



# Information Brief

## Blue Economy Innovation and Investment Summit 2025 and Blue Empowerment Fund Showcase

Authors:

Victor Omondi and Elsie Wanjiku



## Purpose

To summarize key highlights, lessons, and follow-up actions from the Blue Economy Innovation and Investment Summit 2025, with a focus on the Blue Empowerment Fund (BEF) Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) and seaweed value-addition product showcase.

## Background and Context

The Blue Economy Innovation and Investment Summit 2025 was held from 24–26 September 2025 at Pride Inn Paradise, Mombasa, Kenya, hosted by Sote Hub. The summit theme, “Powering Africa’s Blue Growth,” aimed to unlock Africa’s aquatic resources through innovation, investment, and collaboration, with emphasis on youth and women employment in sectors such as eco-tourism, ocean tech, sustainable fisheries, waste management, renewable energy, and blue agriculture.

## Summit Focus & Participation

The summit convened about 700 participants, including policymakers, investors, entrepreneurs, researchers, creatives, ecosystem enablers, and ocean champions from across Africa’s blue economy landscape.

The program combined high-level policy dialogues, keynote speeches, startup deal rooms, investor pitching sessions, and an innovation exhibition featuring marine technologies, eco-solutions, and blue value-added products.

## Core Thematic Tracks

- **Blue investment:** De-risking early-stage marine ventures, scaling blended finance (e.g., blue bonds), and developing bankable, impact-driven projects.
- **Blue tech:** Digital and AI applications for smart fisheries, satellite monitoring, and coastal planning to enhance efficiency, conservation, and profitability.
- **Climate and circularity:** Regenerative aquaculture, plastic-to-product innovation, ocean farming, restoration, and climate-resilient value chains.
- **Policy and governance:** Inclusive, transparent governance, public-private partnerships, marine security, and policy tools that balance innovation and conservation.

## BEF IMTA and Seaweed Showcase

The Blue Empowerment Fund, under the Blue Empowerment Project, exhibited a climate-smart, gender-transformative IMTA system integrating seaweed, fish, and oysters farming, alongside seaweed value-added products. The IMTA model is positioned as a low-carbon biomitigation strategy that reduces pollution from cage aquaculture while diversifying production and strengthening women’s livelihoods in Kwale and Kilifi counties. The model demonstrates a re-imagined large-scale aquaculture system that maintains ecological integrity while supporting commercial viability and attracted strong interest from summit delegates, including ambassadors, research institutions, and development partners and investors.

## Lessons Learned and Implications

- High demand for IMTA knowledge and training: Visitors showed strong interest in IMTA cage construction, cost economics, and masterclass training, pointing to a need for structured capacity-building and technical manuals.
- Knowledge gaps on seaweed farming: Ecosystem enablers and enterprises had limited understanding of seaweed’s environmental and economic potential, especially in high-value products and climate services.
- Strong demand for enterprise finance: Over half of booth visitors inquired about funding, underscoring financing constraints for blue micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the urgency of operationalizing the BEF as a catalytic vehicle.
- Partnership and collaboration appetite: Accelerators, incubators, insurers, and technology providers showed readiness to co-design IMTA pilots and marine innovation programs.
- Product diversification and market gaps: Seaweed can be transformed into diverse edible and health products (juices, jams, porridge), yet market linkages are weak and bulk-production capacity remains limited.
- Investor requirements for scale: Investors sought clarity on scalability, market structure, and value chain readiness, highlighting the need for robust investment profiles and feasibility analyses.

## Keynote Insights

Keynote speakers reaffirmed major global and national blue economy commitments, including the EU's Nice Ocean Action Plan, the UN Ocean Decade 30x30 objective, and Kenya's goal to protect 30 percent of its ocean territory, linking these to the need for scalable, climate-smart models such as IMTA and seaweed innovation.

Speakers emphasized that blended finance, strong and inclusive governance, and robust innovation ecosystems are essential to move promising pilots like the BEF IMTA model from demonstration to investable scale, reinforcing BEF's strategic positioning for future partnerships and co-financing.

## Recommended Actions and Next Steps

### 1. Strengthen IMTA technical capacity

- Deliver specialized IMTA masterclass training for enterprises and coastal communities.
- Develop and disseminate technical manuals, information packages, and establish demonstration sites in coastal counties.

### 2. Expand seaweed knowledge and product development

- Implement awareness campaigns and regional forums to promote seaweed farming and its environmental and livelihood benefits.
- Support research and development, and business incubation for diversified, including organic and natural seaweed products targeting local and export markets.

### 3. Operationalize and market the Blue Empowerment Fund

- Fast-track the BEF's operationalization, with clear eligibility criteria and funding guidelines for MSMEs and innovators.
- Forge partnerships with investors, development agencies, and financial institutions to leverage additional capital and ensure fund sustainability.

### 4. Build partnerships for innovation and scaling

- Formalize collaboration frameworks with accelerators, incubators, and research institutions to co-design pilots, run innovation cohorts, and test new blue ventures.
- Engage ecosystem enablers (e.g., insurance, tech firms) to de-risk adoption of IMTA and blue tech solutions.

### 5. Strengthen markets and aggregation models

- Map seaweed and related blue value chains, and organize trade fairs, business to business (B2B) events, and digital marketplace initiatives to connect producers and buyers.
- Support cooperatives and aggregation models to achieve bulk production, meet offtaker requirements, and improve logistics and offtake arrangements.



Figure 1: At the Blue Empowerment Fund booth where delegates and investors are following the exhibition of an IMTA system as well as the seaweed value-added products during the Blue Economy Summit in Mombasa.



African Centre for Technology Studies  
2nd floor, Konza Complex  
Nairobi-Mombasa Road.

Tel: +254710607210  
Email: [info@acts-net.org](mailto:info@acts-net.org)



[@ACTSNET](#)    [@African Centre for Technology Studies \(ACTS\)](#)