

TRUEFISH Special Session Advancing Collaborative Aquaculture Development in the East African Community (EAC)

Date: 26th June 2025 from 2:00 pm;

Concept Note – TRUEFISH Special Session at the World Aquaculture Safari '25

This session will highlight the progress and insights gained from the EU-EAC True Fish Farming Story in the Lake Victoria Basin (TRUEFISH), an ambitious initiative funded by the European Union (EU) under the 11th European Development Fund aimed at revolutionizing aquaculture in the Lake Victoria Basin. The project implementation began in 2021 and will end in December 2025.

The TRUEFISH Project is implemented under the leadership of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) of the East African Community (EAC), in collaboration with FAO, Landell Mills, and WorldFish. Its core objective is to promote the development of a competitive, sustainable, and gender-inclusive aquaculture sector across East Africa.

During the last five years, the TRUEFISH project has contributed to the development of competitive and sustainable commercial aquaculture in the Lake Victoria Basin. Key achievements include strengthened business capacity and producer associations, improved availability of skilled labour, and enhanced sustainability through spatial planning, biosecurity, and biodiversity safeguards. Among other results, the project has led to the drafting and endorsement of the first-ever Lake Victoria Basin Regional Aquatic Organism Health Strategy by the LVFO Council of Ministers. This milestone strategy will be officially launched during the dedicated TRUEFISH session at the conference in addition to the regional Aquaculture Association initiated by TRUEFISH Project. Emphasis will be placed on regional integration and innovation as critical drivers of sector transformation.

Participants will have the opportunity to engage directly with project experts, share practical experiences, and discuss pathways for scaling up sustainable aquaculture through evidence-based policies, collaborative partnerships, and strategic investments.

Program

Thursday 26th June 2025 From 14:00 pm to 17:40 pm

From 14:00-15:40 pm

I. OPENING SESSION (20 mins)

- Welcome remarks –LVFO, EAC, EU (5 mins each)
- EU-EAC TRUE FISH FARMING STORY IN THE LAKE VICTORIA BASIN (TRUEFISH) by Elysee Nzohabonayo – (5 mins)

II. PRESENTATIONS BY IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS (90 mins) Moderator Dr Elysee

- 1. Strengthening Aquaculture Skills through Technical and Vocational Education Transformation: The TRUEFISH Model in East Africa by Parajua Jose -20 mins (15min presentation and 5min for question)**
- 2. Strategic Zoning and Spatial Planning for Sustainable Aquaculture Development in East Africa by Trevor Telfer -20 mins (15min presentation and 5min for question)**
- 3. Building Aquatic Animal Health Governance in Lake Victoria Through the FAO PMP/AB Framework: The TRUEFISH Regional Model by Reantaso Melba -20 mins (15min presentation and 5min for question)**
- 4. Advancing aquaculture business in the Lake Victoria Basin by Etienne Hinrichsen- (15min) (10min presentation and 5min for question)**
- 5. Advancing improved protection of biodiversity in the Lake Victoria Basin through research and capacity development by Papius Tibihika-(15 mins) (10min presentation and 5 min for question)**

From 16:00 pm to 17:40 pm

III. PANEL DISCUSSION 1: "SCALING AQUACULTURE THROUGH REGIONAL COLLABORATION" (45 mins-@ 5min each per person and 10 min for open floor)

Moderator: (Dr. Kayanda)

Panelists:

1. Director Aquaculture in Kenya
2. Director Aquaculture in URT.
3. Commissioner Aquaculture in Uganda.
4. Director Aquaculture in Rwanda:
5. Director, Promotion of fisheries sector in Burundi.
6. Chairperson, Regional Aquaculture Association.

Discussion Topics:

- Reflections from Partner States on the Impact of the TRUEFISH Project
- Sustaining the Achievements of TRUEFISH Beyond the Project Lifecycle

Open Floor: Q&A and Reflections from Participants

IV. LAUNCH CEREMONY

Moderator Dr Rukuunya (25mins)

Formal Launch of the Lake Victoria Regional Aquatic Organism Health Strategy (LVRAOHS):

This segment will mark the official unveiling of the LVRAOHS, a strategic framework designed to enhance aquatic animal health and biosecurity across the Lake Victoria Basin. The launch will include a brief overview of the strategy's objectives, key pillars, and implementation roadmap.

Planned Activities:

- Presentation of the LVRAOHS and its significance to regional aquaculture -Makerere **(5 mins)**
- Remarks from key stakeholders and partner organizations (FAO (Melba), ES LVFO, Kenya) **(3 mins each)**

Formal Launch of the East Africa Regional Aquaculture Association (15 minutes)

This segment will officially introduce the East Africa Regional Aquaculture Association (EARAA), a regional platform aimed at strengthening collaboration, knowledge exchange, and coordinated growth of the aquaculture sector across East African countries.

Planned Activities:

- **Introduction and Objectives:** Brief presentation on the vision, mission, and strategic goals of the Association, including its governance structure and expected role in advancing regional aquaculture development.- Chairperson EARAA (5mins)
- **Remarks by Leadership:** representatives from participating countries highlighting national commitments, anticipated contributions, and collective aspirations (URT), (4 min each)

Symbolic Inauguration: A ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the official launch of LVRAOHS and EARAA (2mins)

V. PRESS MEDIA (10 mins) Moderator Former Deputy Executive Secretary LVFO Dr ATM

ES-LVFO (English) and Directors from Kenya (English), Uganda (Luganda) and URT (Kiswahili)

Lake Victoria Special

Friday 27th June 2025 from 9:00 am- 12:10 pm

Concept Note Title: Engagement with the development partners on advancing aquaculture in EAC

The Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), is a specialized institution of the East African Community (EAC) mandated to coordinate the sustainable management and development of fisheries and aquaculture in the region. As part of the World Aquaculture Safari, the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) will convene a high-level special session to foster dialogue with development partners on advancing aquaculture in the East African Community (EAC) region. This session aims to highlight investment opportunities, share experiences, and explore collaborative pathways to unlock the sector's potential for economic growth, food security, and livelihoods improvement. The session will feature a panel discussion comprising key donors and development agencies, providing a platform for partners to present their priorities and support mechanisms for aquaculture development.

Program

From 9:00 am to 10:20 am

I. Presentations

- 1) Acoustic Target Strength Modeling of *Caridina nilotica* to Improve Biomass Estimates For Sustainable Aquaculture, Fisheries, and Conservation in Lake Victoria by **Ongore Collins** -20min (15min presentation and 5min questions)
- 2) Genetic Characterization and Interspecies Gene Flow among the *Oreochromis* species in the Lake Victoria and Kyoga Basins, Uganda: Implications For Conservation by **Hecht Thomas**-20min (15min presentation and 5min questions)
- 3) Mass Fish Mortalities on Lake Victoria: An Escalating Age-Old Phenomenon Magnified By Aquaculture? By **Ssekyanzi Athanasius** -20min (15min presentation and 5min questions)

From 10:50 am to 12:10 pm

II. PANEL DISCUSSION:

**Engagement with the development partners on advancing aquaculture in EAC
60 min**

Moderator: (Former Deputy Executive Secretary LVFO – Dr. ATM)

Panelists:

2. Representative from IFAD,
3. Representative from GIZ,
4. Representative from FAO
5. Representative from EU
6. Representative from AU IBAR
7. Representative from EAC

8. Representative from W Bank

Discussion Topic:

Opportunities from development partners available for aquaculture development in the EAC region,

Open Floor: Q&A and Reflections from Participants 15 min

III. CLOSING REMARKS (10 mins)

LVFO (5 mins)