.

I would like to specifically thank one of the members of this assembly who made this visit possible and that is honourable Mwicigi who actually organized with catholic diocese of Meru and made it possible for us to visit this place. I would also like to honour her to second this report. I thank you Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Rebecca Mwicigi: I stand to second this report which is very important and thank my chair for remembering to recognize that I did something to take these people to appreciate what other counties are doing.

We were hosted by Fr. Mbiko an old friend of our family and sister Gemma who co-ordinates the catholic women action in the county and she told she has about 200, 000 women, and all these women are in projects and they no longer give their husbands problems so their husbands do not hang themselves because their homes are catered for by these women.

They rely a lot on donor funding and I do not see the reason why we cannot look for donor funding having the UNEP near us and are very good in looking for donor funding like the Kandara water scheme was done by donor funding. So I do not see why Murang'a should not go that way so that we may put money in our people's pocket through the first world which is much developed.

The areas we visited were all manned by women, the bakery, the flour mills and they also have got a cow project where a woman is given a cow and the first heifer which is born is given to a woman, and this project has been going on for ten years and Meru is going to have grade cows.

We were very concerned on harvesting of flood water and we noted they are harvesting flood water and building dams to give people water, and we learned also and we can start building dams so that we can benefit from water and help our people to get out of poverty.

Forestry is well conserved there because it is given to a particular institution and therefore we should think in those lines of giving a particular institution whether it is natural resource. We ask the national government to give our people Aberdare's so that we can take care of it and own it.

Fr. Mbiko told us the lifespan of Meru people and we realized it is longer than ours because they depend a lot on organic materials and the herbs that they grow are all medicinal. We realized that Italians bring their containers up to the farm level and that is where they collect the products and those people are left with dollars.

That shows that even if Meru is ahead of us in coffee growing and selling they also have other non-traditional crops which also bring money that county.

Mr. Speaker, the Father as you heard is willing to train our people and it is high time we do not keep on talking about value addition and put it into action. Why we are saying that as a committee on agriculture is because we are just about to go into budget making and that budget should have the industrialization part in it.

So that we can employ people without having to work in the farms only we can employ them in the industries, and since we have the pack house we can make it happen to have the industries. We grow these herbs he said he can get us the seeds, show us how to grow and pack them and he can even get the market for us because the market is unexhausted. And with that non exhaustion of the market he does not think that we will be his competitor. Thus the industry will employ our people and things we were speaking about yesterday on rapes and people hanging themselves will no longer be there as everybody will have something in their pocket.

The honey they grow is grown on trees which are indigenous and when you take that honey it releases the chemicals in your veins and therefore people there do not suffer from asthma, bronchitis because the honey they take have medicinal value.

In all that I wish to appeal to the house they approve this report so that these things can be started here. It should not be history anymore. We were very happy to see women are far much ahead and they were catering for their homes and even educating their children and their husbands are at peace. I thank you Mr. Speaker I second.

(Question Proposed)

Hon. Martin Mwangi: I stand to support this motion. I am one of the members of agriculture committee and I also visited the Meru County.

We were surprised to see what Meru people are doing especially in value addition. When we talk of lemongrass which we have here in Murang'a when I saw it I wondered which kind of grass it was which cattle could not eat. When we went to Meru

I realized it almost as lemon tea because we bought it and if you can look at me I had about 100 kilograms but after taking the herbs from Meru I can confess my weight has reduced to 81 kilograms.

(Applause)

What Meru people are doing they are encouraging their people to use these herbs which they have added value to and also they are improving the health of people in that county.

This is a very good report if we can adopt it and also encourage our county because we have tea but we are experiencing problems with those who are dealing with tea, but when we go global we know that the best cure of cancer is green tea and we as the county we are the producers of tea.

If we can take this example of Meru and we start adding value to our products this county can be producing green tea and we can be referred by the world as the people who has the best cancer remedy.

When we visited Meru irrigation encouraged us. We are urging people to go to farming but without irrigation water we cannot do much in farming. But in Meru just like the report is saying almost 95% of farmers have access to irrigation water.

That is why they are producing a lot of bananas. Mr. Speaker we saw they are producing those grapes, they are producing coffee and everybody in that county when you look at their faces they are almost smiling because of what is in their pockets. So Mr. Speaker I would urge this House we adopt this report and also we encourage our county to be practical because we might be doing many things which might be seen as theory but let Murang'a county be practical in agriculture things that can touch the lives of our people directly Mr. Speaker so that we can see changes.

