



Gathaithi Farmer's Cooperative Society

Nyeri County, Tetu District, Kenya

Partner since: 2018

Traceable to: 1542 Members

Altitude: 1650 MASL

Varietals: SL 34, SL 28 (90%), Batian, Ruiru 11

Processing: Coffee is pulped and fermented overnight in water before being run through washing channels to float and separate. Coffee is then skin dried and moved to raised drying beds for 7-15 days.

Harvest: October November December

Booking: March April May

Arrivals: May June July



Gathaithi Farmer's Cooperative Society is located on a saddle between Mt. Kenya and the Aberdare ranges, putting it at the center of Kenya's Central Highlands. Their factory is a short drive north of

Nairobi, about 160km as the crow flies, in Nyeri County's Tetu District.

In 2000 these farmers spun off from the Giant Tetu Coffee Farmers Society, and now, membership numbers 1,542. And these are active members, in part because funds set aside from the previous year's harvest are used to provide pre-financing for school fees, access to farm inputs and funds for emergency needs.



Kenya is an enigma. It occupies a top spot in specialty – Kenyan top lots are always amongst the most expensive of any harvest. But yet it's a country where coffee production is dropping year over year. Kenya is a place where traceability is given, but knowing what you want and how to get it are two different things. Rarely do we find partners more capable, and loyalties more difficult to navigate than we do in Kenya. For all the aforementioned reasons, competition in Kenya is fierce, making prized coffees feel like even more of a success.

However, no matter how formally the industry is structured, coffee still remains a system of people. And in a country where farmers own their own cherry production, there is additional power to connecting with coffee's most important stakeholder. Farmers can, for example, point you to the best collections from every harvest, or delay sending their lots to auction to give you another week to sample. At request they can change the way they separate lots, bringing new products to market in a year that would take other countries nearly a decade to do.

But experimentation is not the name of the game. With washed coffees working so well, you won't find many a manager willing to mess around with different fermentations, flotation, drying times or with certifications like organic.

The experiment instead is that of business model. How do cooperatives normalize earnings to keep their members engaged in coffee? How do we take away red tape to encourage more farmers to plant more coffee, as opposed to corn or dairy? How can small estates split off and succeed under their own pulping license? Is it better to sell through auction or directly to an international buyer – can you afford to cut out your marketing agent? Once you speak to these problems you are speaking the language of coffee in Kenya – this is a country that already knows how to coffee.