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REPUBLIC OF KENYA



The Role and Contribution of Montane Forests and Related Ecosystem Services to the Kenyan Economy

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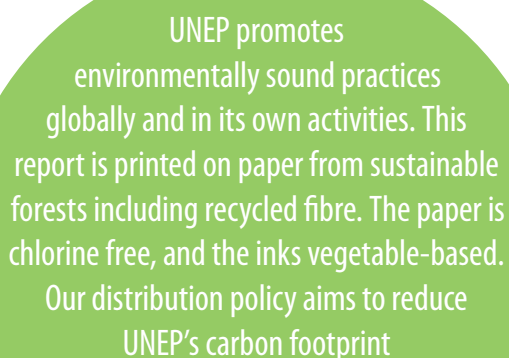
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Forests and their related ecosystem services play an important role in supporting economic activities and human well-being. This publication highlights the importance and contribution of Kenya's montane forests or "water towers" to its economy. The value-added by forest services to Kenya's economic sectors have either consistently been undervalued or ignored by headline economic indicators such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Measuring and understanding the economic value of forests is important for decision-making processes including planning and budgetary allocations. The recently concluded UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) has re-affirmed and underlined the need to better account for natural capital and critical ecosystems such as forests and urged member states to use a "new system of environmental and economic accounts" towards a transition to a Green Economy.

This publication represents some of the on-going efforts by the Government of Kenya in this direction, including its recently launched Green Economy initiative and the country's overarching development aspirations embedded in the strategic document entitled 'Vision 2030'. Among the six sectors identified as priorities within the Medium Term Plan 2008-2012 of Vision 2030, at least four (agriculture, tourism, wholesale and retail trade), which make up the largest part of Kenya's GDP, have linkages either directly or indirectly to montane forests and the crucial services they provide. Other sectors supported by forests include energy, inland fisheries and manufacturing.

Using best international analytical practices and environmental and economic evidence, this publication underlines the need for better management and increased investments in montane forests as well as innovative policy instruments such as REDD+. The extraordinary value of the ecosystem services of the Mau forest complex to the Kenyan economy calculated by the UNEP, the government and partners is already catalyzing a response and support from a range of donors and the private sector.

This publication, if acted upon, may provide similar pathways to improve the prospects and sustainable management of forests elsewhere in the country and provide inspiration for other economies in East Africa and beyond.



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Abstract

The montane forests of Kenya, better known as Kenya's "Water Towers", produce direct economic value for its citizens. This value accrues not only from the production of various timber- and non-timber forest products, but also from a range of regulating ecosystem services that provide an insurance value to several key economic sectors. There is also a secondary or indirect multiplier effect associated with the direct economic value of the Water Towers.

This report estimates these economic values, by means of best international analytical practices and environmental and economic evidence from Kenya, and shows that montane forests have consistently been undervalued in conventional national accounting.

The findings underline the need for better management, increased investment in montane forests and innovative policy instruments (such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+)).





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