Therefore, I would like to thank Hon. Mwicigi because she came with initiative to the committee and then she connected the committee to that place and we are so much amazed when we went there because we were wondering what can we see in Meru? But when we went there we saw that Meru is almost our neighbour, but what they are doing is marvellous. Therefore, members I would like we support and we adopt this report and also not only the report in papers but we do it practically just like Meru people are doing and I am sure after a very short time will see the fruits when we compare the things that we are doing and then we imitate what Meru are doing, I am sure our people in Murang'a will start reaping the fruits of hard work. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Florence Nyambura: Mr. Speaker Sir, I thank you for giving this opportunity, I wish to say that when we visited our almost neighbouring county, that is Meru, we were so surprised of the things that they have been doing and while we were in the van we were asking ourselves questions whether we are in the same country.

Mr. Speaker Sir, first of all we were surprised by the irrigation water where when you went atleast a quarter a kilometre, you see there is irrigation water where by it is taken to the home steads.

Mr. Speaker sir, we went to visit so many farms and we have come to see that especially our communities in Ithanga, Kakuzi and Kambiti instead of waiting and we are saying that they are dying because of hunger, we can introduce that irrigation water and then we see how we can try and start that irrigation and start that farming of grapes.

Mr. Speaker sir, in fact we were so much surprised because we have seen that they utilize their land, even if it is very hot they tried to utilize that land and as we were

discussing with our guides they were telling us that if we start growing the grapes it is very easy for them to find a market for us.

Mr. Speaker, we also became very surprised because our dairy farming, our cow ownership program is a challenge to our county but when we visited them they were so much interested because we met women group where by those women groups one has to buy shares in the group so that she can get a cow and as we interview them they told us that those cows they give to the members and when that cow gives birth, you give it to another member who has shares and it has not brought them any challenge but I think Mr. Speaker sir the CEC because we are with him, should come up with a policy on how they can distribute the cows that are in Mariira through the women to form groups and then they buy the shares and then they get the cows.

Mr. Speaker sir, we were also surprised because of the organic farming. I would wish to say that when we farm with the fertilizers, the cost go up, but when we introduce organic farming, the farming is going to be very low. The only thing that we would like is that our agricultural extension officers train our farmers on how they can use the organic fertilizers and those diseases like cancer and diabetes disease that sometimes are brought by the use of those chemicals they will be lower in our county. Mr. Speaker sir, as I come to conclude I will say that we in Murang'a have the very big Aberdare forest and where we can tap our irrigation water. We went through the tunnel as we visited the Nyambene hills, the Nyambene forest, we saw how they have tapped the water, the over flow water and the level of the water which is retained and Mr. Speaker sir we are surprised with the tunnel that went through and they were so far. As I conclude, we would wish that the report of the visit to Meru is not just only a report in paper as we should do it and do it as quickly as possible and some of those things we should introduce them and then we should also factor some of the things in the budget so that when we talk of the farming of the grapes, it is something that is being factored in the budget. Thank you Mr. Speaker sir, I stand to support the motion.

The Speaker: Order! Order! Before we move on I do know whether the hon. members have the same problem I have with the wording of this motion because every speaker who speaks, he talks about adopting. Adopting means you agree and we impress that whatever is there is actually activated but the motion reads that the Assembly notes. Noting does not means that you do anything, it means that you note that committee went and saw what they saw and recommended what they recommended. So I don't know whether the chairman would like the before we move on so that the members at least are very clear whether they are supporting adoption or just noting.

Hon. James Kariuki: Mr. Speaker sir, I agree with you what we are doing is to note, it's not to adopt. Thank you.

The Speaker: So members note we are just noting which means it was very little debate because all of you have already noted it

(Laughter)

but go on.

Hon. Samuel Wandia: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I represent Muthithi ward. I only want to make a few remarks. This is a good report. I support it. Mr. Speaker it is good that you organize more trips for us, both local and international, because when members go out they come back with good recommendations. When I look at this this one, they are talking about value addition. I remember when we went to Uganda we noted that there is a lot of value addition there and they make it in such a way that even

the local people in Uganda take a lot of coffee. That is another market for their coffee they do not only depend on the international market. Through the value addition, the population in Uganda has been encouraged to take their coffee and they have created the market for the farmers. That was the essence of us going out Mr. Speaker.

