



KENYA PLANT HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICE(KEPHIS)

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

MARCH 2025

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Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service(KEPHIS)

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Vision:

Excellence in Plant health and quality assurance in agriculture

Mission:

To assure plant health, quality of agricultural inputs and produce towards a food secure nation and safe trade

Plant Health, Our Business

Document Control

Approved in theth Meeting of the KEPHIS Board held/...../2025

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	Deputy Director, Corporate Communications
	Managing Director

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Policy Approvals

The Communications Policy has been approved and issued under the signature of:

Chairman, KEPHIS Board:

Date:

Managing Director:

Date:

Deputy Director, Corporate Communication

Date:

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Draft

Definition of Terms

Communication Policy: These are general principles that guide how KEPHIS will communicate with all its stakeholders

External Communication: The exchange of information and messages between KEPHIS and other organizations, groups or individuals outside its formal structure to facilitate cooperation and to present a favorable image of KEPHIS

Internal Communication: The sharing of information within KEPHIS Board, management and staff for business and social purposes

KEPHIS Staff: Any person employed by the Board as well as members of the KEPHIS Board of Directors.

Media: a means of communication that reaches or influences people widely and speedily where necessary.

Material Information: Any information relating to the business and affairs of KEPHIS that when publicly released would significantly affect, or would reasonably be expected to have a significant effect on the image or reputation of the Organization

Confidential Information: Information not widely disseminated within or external to KEPHIS, which, if disclosed, would be unduly detrimental to KEPHIS's interests

General and Routine Information: Information that would not otherwise be classified as confidential information, and which is not otherwise required to be kept confidential.

Selective Disclosure: Disclosure of confidential material information to one or more individuals or companies and not broadly to our customers and stakeholders.

1.0 Introduction

Communication plays an integral and crucial role in every organization. Organizations that communicate effectively perform better and have higher levels of employee engagement. A culture of an organization is a combination of the beliefs and values and how people behave with each other as well as the behaviours they demonstrate to their stakeholders.

KEPHIS acknowledges the importance of planned and coordinated communication as a strategic management function and as an integral part of its daily functioning. This is founded on the premise that well-structured, communication leads to better relations with both internal and external stakeholders, mutual understanding of all customers, good reputation and brand image; and ultimately support from relevant stakeholders.

This Policy is anchored on KEPHIS Strategic Plan 2023-2027, current Performance Contracts and Work Plans and the Access to Information Act, 2016 which gives the public the right to access information from any public institution. It puts in place a solid communication structure that will give KEPHIS adequate visibility, engagement mechanisms and guide the Corporation in adopting best communication practices. Through this, KEPHIS seeks to foster its obligation to providing comprehensive information to all stakeholders through the most appropriate communication methods. This policy, through the framework provided, will guide and enhance the Authority's decision-making processes on all communication issues. It will also provide general principles, communication channels, management of communication and branding guidelines for KEPHIS's logo as well as media engagements.

2.0 Communications Policy Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish sound principles of communication in KEPHIS and to ensure that internal and external stakeholders understand the importance of our communication mechanisms.

The mandate of KEPHIS is to assure the quality of agricultural inputs and produce to promote food security and economic growth. This is done through seed certification, protection of plant varieties, analyses of agricultural inputs and produce through globally accredited laboratories and phytosanitary services. As such, KEPHIS services are in demand locally and globally. This results to both customer and media attention. There is therefore need for KEPHIS to communicate regularly, in a factual manner that satisfies the information needs of all stakeholders.

This Policy is therefore intended to provide a framework for good communication between KEPHIS and its stakeholders. It will ensure that all the Organization's stakeholders are fully, accurately and effectively informed of all activities of the Authority.

2.1 Communications Policy Scope

This Policy applies to the conduct of the KEPHIS Board, Management, Staff, Casual staff, Attaches, Interns, Suppliers and all the Corporation's stakeholders. The document also guides on recommended methods for corporate communication, within the institution including;

- 2.1.1 Written Communication such as news releases, advertisements, speeches, presentations, correspondence, conference and corporate events invitations, email, social media, blogging and the Corporation's website and social media handles.
- 2.1.2 Oral Communication such as face to face, group meetings, telephone conversations, tele-conferences, interviews and news conferences

2.2 Communications Policy Objectives

This policy applies to the internal and external stakeholders of the Organization. The Policy's objectives are as follows:

