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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The government has imposed stringent new laws on the sale and consumption of palm wine, sparking outrage among consumers and traders who sell the drink popularly known as mnazi in the Coast region.

Mnazi, which was legislated 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 dealers, 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 bars maintaining personal hygiene, including “clean and short fingernails” and “short and protective clothing” for those who sell the drink, sellers must ensure the drink sold has an alcohol content of between 5 and 8 per cent.

The Kenya Coconut Development Authority (KECD) 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 handler 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.**

**POLICE HARASSMENT**

KECD Chairman Dr Titus Kachira Tumvi says the proposed rules will also help protect the traders, who are mostly women, from police harassment and also curtail the trade of illicit brews in drinking dens.

“Do we want to breed an alcoholic nation? People should work. Tumvi 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 mooted following consultations between KECD and stakeholders from all the six counties on the Coast together with Nacwa. However, it is not clear when the meeting took place.

The标准 has seen a sharp rise of the new regulations published after the meeting and distributed to sellers.

The laws also seek to tame street vendors thinking of imposing regulations on the sale of mnazi. Also regulations prohibit dealers from interfering with schools, mosques or churches.

These structures should be strong and well erected, with good ventilation and sanitation, and they should not act as a gathering place for criminals or act as brothels.”

Yesterday, Mombasa County Commissioner Nelson Marelli 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,” Mwana said.

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 these are hard for us to comply with conducting what we can’t from the business. There is a plan to run us out of business and give our business to people who can manage the new laws,” Kibibi Kahindi Buaa, a widower who has been selling palm wine for the last 20 years in Shauri said.

**AFFECT BUSINESS**

“Where will we get the funds to build floors and structure things to their standards?” Ma Kibati asks.

Nzualu Mwamwana, 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 Kanna, a tapper, asked.

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

He added, “Local leaders should come forward and speak about issues since smoke drives the economy of many counties around the Coast.”

However, KECD says with the counties in place, traders can group themselves and take advantage of the Youth Development Fund and other credit funds to grow their businesses.