

# Strict laws on *mnazi* consumption introduced

Palm wine is legal, the laws are meant to ensure safety measures, public health and sanitation are followed

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Mombasa County

The government has imposed stringent new laws on the sale and consumption of palm wine, sparking a dispute with tappers, consumers and sellers of the drink popularly known as *mnazi* in the Coast region.

*Mnazi*, which was legalised about ten years ago, will now be subjected to the provisions of the law that impose age restrictions, time limits and stringent hygiene requirements for drinkers, sellers and tappers.

*Mnazi* traders are now required to sell the drink when it is still "reasonably fresh" and supply sterile straws. Traders have also been warned not to add water to the alcoholic sap.

It has also been decided that besides maintaining personal hygiene, including "clean and short fingernails" and "short and protective clothing" for those who sell the drink, sellers must ensure the brew sold has an alcohol content of between 5 and 8 per cent.

The Kenya Coconut Development Authority (KCDA), which regulates the coconut sector, says the new measures are meant to regulate consumption and facilitate health and hygiene

## SOME OF THE NEW LAWS

- Traders are now required to sell the drink when it is still "reasonably fresh", and supply sterile straws
- Traders have been warned not to add water to the alcoholic sap
- Sellers must ensure the brew sold has an alcohol content of between 5 and 8 per cent
- Tappers and sellers will be required to acquire a food handlers and medical certificate
- The drink will be sold only to people aged 18 years and above, and between 5pm and 11pm on weekdays and 2pm and 11pm on weekends

among traders of the local brew.

Henceforth, tappers and sellers will be required to acquire a food handlers and medical certificate, and the drink will be sold only to people aged 18 years and above, between 5pm and 11pm on weekdays and 2pm and 11pm on weekends.

## POLICE HARASSMENT

KCDA Chairman Dr Titus Kadere Tunje says the proposed rules will also help protect the traders, who are mostly women, from police harassment and also curb the trade of illicit brews in drinking dens.

"We don't want to breed an alcoholic nation. People should work," Dr Tunje said yesterday as he defended the new rules.

"*Mnazi* is legal and the laws are

only meant to ensure that safety measures and public health and sanitation are properly adhered to. We don't want to see cases of police arresting people and charging them with selling illicit brews," he added.

The new regulations were reportedly unveiled following consultations between KCDA and stakeholders from all the six counties at the Coast together with Nacada. However, it is not clear when the meeting took place.

*The Standard* has seen a sheet of the new regulations published after the meeting and distributed to sellers.

The laws also seek to tame excessive drinking by imposing restrictions on where the wine may be drunk. The regulations prohibit dens from being erected near schools, mosques or churches.

These structures should be strong and well erected, with good aeration and ventilation, and they "should not act as a hiding point for criminals or act as brothels".

Yesterday, Mombasa County Commissioner Nelson Marwa said the government has no intention of banning palm wine but wants to bring order to the sector with the new regulations.

"Anyone who fails to follow these regulations will be arrested and charged," Mr Marwa warned.

However, many palm wine sellers are questioning the intent of the new legislation, claiming the laws are meant to run them out of business.

"Most of the laws are hard for us to comply with considering what we earn from the business. There is a ploy to run us out of business and give our business to people who can manage



Mangi Karisa taps madafu at Majaoni in North Coast. The Kenya Coconut Development Authority wants *mnazi* dealers to sell the drink in glasses and construct special dens complete with latrines. [PHOTO: OMONDI ONYANGO/STANDARD]

the new laws," Kibibi Kahindi Baya, a widower who has been selling palm wine for the last 20 years in Shanzu, said.

## AFFECT BUSINESS

"Where will we get the funds to build floors and structure things to their standards?" Ms Kibibi asks.

Nzalambi Mwanzala, a palm wine trader, says the wine business has helped her educate her children and the new laws will destroy her livelihood.

Even palm wine tappers are wary that the new laws will leave them with no customers.

"If they run the traders out of business, who will buy our palm wine?" Mangi Karisa, a tapper, asked.

"The business has helped us educate our children and now they are trying to ground the same businesses," Mangi said.

He added, "Local leaders should come forward and speak about this issues since *mnazi* drives the economy of many counties around the Coast."

However, KCDA says with the counties in place, traders can group themselves and take advantage of the Youth Development Fund and Women's funds to grow their businesses.