1. To facilitate interactive communication at all levels. This will ensure that all staff are constantly informed, engaged and motivated to work as a team with the aim of achieving the KEPHIS mandate.
2. To create awareness of KEPHIS services. This builds understanding and support for the Corporation among all stakeholders.
3. To cultivate and promote a high performance environment.
4. To achieve and sustain high levels of customer satisfaction.
5. To position KEPHIS as a customer centric organization that is constantly seeking innovative ways to serve our customers better.
6. To position KEPHIS as an organization that is socially responsible and compliant to regulatory bodies.
7. To entrench the culture of pride and passion towards the Corporation.
8. To ensure that all communication is aligned to the Vision, Mission, Core Values and overall, the Strategic Plan.
9. To strengthen the culture and sense of recognition among our internal customers (staff).
10. To embed the value of excellent customer service as stipulated in the Corporation's Service Delivery Charter.
11. To strengthen and align the KEPHIS Brand by ensuring that ICT Systems, including all desk/laptops comply with our Brand and Visual Identity.
12. To create awareness, understanding and compliance by employees of all relevant mandatory regulations as stipulated in the KEPHIS Act and any other regulatory body.
13. To constantly remind employees to take individual responsibility for controls as this is what gives us the license to do business.

14. To assist in managing change through proactive communication.
15. To ensure that organizational information is preserved through confidentiality, integrity and made available as and when needed.
16. To empower internal customers (staff) with information and knowledge so that they may effectively market KEPHIS.
17. To ensure efficient communication in times of crisis

2.3 Communications Policy Statement

KEPHIS is committed to providing information on its services to internal and external stakeholders in an accurate, timely, relevant and understandable manner. Further, the Corporation is committed to being visible, accessible and answerable to the public by reporting on its activities with regard to its mandate.

2.4 Expected Outcomes

- 1) Clear and coordinated communication within the Corporation and to its stakeholders;
- 2) Productive, sustained, professional and mutually respectful media relations;
- 3) Optimal integration of the Corporation's Communication assets in service delivery;
- 4) Improved management of crisis, risk and management communication;
- 5) Wider accessibility of the Corporation's information and services, both locally and internationally;

2.5 Communications Policy Guiding Principles

The Corporation has adopted and committed to the following key guiding principles to support communication:

- **Information:** The Institution shall support the right of people to seek, receive and impart information and ideas about its services.
- **Transparency:** KEPHIS shall seek to be a positive example of transparency and to act in a way that is consistent with the advice it provides to members on transparency issues.
- **Confidentiality:** In the absence of a compelling reason for confidentiality, there shall be a presumption in favor of disclosure of information.
- **Clarity:** The Corporation shall promote clarity by ensuring that uniform and clear messages on key issues are provided.
- **Feedback:** KEPHIS shall actively and regularly seek feedback from its stakeholders.

- **Diversity and Equality:** The Corporation's communication ought to promote equality and equity in all aspects.
- **Cultural awareness:** As a national Body, the Corporation shall ensure continuation in respect to ethnic cultural diversity of all stakeholders in its communication.
- **Respect:** All the Corporation's staff will place a premium on respectful engagements and interactions amongst themselves, with the external stakeholders and members of the media when disseminating factual communication.
- **Pro-activity:** KEPHIS shall continue to demonstrate leadership and in line with its vision, mission and core values, it will actively seek and engage external contacts in areas of mutual interest.

3.0 Channels of Communication

In an organization, information flows forward, backwards and sideways. This information flow is referred to as communication. Communication channels refer to the way this information flows within the organization and with other organizations and stakeholders. Decisions and directions flow upwards or downwards or sideways depending on the position of the individual in the communication web.

The foundation of communication is to inspire, steer and organize employees efficiently, and for all this, the most effective tools are spoken and written words. For the effective flow of information within an organization, it is important for an effectual communication channel to be in place.

3.1 The Working of a Communication Channel

Information is transmitted on an all-round basis be it through a modern of communication, be it face-to-face conversations or an inter-department memo, information is transmitted on an all-round basis. An important element of the communication process is the feedback mechanism between NITA Management and employees and between NITA staff and external stakeholders.

3.2 Types of Communications Channels

KEPHIS staff are its biggest asset for the Corporation and they play the role of being day-to-day brand ambassadors. Developing effective staff communication, involvement and participation is essential for the Corporation's operations and reputation. Staff play a vital role in relaying messages to stakeholders and therefore form an essential part of the Authority's overall development of stakeholder participation and partnerships. They also need to be kept informed of the Corporation's activities to contribute to their successes. When communicating internally, therefore,

all messages should be consistent with the Authority's values, up to date, relevant and presented in a clear and concise manner. For KEPHIS, the main form of communication is through internal memos team briefings, one on one meetings, staff portal communications, monthly bulletins, and emails.

