

PRESS RELEASE

August 24th 2011

Alliance for Water Stewardship to launch report “Exploring the Value of Water Stewardship Standards in Africa” at 2011 World Water Week.

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is proud to announce the release of its report “Exploring the Value of Water Stewardship Standards in Africa”. The report will be officially released during the 2011 World Water Week in Stockholm.

Date: Wednesday August 24th

Time 12:45

Location: Stand AG:03

The report documents a series of pilot studies of water stewardship standards around Lake Naivasha in Kenya, one of the most economically important freshwater resources in East Africa. This is the first exploration of how a water stewardship standard could work in a developing country and was undertaken in collaboration with leading UK retailer Marks & Spencer, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Lake Naivasha was chosen for its environmental, social and economic significance. The lake is an important wetland ecosystem and home to more than 400 bird species, but also provides irrigation for agriculture which generates over 10% of Kenya’s export revenue, contributes 2.1% of the national GDP and provides employment for 75 000 people.

AWS is currently developing an international water stewardship standard. Testing and refining existing regional standards from Europe and Australia in developing countries like Kenya is a vital part of this process. The report describes results and learning from the testing of both European and Australian draft standards at sites operated by two Naivasha-based M&S suppliers, along with stakeholder workshops.

AWS Executive Director, Adrian Sym, commented, “One of the most exciting aspects of this project was the close collaboration between public and private sectors in the work of AWS. At AWS, we know very well that to make a real difference, both the standard and the other elements of our water stewardship program need to be relevant for and assist business and public sector agencies. We will incorporate the learning from this project into our future work, both in Africa and elsewhere.”

The project was led by AWS Board member Nick Hepworth, Director of Water Witness International, alongside Kenyan Project Manager Dr Dorice Agol.

Nick Hepworth commented, “These new water stewardship standards are exactly what we need to ensure that our virtual water consumption - the water used to produce the food and goods we import - from developing countries is sustainable. As a system of independently audited self-regulation in places where government regulation is weak, they can help ensure that buying ‘thirsty’ products like flowers and vegetables from Africa doesn’t harm the poor or the environment through pollution and water shortages. The pilots in Kenya have been an essential step. What impressed me most was that all the stakeholders in Kenya immediately saw value in what the AWS is doing. They live with the barriers to better water management on a daily basis and feel the impacts. As the testimony in our report and the results show, they see the AWS standard as an important practical way of preventing negative water impacts arising through global trade.”

Louise Nicholls, Head of Responsible Sourcing at Marks & Spencer noted that “the findings [of the report] presented here reassure us that our suppliers are already efficient and responsible water users, but they also show that the standard will drive further improvements. The case study identifies the importance of collective action and improved performance of statutory water management systems and begins to clarify what responsible suppliers can do to drive better water management both within, and critically, beyond their fence line.”

As Peter Ruoya, vice chair of the Lake Naivasha Water Resource Users Association and representative of small farmers in the upper basin put it, “This work to develop a water stewardship standard is very important. It will change the way water is managed in Naivasha for good”. The standard was also welcomed by the Kenyan government. According to Philip Olum, Chief Executive Officer of the Water Resource Management Authority, “...it is clear that the standard will help us implement integrated water management and our National Water Policy – it has our full support”.

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AWS, working with stakeholders from around the world, is providing a platform for the development of a global water stewardship program. At the heart of this work is the development of standard and a certification program. AWS is working to build a program that recognizes and rewards water users and managers who take major steps to minimize the impacts of their water use and management. Regional Initiatives and stakeholders are critical to the development of a meaningful stewardship program.

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