Status, Impact and Management of Invasive Alien Species in Tanzania

JG Lyimo, RYM Kangalawe, ET Liwenga

Abstract

Invasive alien species (IAS) are among the significant drivers of environmental change worldwide and important causes of biodiversity losses. They contribute to economic hardship and social instability, placing constraints on sustainable development, economic growth, and ecological problems in various parts of the world, including Tanzania. This study was undertaken to provide information on the status of invasive species and their management needs in Tanzania. The study used three methodological approaches including documentary search, interviews with relevant stakeholders and limited field visits. Findings from the study have indicated that the awareness, trends, distribution and impacts of the invasive alien species in Tanzania are variable, and similarly are the management and control requirements and practices for these species. Among the major impacts associated with the IAS in the country include loss of biodiversity, where in some cases has caused disappearance of certain species of fauna and flora, social and economic distress to human being due to the disappearance of plants and animal species that are regarded as important sources of livelihoods. The study shows that currently there is limited demonstrated capacity in terms of human and financial resources to address the issue of IAS, except for a few cases such as the water hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) in Lake Victoria. In addition, there are no clearly defined long term strategies to address the issue of invasive species in many institutions. Experience shows that many of the legislations and policies dealing with biodiversity and/or resource management in the country do not directly address invasive alien species. This shortfall may be responsible for the inadequate attention being accorded to the management of invasive species. Thus for effective management of invasive alien species, policies and legislations should be encouraged to directly deal with invasive species. Such situation calls for integrated efforts including various institutional frameworks and collaborations.

Keywords: Invasive alien species, biodiversity loss, management of IAS, Sustainable development, Tanzania.