Others are notice boards, departmental/committee meetings, complaints boxes, the E-newsletter, website, social media, team briefings, one on one meetings, Discipline Procedure, Suggestion Boxes, leadership communication and upward communication and emails. It is envisaged that an intranet will be developed in the near future that will further facilitate communications between staff.

The Corporate Communications department will manage, facilitate and promote effective staff communication and will offer advice and support to the Managing Director and top management as requested.

WhatsApp: There are WhatsApp groups that have been formed to foster faster and more efficient communications. KEPHIS encouraged the use of this social media method as it is fast and conveys messages clearly and concisely. Departments are encouraged to form these groups for fast and efficient communications.

3.3 Management of Internal Communication

1. Directors and Heads of Departments shall communicate within their teams and inform the MD where applicable.
2. KEPHIS will encourage an open door policy at all times where the leadership shall be available to their direct reports and other staff
3. If a Director or Head of Department wants to officially communicate with an officer not working within his/her department, he/she shall do so through the appropriate supervisor without being inhibitive.
4. The Managing Director shall communicate with officers through respective Directors/Heads of Department as the case may be, except in such matters of daily routine as may require direction or when special circumstances so require. In such cases, it would be important to rope in the Head of Department if decisions are made during the meeting.
5. All communication relating to an individual officer shall be filed in the employee's personal file.

KEPHIS communicates with a wide range of external stakeholders. As outlined in the Strategic Plan (2023-2028). Before any communication is made, KEPHIS must decide how it wants the communication to be received, hence should be composed in an appropriate manner. All communication should be credible, open, honest, timely, realistic and professional. Target audiences should be identified and the most appropriate and effective method of delivery chosen to ensure maximum coverage. At all times, KEPHIS cultivates a robust interactive communication channel between the Corporation and its stakeholders to promote confidence in service delivery. Feedback

on service provision is essential for the future development of KEPHIS and to provide information on encountered challenges.

Channels for external communication include Face to Face, Written Communication, Newsletters, Social Media, Website and Emails.

3.4 Management of KEPHIS Logo

The Deputy Director, Corporate Communication is responsible for the management of the logo and its various uses and forms as per the KEPHIS Brand Manual. The logo will be used on all communication within NITA and to external stakeholders as per the set guidelines. Where requests are made by external parties for the use of the NITA logo, the Corporate Communications Department can decide to endorse the request but not submit the logo. Also, where donors and partners are to use the logo with KEPHIS, then guidelines will be established on how to use the logo to ensure visibility and enhanced communication. At all times, the logo will not be pixilated or distorted which can harm the image of the Corporation.

3.5 Principles Governing Communication Channels

All communication whether internal or external shall:

1. Bear a reference and be divided into paragraphs and dated the day they are actually dispatched.
2. Be printed only where necessary, as this encourages going paperless
3. Be confined as far as possible to a single subject under an appropriate and summarized heading.
4. Invariably, the reference number and date of the last communication, if any from the writer and from the person addressed on the same subject shall be given (cross referencing).
5. In the case of enclosures, unless of exceptional importance, shall be avoided whenever practicable and copies, not originals, shall be sent. Enclosures in foreign language should be accompanied by a translation, or in the case of documents of minor importance, by a summary of the contents.
6. Great importance shall be attached to the expeditious treatment of all communication received by a department, division, region and branch.
7. Every communication requiring a response but cannot be answered at once, shall be acknowledged promptly on receipt.
8. The necessary consultations shall be finalized and appropriate reply dispatched in not more than seven days unless it can genuinely be established that such consultations require a longer period.

All communication with internal and external stakeholders must be treated with:

Confidentiality: No member of staff or sitting committee shall divulge official information or deliberations of a committee to the public or unauthorized persons

before such release is sanctioned through an official communication by way of letters, memos, circulars, minutes or press release. No information which shall have passed between the departments or between the public and the departments shall be communicated to any member of the public without the sanction of the Managing Director or another duly authorized officer. When management decisions have to be communicated to employees, all managers have to take full ownership of the decisions. Confidential decisions must:

1. Be identified as such
2. Be stored in locked cabinets to which access is restricted
3. Be removed promptly from meeting rooms at the conclusion of meetings
4. Be subject to secure limited access of electronically stored computer information
5. Not be discussed in places where the discussion may be overheard
6. Not copied unnecessarily or discarded where others can easily retrieve it

Integrity: The Head, Corporate Communications Department shall ensure that all communication is packaged with completeness and accuracy while safeguarding the loss of its integrity upon dissemination to the targeted audience.

Availability: The Head, Corporate Communications Department shall ensure that information on communication is available as and when needed to enhance its consumption.

