

## The Untapped Potential of *Casuarina equisetifolia* in the Kenyan Coast

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### Abstract

*Casuarina equisetifolia* is one of the most preferred tree species in the coastal region of Kenya for construction poles. The species has not yet been commercially utilized for other products despite the presence of the technology and markets. Despite the huge environmental and economic benefits of this species, the Coast region remains poor with most farmers reluctant to embrace the growing of the species as an economic venture in the face of poor climatic conditions that have made crop farming unproductive. The objectives of the study was to assess the trends of *C. equisetifolia* uptake and determine the factors affecting its uptake by farmers in the Coast region. The study sites were the two major *C. equisetifolia* growing counties of Kilifi and Kwale. The counties have been growing *C. equisetifolia* intensively and have diverse socio-economic conditions which allowed for comparison of trends. Data collection was done through review of secondary data mainly records kept by Kenya Forestry Research Institute, Kenya Forest Service and private nurseries. Results revealed that *C. equisetifolia* uptake varied between the sites with Msambweni area in Kwale leading with 36,500 seedlings planted in a year, while Buda area of Kwale had the lowest uptake at 7,374 trees in a year. The level of uptake also varied between the years. Uptake in almost all the sites was lower between 2001 -2009 and highest between 2009-2010 for most sites except Kwale and Buda whose uptake was highest between 2003-2004 and 2005 -2006 respectively. Generally, the uptake of *C. equisetifolia* is still relatively low. In order to enhance its growing and improve farmers' livelihoods and environmental conservation, there is a need to create awareness and start value addition schemes targeting products like chip board, briquettes, timber, paper, transmission poles as well as carbon credits to enhance co-benefits.