

Fish stock assessment in the Kenyan EEZ: current status

Kaunda–Arara Boaz¹, Emmanuel Mbaru², Stephen Mwakiti², Pascal Thoya², Almubarak Athman², Samuel Ndirangu², Rashid Anam², Boaz Orembo², Dickson Odongo², James Gonda², Dismas Kosieny² and Renison Ruwa²

¹ University of Eldoret, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, PO Box 1125, Eldoret, Kenya
E-mail: b_kaunda@yahoo.com

² Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), PO Box 81651, Mombasa, Kenya

Kenya's marine fisheries resources support livelihoods and economic activities of more than 8,000 fishers. However, the fishery is mostly artisanal reef-based and recent indications are that the resource is overfished with declines of species abundance ranging from 50–80% over the last decades. Alternative sources of livelihoods are necessary to release pressure on the nearshore fisheries resources. The deep slope fisheries resources in the EEZ of Kenya and coastal Eastern Africa remain largely unassessed since the expeditions of the *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* of the early 1980s. The species distribution, diversity, biomasses and economic viability are largely unknown but can form alternative source of livelihoods and economic income to the artisanal fishers. The South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (SWIOFP) that concluded in 2013 surveyed the demersal fisheries resources on the Kenyan coast over a bathymetric scale that ranged from shallow (10–50m) to deep slopes (> 100km) on the continental shelf during the NEM season of 2012. Fish species biomasses were estimated along the coast using a bottom trawler over a 2-weeks period. Additional deep slope species biomasses were estimated using a dropline survey albeit over a shorter experimental period. We evaluate these datasets and discuss the potential of an offshore demersal fishery in coastal Kenya.