4.0 Principles of Effective Communication

KEPHIS shall endeavour to build the capacity of its human resources by conducting trainings on effective communication. The knowledge acquired shall be shared and documented for future reference/use. Some of the factors that will determine effective communication include:

1. **Key Messaging:** Communication is only successful when the sender and receiver perceive it in the same way. The key message therefore needs to be articulated clearly by the communicator.
2. **The Audience/Recipient(s):** The sender shall know his or her audience so as to package the message appropriately and in ways they understand. Understanding depends on their culture, environment(s), areas of study or expertise, communications mechanisms, among others.
3. **Clarity, Precision and Accuracy:** It is important to ensure that all communication is accurate as this helps build trust and confidence among staff. The message shall therefore be simple, clear and precise, using the acronym KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid).
4. **Tact and Appropriateness:** No communication shall be offensive or derogative to any groups of staff. In this regard, the leadership shall always

be conscious of the diversity of people at KEPHIS in terms of gender, age, religion, race, ethnicity and disability.

4.1 Communication Protocols

This Policy shall guide on the following in compliance with the Quality Management System(QMS):

1. **What to communicate:** -The Head, Corporate Communication shall prepare appropriate information as directed by the Managing Director for communication based on a selected medium. Managers for each functional area shall determine what to communicate in compliance with QMS.
2. **When to communicate:** -Communication shall be carried out taking into consideration the target audience at the appropriate timing.
3. **With whom to communicate:** -Communication shall be between KEPHIS and its internal and external stakeholders
4. **Who communicates:** -The Managing Director is the Corporation's spokesperson. In his absence, his designated appointee shall speak on behalf of the Corporation
5. **How to communicate:** -Communication to staff and stakeholders shall be carried out based on the defined channels while considering the nature of such communication.

Protocol shall be observed in inter-departmental communication without bureaucratic hindrances.

5.0 Engagement with the Media

5.1 Media Relations

The Corporate Communication Department coordinates all media relations activities. Unless otherwise authorized by the Managing Director, media related activities and interviews are restricted to the Managing Director who is the Corporation's spokesperson. In specific circumstances, and with authorization from the Managing Director, KEPHIS Management or senior officers and/or other subject matter experts may be called upon to speak to the media about specific subject matter. These opportunities will be pre-arranged in consultation with the Managing Director and Corporate Communication Department.

As far as is possible, media deadlines are to be respected at all times.

KEPHIS staff who are not authorized to serve as spokespersons will not respond on behalf of the KEPHIS to any enquiry from, or initiate communication with the media. If the media approaches them, they are to consult with their respective Directors or Deputy Directors.

The key principles of engaging with the media shall include:

1. Directing all media inquiries to the Corporate Communication department

2. Developing and maintaining good relationships with the media; especially local and specialized media
3. Being open and accessible to the media
4. Making information available to the media through appropriate spokespersons
5. Respecting the right of the media to represent all views in their coverage.

5.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the Designated Spokesperson

The Access to Information Act, 2016 states that the Chief Executive Officer of a public entity shall be an information access officer and may delegate the performance of his or her duties as an information access officer under this Act to any officer of the public entity.

The Managing Director is the Spokesperson for KEPHIS and has a duty to speak truthfully and openly to the best of his/her knowledge regarding the Corporation, subject to the disclosure restrictions as discussed in this Policy.

5.3 Public Comments at KEPHIS Corporate Events

KEPHIS staff, who are invited to make presentations or speeches about the Authority (whether verbal or written) to industry groups, conferences, or public meetings, as a part of their normal area of responsibility, should receive the approval of their Manager prior to accepting such invitations. Should such an opportunity be pursued, the roles and responsibilities of the designated spokesperson stipulated in this document will apply.

5.4 Statements of Personal Opinion

KEPHIS staff must refrain from making public statements of personal opinion regarding KEPHIS and from presenting a personal opinion regarding KEPHIS as a fact.

5.5 Media Monitoring

The Corporate Communications department prepares monthly and quarterly reports on media coverage and social media engagements of the Corporation. These are forwarded to the Planning and Strategy department as part of Monitoring and Evaluation and onwards to the Managing Director.

5.6 Press Release Procedure

Press releases are issued to present positive messages about KEPHIS and its work amongst stakeholders and the public. Releases serve to inform, communicate and educate about our objectives and achievements. The Corporate Communication Department will issue statements that explain or defend KEPHIS position on issues that may arise.

All press releases and statements from KEPHIS will be planned, coordinated and released through the Communications team. When working with partners or donors, the corporate communications teams will work together to develop the releases before approval and dissemination.

