

# Fishery modernisation key to economic growth

By ALLY MAYALA



THE cage fishing envisioned by the government under President Samia Suluhu Hassan will bolster revenue generation and create more jobs for Tanzanian fishing communities, whilst conserving marine resources.

President Samia this week handed out about 222 fishing cages and 55 boats to fishers in an effort to upgrade efficiency in the Lake Victoria regions, including Mwanza, Mara and Kagera.

Several economic stakeholders, speaking to the 'Daily News' recently, lauded the move, describing it as transformative in the fishery sector.

Secretary General of the Tanzania Fishers Union (TAFU), Mr Jephtha Machandalo, who is also a fisherman, praised the government's initiative to develop the fishing industry by providing the latest equipment to fishers.

He said the equipment, provided through soft loans, will mitigate the persisting problem of illegal fishing,

which currently threatens the sustainability of the sector by netting small fish below 50 centimetres.

"The cage fishing system will bring smiles to the entire fishing sector within two years. It should be maintained for the country's fishing revolution. We expect an increase in processing factories due to increased production and fish resources due to illegal fishing prevention," Mr Machandalo said.

He noted that the cage system, which is mostly applied to tilapia, will cater to the local market and increase the volume of Nile Perch fillet exports.

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**PRESIDENT Samia Suluhu Hassan swears in Iringa Regional Administrative Secretary, Doris Kalasa at Chamwino State House in Dodoma, yesterday. (Photo by State House)**



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He called on the government and other fishing stakeholders to research and develop new technological methods suitable for rearing Nile Perch in cages, noting that it is somewhat tricky and difficult to contain the species due to their ecological behaviour of mobility in search of food.

"For hours, the Nile Perch can traverse several kilometres in search of food, unlike Tilapia, which can be fed and relax at one location. We need new technology in rearing the Nile Perch," he said.

According to Mr Machandalo, Tanzania has great potential for exporting exponential tons of Nile Perch available in freshwater, especially in Lake Victoria and Nyasa.

Member of Parliament

for Musoma Rral, Professor Sospeter Mubongo, said intensive investment in the fishery and other production sectors, including gas and minerals, is critical to achieving accelerated economic growth with a GDP of eight to ten percent.

He noted that China, a leading nation in the fishery sector globally and Egypt in Africa, fetch large portion of their returns from cage fishing, and it is necessary for Tanzania to follow suit.

"The cage technology will prevent the extinction of fishery resources," he said.

Prof Mubongo called for comprehensive research on various fish species available in all waterbodies, including Lake Tanganyika and Victoria, for effective conservation and harvesting of the resource diversifying the country's economy.

Dr Sylvester Jotta, a

business expert based at the Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), said the adoption of cage fish farming is a new era of effective exploitation of marine resources, which have been underutilised for a long time due to the use of rudimentary technologies like throw nets.

Dr Jotta said modern fishing will enable fishers in Lake Victoria, among others, to move from subsistence production to surplus in order to sufficiently serve domestic and overseas markets.

He said cage fishing is predictable and called on fishers to strategise and conduct market research as they start their projects in order to obtain desirable returns in the near future.

In another development, Dr Isaac Safari, an economist residing in Mwanza, who conducted research on Lake Victoria in 2010 titled "Utili-

sation of the By-product of Nile Perch," said the cage system will attract immense investment in fish processing industries.

"After conducting my research, I realised that every part of the Nile Perch can serve a specific purpose apart from its primary use as food. The fish bone can be used in manufacturing poultry feed, the fish scale can be used to make glue, and we can produce ornaments and diesel from fish," he said, referring to his cutting-edge research.

Dr Safari said the increase in Nile Perch production as a result of the shift from traditional to modern fishing will add jobs in the entire production chain and foreign currency for the country's prosperity.

To realise a countrywide shift to cage fishing, Dr Safari appealed to the government to continue raising

awareness among citizens about the significance of the modern fishing approach, which multiplies profits while conserving fishery resources in all water bodies across the country.

Mr Willy Bwemelo, Director of Eden Agriaqua Limited, a company involved in fish fingerling and feed production, said he expects further growth in the sector due to increased supply and demands altered by the cage technology.

During the handing-over ceremony, the Minister for Livestock and Fisheries, Mr Abdallah Ulega, briefed President Samia on the impact of the government's integrated efforts to transform the fishery sector.

He said the country aims to have the sector contribute 10 per cent to GDP by 2036, as opposed to the current 1.8 per cent.