

The **EATTA** Junction

September 2024

A Publication for the East African Tea Trade Association

September 2024 issue
Ksh.250. Tsh.5000. Ush.7500

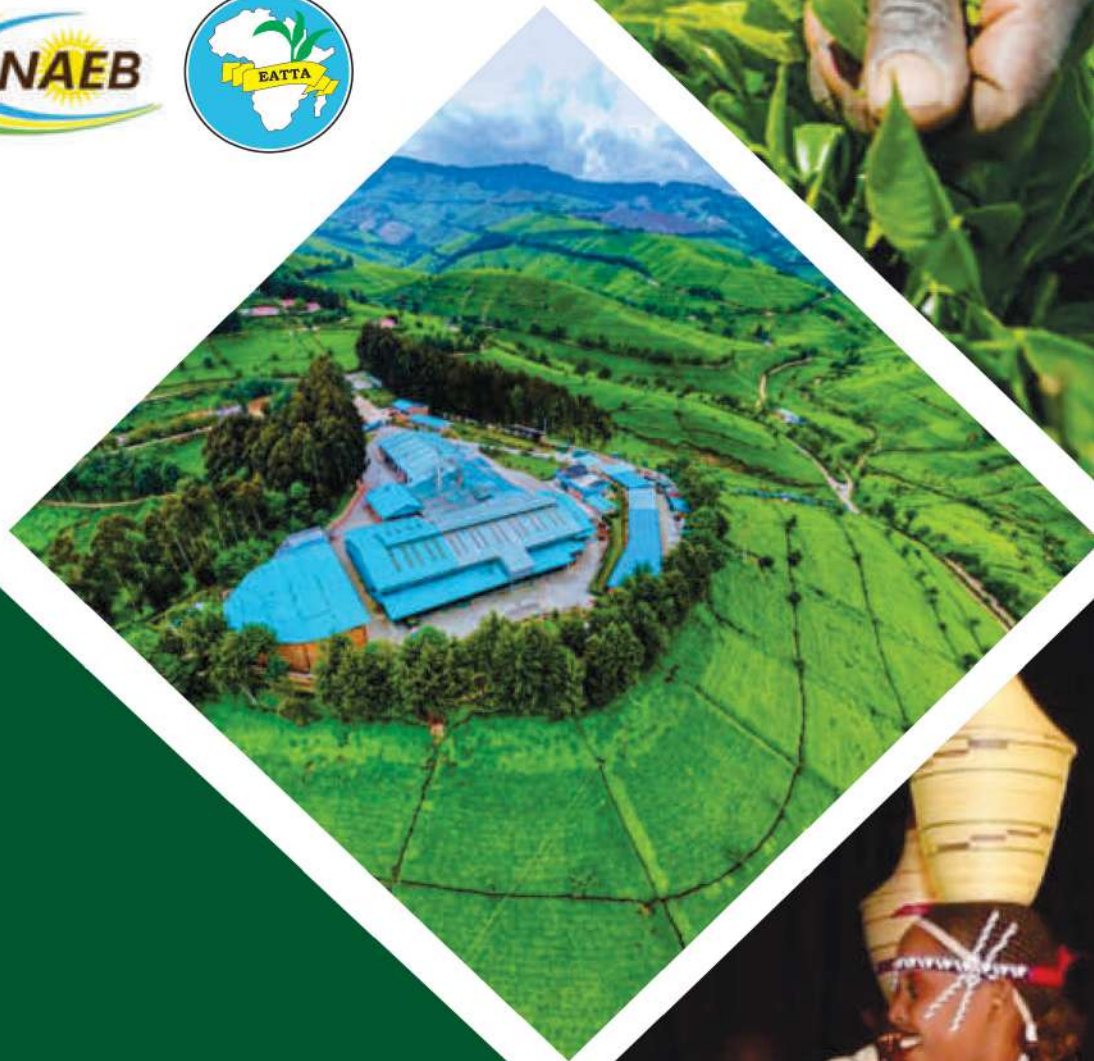
TEA EXPORT
EARNINGS
SURPASS
KSH 211
BILLION

**THE
FUTURE
OF TEA**
*Insights from
Colombo*

**EATTA PROMOTES ETHICS
AND PROFESSIONALISM
IN TEA TRADE**
George Juvga



THE 6TH
AFRICAN TEA
CONVENTION & EXHIBITION



THEME:
**HARMONY IN A CUP:
PROMOTING TEA FOR PEOPLE
AND PLANET**

OCTOBER 9TH-11TH 2024
KIGALI, RWANDA.



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The Junction

Dear Esteemed Readers,

We bring you a new edition of the Tea Junction magazine covering a wide spectrum of activities taking place or are planned for the tea industry in Africa and beyond.

In this issue we feature the 6th African International Tea Convention to be held in the beautiful city of Kigali, Rwanda.

This is indeed my first Tea Convention as the newly appointed Managing Director of the East African Tea Trade Association and it gives me immense pleasure to be with you in this auspicious forum flanked by such a diverse and distinguished group of delegates from across Africa and beyond.

Your presence at this event is a testament to our unity, strength, and shared commitment toward the growth and sustainability of the African tea sector.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the government of Rwanda, the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), and the Rwanda Tea Association for graciously accepting to host this year's convention.

Your unwavering support and warm hospitality have created an environment conducive to meaningful discussions and engagements for the exciting days ahead. We are deeply grateful for the creative and thoughtful planning with which the convention committee from both Kenya and Rwanda has organized this event.