I also noted that irrigation is very much encouraged because it increases food production for both humanity and animals. When I go to Kirinyaga I note that they have done a lot of irrigation in terms of rice production and the husks from the rice, they feed it to their animals.

I congratulate the County Government because it has taken moves in the right direction in bringing in the element of irrigation in this County and I hope that they will not relent but they will continue and spread irrigation to all the wards that can afford and especially the lower part of Murang'a because when you go to the lower part of Murang'a, I think it is ideal for rice production. What we need to do is to test our soils. Once we test our soils we move the irrigation towards the eastern part of Murang'a. By so doing we shall increase our production and we shall not import any rice from Kirinyaga. We shall get rice from our County and we get food for our animals.

Mr. Speaker I note that when I talk of bee keeping in this House, when we go out I am always mocked about the bees. Mr. Speaker bee farming is very important, it reduces the level of poverty. When you go out there, I do not want to name the wards because if I name them some ward representatives will shoot up but let me use the word the lower part of Murang'a. If we bring bee production and we encourage it, the level of poverty in the eastern and central parts of Murang'a where I come from, Muthithi, will reduce. I assure this House that idleness will not be there again.

We can as well as seek information from experts like Kakuzi. I understand that Kakuzi has a lot of hives. They have both old ones and the modern ones; similarly, this should be extended here. The other day I was looking at the provisions of the budget and I noted that bee keeping has provision. This provision is not utilized. I would urge the County Government, in our laws of bringing down the level of poverty, to encourage bee keeping. If we encourage bee keeping, the level of poverty will be brought down and people will use the honey to improve their health.

Mr. Speaker, I also note in this report that there is a call for building more water pans. This should be extended to those wards which can afford by the fact that they have rivers. Once this is done, the water can be used for all purposes, for drinking where the water is treated from the pans. Thank you very much for giving me that opportunity.

The Speaker: I now ask the mover to respond.

Hon. James Kariuki: Mr. Speaker, I am very thankful to the members who have supported that report. As the Speaker rightly put it, we are only noting because we went and it happened. We were with the CEC Agriculture, Mr. Mwaniki, for the two days and he was also impressed and I know he is likely to take some action especially in the area of irrigation where I understand we want to put in a lot of money in the next budget going forward and also in the area of herbal farming.

Mr. Speaker when you go to Meru, you will note a very big difference between them and us. I do not know what happened to Murang'a. Murang'a is way behind counties like Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Embu and Meru when it comes to farming, yet we are supposed to be showing them the way. It is the highest time we reclaimed our position in this country especially in terms of farming and therefore that report will serve that particular purpose.

Mr. Speaker, I am known to be one of the greatest proponents of value addition because I know if you want to finish poverty all you need to do is to add value to our products. For example, a product like mango can shoot from Kshs. 20 to Kshs. 600 if dried. What kind of percentage is that when you add value? Until we add value to our products, I believe that we shall not rest our people from poverty in this County. Thank you for the support that I have received from the members.

(Question put and agreed to)

NOTICE OF MOTION

LAND MAPPING IN MURANG'A COUNTY

Hon. Duncan Njuguna: Thank you Mr. Speaker sir, I represent Gitugi ward and I am the Chairman for Land, Housing, Physical Planning and Settlement committee. I beg to give notice of the following motion;-

Aware that public land shall vest and be held by the County Government in trust for the residents of the County as stipulated in Article 62 section 2 of the constitution of Kenya of 2010, further aware that Murang'a County is marred with numerous cases pertaining to illegal and irregular location of public lands and challenges in identification of the same, noting that the County Government requires land to develop infrastructure for public services cognizant of the fact that land is an emotive issue in Kenya and there must be unlisted public participation to ensure that public land is protected and reserved for public purposes, this House urges the County Executive Member for Land, Housing and Physical Planning to;

1. Constitute a technical committee to co-ordinate a community led public mapping in Murang'a County.
2. Develop a program and work plan for mapping of public land and in Murang'a County.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: The House is now adjourned until tomorrow at 2:30 pm.

The House rose at 3:21 p.m.