

## **Kilifi**

The county lies between latitude 2° 20' and 4° 0' South, and between longitude 39° 05' and 40° 14' East. It borders Kwale County to the south west, Taita Taveta County to the west, Tana River County to the north, Mombasa County to the south and Indian Ocean to the east. The county covers an area of 12,609.7 km<sup>2</sup>. The average annual rainfall ranges from 300 mm in the hinterland to 1,300 mm at the coastal belt. The dry months are experienced during January to March in all parts of the county.

The annual temperature ranges between 21 °C and 30°C in the coastal belt and between 30°C and 34°C in the hinterland. Kilifi County has four major topographical features. The first one is the narrow belt, which forms the coastal plain and varies in width of 3 Km to 20 Km. The coastal plain lies below 30 m above sea level with a few prominent peaks on the western boundary. To the west of the coastal plain lies the foot plateau characterized by slightly undulating terrain. The plateau falls between 60 m and 150 m altitude and slopes towards the sea. The next zone is the Nyika plateau that rises from 100 m to 340 m above sea level and occupies about two thirds of the county. This is an arid and semi-arid zone, which is suitable for ranching. Parts of the semi-arid zones are also suitable for tree crops. The most widely cultivated tree crops in Kilifi are mangoes, citruses, cashew nuts, and coconuts.

Mango forms part of the landscape and they have been in existence for many decades. Most farmers here grow the four tree crops as a basis for subsistence of which the highest income return comes from cocoa nut, citruses, cashew nut and mangoes due to their flowering and fruiting pattern (Figure 40). Cocoa nuts and citruses flower more frequently whilst cashew and mangoes flower twice in a year. Flowering of both mangoes and cashew nuts are sometimes severely affected by diseases but only a few farmers invest on IPM. Also, during the harvesting season mango fruits are affected by pests and blemishes when falling and on transportation such that only 50% of the produce reaches the market in good condition. Only a few farmers grow mangoes on commercial scale of 50 to over 2000 trees. Even within those farms trees are hardly weeded, pruned and sprayed with fungicides and pesticides. Most mango trees planted in Kilifi are from seedlings rather than grafted, which gives intra-varietal and intra-specific diversity. The varieties of mangoes grown in Kilifi are many. They include Ngowe, Apple, Boribo, Kitovu, Batawi, Kent, Mpunda, Dodo, Dodomaji, Kimuzi (Chimuzi), Khovu, Safula, Mcharabu, Mteri and many unnamed local varieties.

Of these varieties Ngowe and apple are the most marketable. Ngowe ripens early thus it captures the early market while Apple is known for its sweetness. Kitovu is another variety with a wider acceptability since it is the one eaten unripe with salt and pepper giving it good aroma and taste. The cost of farming Ngowe, Apple and Batawi are the highest since the first is highly susceptible to powdery mildew; Batawi and Apple are highly susceptible to mango weevil and fruit fly, in addition to rust that affects Apple depending on weather conditions. Batawi has a good taste but it is hardly harvested in good condition due to high susceptibility to maggots of the fruit fly.

Kilifi and Coast in general will be the most suitable centre of diversity for mango selection and improvement given the wide diversity observed on farms (Fig. 41).



Fig.2: A rare variety of mango with large glossy fruits and no known commercial name in Kadaina Island