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## **Inaugural Kenya National Research Festival Opens: A Catalyst for Partnerships and Collaborations for Socio-Economic Development through Research**

*The Kenya National Research Festival 2024 opens with a call for bold partnerships and cutting-edge research to drive the nation's socio-economic progress.*

**Nairobi, 21st August 2024** — The inaugural Kenya National Research Festival 2024 kicks off in Nairobi, setting the stage for a week of insightful discussions, exhibitions, and collaboration under the theme “Research Partnerships and Collaborations for Socio-Economic Development.” The festival, organized by the National Research Fund (NRF) in partnership with Young Scientists Kenya (YSK), aims to foster a vibrant research culture that drives Kenya’s development agenda. The festival, running from 19th to 23rd August, is a pivotal platform to highlight the NRF’s achievements, foster strategic partnerships, and inspire future innovations that align with Kenya’s development goals. With over 100 exhibitors and poster presenters, showcasing research outputs are presented for potential uptake and commercialization through public and private partnerships across different sectors.

A significant highlight of the festival is the hosting of the **7th National Science & Technology Exhibition**, themed “Developing Sustainable Solutions for Climate Change.” This year’s exhibition features 200 students and 100 teachers from 390 schools across all 47 counties, including special needs and refugee schools, showcasing their innovative projects festival’s commitment to fostering a culture of research and innovation among Kenya’s youth.

While officiating the opening ceremony, Felix Koskei, the Chief of Staff and Head of the Public Service, highlighted the pivotal role of research in shaping Kenya’s future. In his keynote address, he emphasized the importance of research in transforming curiosity into knowledge and knowledge into power.

“Research is the disciplined journey that fuels progress, drives innovation, and helps nations tackle the challenges and crises they may confront in their developmental agenda,” he remarked.

The Head of Public Service said that the festival has come at a critical time when the Kenyan government was pursuing a paradigm shift toward a knowledge-based economy. He noted,

“This festival provides a unique platform for cultivating relevant and insightful discussions, promoting synergies, and strengthening both domestic and international collaborations, which are critical levers of development in today’s interconnected world.”

A significant highlight of the festival is the participation of over 200 students from all 47 counties, alongside young scientists and researchers. He underscored the importance of involving the youth, stating, “The youth make up the majority of our population, and their energy and technological savviness is critical for today’s world, which is largely premised on technological developments and fast-paced changes. Research is vital for the full realization of this demographic dividend.”

The festival’s theme resonates with the government’s Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), which emphasizes leveraging research to harness local knowledge and technologies to address community-specific challenges and promote inclusive growth. “Research outputs have been pivotal in shaping public policy through evidence-based insights that guide effective decision-making,” said the Head of Public Service. He cited examples such as the development of drought-resistant crops and

advancements in geothermal energy that have bolstered Kenya's food security and leadership in renewable energy.

The critical role of interdisciplinary research in addressing global challenges, particularly climate change was highlighted. "Interdisciplinary initiatives are crucibles of groundbreaking innovation, where the boundaries between disciplines dissolve, and the synergy of diverse perspectives leads to solutions that transcend the limitations of any single field,"

Mr Koskei encouraged participants to leverage strong linkages between researchers and industry, which is the main consumer of research information. "Our vision of 'Buy Kenya, Build Kenya' depends on this,"

Prof. Dickson Andala, CEO, NRF emphasized the importance of the festival in catalyzing national development through research. He highlighted NRF's success in translating over 60 research outputs into tangible products and services ready for commercialization, with examples ranging from the high-yield Sahiwaal cattle breed by KALRO to innovative assistive technologies from Meru University of Science and Technology among others.

Underscoring the need for sustained investment in research and development (R&D) to ensure Kenya remains competitive on the global stage, Prof. Ratemo Michieka, Chair of NRF, praised the collaborative efforts between academia, industry, and government as key to unlocking Kenya's potential in addressing complex challenges such as climate change and economic inequality.

Dr. Victor Mwangera, YSK National Director says the increasing involvement of young girls in technology is not just a trend but a testament to the untapped potential of their innovative minds in shaping a better future. He emphasized the collaborative spirit that underpins many of the projects on display.

The festival will culminate in the prestigious **National Outstanding Research Awards (NORA)**, recognizing excellence in research and the impact it has on national development. These awards, alongside the **YSK National Science and Exhibition Awards**, will celebrate the outstanding contributions of Kenya's researchers and young scientists, further solidifying the festival's role in promoting research as a cornerstone of national development.

#### **For Media Enquiries Contact:**

Titus K Kisangau, [tkisangau@nrf.go.ke](mailto:tkisangau@nrf.go.ke)  
+254703610989

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#### **About the National Research Fund (NRF)**

The National Research Fund is established under the Science, Technology, and Innovation Act No. 28 of 2013, mandated to mobilize, allocate and manage financial resources to facilitate research for the advancement of science, technology, and innovation. NRF is committed to the advancement of national development through R&D initiatives. The National Research Fund is a statutory body established under the Science Technology and Innovation Act 2013, mandated to facilitate research in science, technology, and innovation, support scientific research and innovation, and compile and maintain a national database of research and innovation in Kenya. NRF is dedicated to fostering research and innovation in Kenya. Through various initiatives and collaborations, NRF aims to enhance the nation's scientific and technological capacity, driving sustainable development and economic growth [www.nrf.go.ke](http://www.nrf.go.ke)