



## Kaguyu Wet Mill (Inoi FCS)

Kirinyaga County,  
Kenya

**Partner since:** 2021

**Traceable to:** 600 members

**Altitude:** 1,400

**Varietals:** SL 28, SL 34, Batian

**Processing:** Cherries are delivered to the wet mill daily, where they are floated, pulped and let to ferment over night before washing, 12 hours of soaking and then 12-18 days of drying on raised beds in a covered green house.

**Harvest:** October November December

**Booking:** March April May

**Arrivals:** May June July



Kaguyu Factory (wet mill) is nestled into the red volcanic and loam soils of Mt. Kenya. There are just about 600 smallholders who live within walking distance of the station, and who deliver cherry by hand the same day as it's harvested. These small collections come in by the pillowcase, which is spread out for hand-picking and some general separation by size which, with floatation, ensures that the pulper is calibrated to the right size. The group is headed by Wilson Wanjohi, factory manager, who has pushed the cooperative forward both on quality, and on conservation. To the former he points to the greenhouses in which raised drying beds slowly dry parchment to FAQ. To the latter he points to their waste water management system which both recycles water, and uses drainage pits to minimize impact.



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.