Press releases will also be available on KEPHIS website and social media accounts.

6.0 Routine Information Requests

The appropriate staff/Manager can answer enquiries from the public for general and routine information if the information requested is contained in records/publications previously released for public distribution (is in the public domain).

Enquiries from the public cannot be answered if the enquiry is regarding KEPHIS activities that constitute confidential material information. If such an enquiry is made, the staff/Manager will respectfully decline the request as containing confidential or proprietary information but advise that the inquirer can write to the Managing Director on the same.

6.1 Use of Forecasts and Other Forward-Looking Information

The use of forecasts and/or other forward-looking information should only be released with caution. All forward-looking information must contain a statement that the information is forward-looking, a description of the factors that may cause actual results to differ materially from the forward-looking information, all material assumptions and appropriate risk disclosure, and cautionary language. Release of such forecasts and forward-looking information must first be approved by the Managing Director.

6.2 Responding to Rumours

In general, no comment will be made in response to rumours or speculation regarding the Organization. However, certain exceptions may be made under the direction of the Managing Director and advice from the Corporate Communications and Legal

7.0 Crisis Communications

At KEPHIS, crisis can occur in any section but particularly in the core departments of seed certification, plant variety protection, phytosanitary services and analytical chemistry laboratories and other laboratories. Crises can include fire or chemical outbreaks at the laboratories, trade issues, staff unrest, farmer complaints on fake seed, plant disease outbreaks, adverse media coverage, terrorism attacks, among others.

At KEPHIS, the crisis communications team comprises the following:

- The Managing Director
- Director, Seed Certification and Plant Variety Protection
- Director, Phytosanitary Services
- Director, Corporate Services
- Director, Legal Services
- Deputy Director, Corporate Communication

In crisis, only the Managing Director or his authorized representative is to speak to the media. In relaying the information:

- All comments should be guided by professionalism and transparency.
- Personnel matters are to remain confidential.
- When possible, responses should be proactive, responsive and action-oriented
- If there are casualties, then all communication will put into consideration the affected families

The team shall constantly monitor, interpret and manage issues so that they do not escalate. At the time of a crisis, the team will assess the severity of the crisis and determine the course of action, which must be approved by the Managing Director who shall then make necessary communication to relevant stakeholders and the Board of Directors in a timely manner.

7.1 Crisis Management Protocols

- Safety – Ensure safety of all staff and others who work at KEPHIS
- Notification – Notify the Managing Director immediately
- Before Going Public – assess the situation to determine the facts, determine the appropriate action, create a plan for communication, develop key messages, assess the resources necessary to manage the crisis
- Notify the staff and board
- Go Public
- Keep Records
- Ensure constant communication with key parties to the crisis
- Manage all parties involved

8.0 Policy Compliance

The Policy compliance by the Board, Management and Staff will also extend to contractors whose services the Corporation may procure from time to time.

9.0 Responsibility

The Corporate Communication Department will have the responsibility of implementing the Policy, while the Managing Director will have the overall responsibility for the effective operationalization of this Policy.

10.0 Guiding Framework

This Policy shall be read together with the following Laws, Policies and Procedures Manuals:

- a. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010
- b. Kenya Information and Communications Act, 2015

- c. Access to Information Act, 2016
- d. Commission on Administrative Justice Act, 2012
- e. KEPHIS Strategic Plan 2018-2022
- f. KEPHIS ICT Policy
- g. KEPHIS Human Resource Procedures Manual
- h. All other Policies within the KEPHIS framework

11.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Monitoring is the ongoing process of reviewing program activities to determine whether plans are being carried out as designed; Evaluation on the other hand is the systematic episodic assessment to determine the effectiveness, relevance, impact and cost effectiveness of a program.

KEPHIS will assess the implementation and impact of the Communication Policy through various monitoring and evaluation activities. An appointed committee guided by the Corporate Communications department may be appointed for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this Policy and making recommendations for changes to minimize risks to KEPHIS operations

A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been formulated to monitor progress against target outcomes. The implementation of the corporate communications policy will also be measured against a number of Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Relevant and Timely (SMART) objectives.

KEPHIS will use the following measures, among others, to monitor the success rate and effectiveness of the Corporate Communication Policy:

1. Increased stakeholder satisfaction and awareness rating
2. Increased Staff satisfaction
3. Increased positive media coverage of KEPHIS activities
4. Delivery of measurable improvements in the quantity of communications delivered through the website
5. Increased brand recognition of KEPHIS at local, national, regional and international levels;

12.0 Policy Review and Amendment

Signed: Managing Director

Signed: Deputy Director, Corporate Communications

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