

## Butterfly farming takes wing in Kenya

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The farming of butterflies is becoming an ever more important foreign exchange earner in Kenya, with annual earnings estimated, according to most recent figures, at more than \$100 million dollars.

The Kipepeo project, in the coastal Arabuko-Sokoke forest and which includes about 900 butterfly farmers, has seen stellar success in the four years since the initiative was set up by the Kenyan government.

Farmers at Kipepeo rear a wide range of high-quality butterfly and moth pupae for export to western markets, particularly in the US and UK.

Some species produced there are also raised in other high biodiversity forests in Kenyan coastal regions such as the Shimba and Taita Hills.

Arabuko-Sokoke forest, which is over 40,000 hectares in size, is the largest single block of natural coastal forest remaining in East Africa. Its rich biodiversity includes a concentration of endemic and endangered flora and fauna.

Further, nine butterfly species found in Arabuko-Sokoke are not found anywhere else in the world. The Kipepeo project intends also to ensure that they do not become extinct.

The forest, in Taita-Taveta, ranks second in mainland Africa as home to six globally threatened birds, after the Congo rainforest.

Kipepeo intends to extend its product range to take in praying mantids and other groups and also supplies dried insects for specialist collectors. For more information please see the [Kipepeo Project's web site](#)