The meticulous planning and attention to detail are evident, setting the stage for what promises to be an enriching, thought-provoking, and productive convention days ahead.

Special thanks go to our sponsors, whose relentless support has not only made this convention possible but has also been pivotal in driving the African tea sector agenda forward.

Your commitment to the industry, through both challenging and prosperous times, is deeply appreciated and does not go unnoticed.

The East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA) plays a critical role in the African tea trade, acting as a linchpin for the industry within our member countries. EATTA has been at the forefront of ensuring that the African tea trade remains vibrant and competitive on the global stage.

Our member countries—Kenya, Ugan-

da, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, and the democratic republic of Congo—are united in our mission to promote the highest standards in tea production and trade.

Tea is not just a crop but a lifeline for millions across Africa. The socio-economic contribution of tea to our continent is profound. In many of our countries, tea plays a vital role in contributing to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and foreign exchange earnings, driving economic growth and development.

The tea industry provides employment opportunities to millions, from the smallholder farmers who toil daily in the fields to those involved in processing, distribution, and export. Tea has been instrumental in poverty alleviation, especially in rural areas, where it supports the livelihoods of countless families, contributing significantly to rural development and the overall improvement of living standards.

The African tea sector has also seen tremendous technological advancements that have revolutionized the way we do business. Over the past decade, we have embraced technology to create efficiencies, save time, and enhance transparency across the entire value chain.

Initiatives like the multihall system have transformed the auction process, allowing us to handle multiple transactions simultaneously, reducing bottlenecks, and ensuring every stakeholder can access real-time information. This cutting-edge technology has streamlined operations and increased the trust and confidence of buyers and sellers alike, fostering a more robust and transparent marketplace.

However, despite these successes, the global and African tea sectors face significant challenges. Climate change poses a real threat, with unpredictable weather patterns becoming more frequent, increased incidences of pests and diseases, and an overall impact on tea quality. Increased production costs, economic and geopolitical factors, social dynamics, and the mismatch between supply and demand also complicate our industry. These challenges underscore the urgent need for us to develop and implement sustainable, climate-resilient adaptation measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change



in the tea sector. The development of climate-resilient cultivars, those resistant to drought, pests, diseases, and frosts, will be crucial for the survival of the tea sector in the face of these ongoing challenges.

This year's convention theme, "**Harmony in the Cup: Promoting Tea for People and the Planet**" aligns perfectly with these pressing issues. Over the next three days, we will delve into thematic topics that address these challenges head-on and explore the opportunities that lie within them.

It is time for Africa to showcase the best of what we have to offer in terms of tea production and the technological advancements that have transformed the entire tea value chain.

From innovative farming practices to cutting-edge processing techniques, we have much to share and even more to implement as we work together to secure the future of the tea industry.

As we embark on this journey together, I encourage you to sit back, relax, and engage fully in the discussions that will unfold. The presentations and panels have been carefully curated to provoke thought and inspire action. We are privileged to have a wealth of experienced speakers with us, ready to share their insights and expertise.

Let us make the most of this opportunity to connect, learn, and drive forward the African tea sector with renewed vigor and shared purpose. I wish you all a successful and enlightening convention.

George omuga
Managing director
East Africa Tea Trade Association



TEA EXPORT EARNINGS SURPASS KSH211 BILLION AS KENYA SIGNS MoU WITH CHINA

By A CORRESPONDENT

Tea export earnings are expected to rise from Sh180.57 billion to Sh211.27 billion by end of the year, recording Sh30.70 billion increase from what the industry earned in 2023.

The projection comes in the wake of Kenya and China recently signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Specialty and Orthodox teas which is expected to greatly boost the tea trade between the two countries.

The significant rise in tea earnings is attributed to government interventions on market access and promotion of value addition, which by May this year has seen tea export earnings surge by 28 per cent - an equivalent of Sh19.55 billion higher from Sh68.73 billion to Sh88.28 billion.

The Tea Board of Kenya (TBK) projects the earnings of smallholder tea farmers to rise to a minimum of Sh64 per kilogramme of green leaf from Sh59.02 by the end of the year.

The Kenya government recently launched the China-Kenya Tea Trade Centre in Fujian Province of China to facilitate distribution of Kenya tea to the Asian country. The centre was due to receive the first consignment of Kenyan tea by end of June, 2024.

According to the Tea Board of Kenya (TBK), it is expected that by the end of the year, one million kilogrammes of Orthodox teas under the arrangement will have been shipped to the Asian giant.

Within the same period, Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) signed a separate memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Benny Tea of China on technology transfer and marketing.

“All the teas manufactured under this arrangement will have guaranteed market access to China through Benny Tea,” according to the board.

TBK equally announced that plans are also afoot to establish warehousing facilities for value-added tea in the target markets. The board specifically targets

the markets of Ghana, DRC Congo, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to ease distribution of value-added teas.

“Logistical support through concessionary airfreight cargo charges will also be provided for value-added tea exports to warehouses in African, North American export trading hubs facing market access. Similar initiatives will be pursued in Russia and Iran markets, respectively,” the board said.

The Managing Director East African Tea Trade Association, Mr George Omuga, welcomed the move by Kenya to sign an MoU with China on special and orthodox teas but emphasised the need to address trade barriers experienced by the members in exporting tea to China.

“We welcome the move to sign the MoU but we must remove trade barriers still experienced by our members. The duty and import process into China market has been very, very challenging for our members,” he said.

Mr Omuga said more should be done to improve the bilateral engagement in

order to make the trade between Kenya and China better. "Trade imbalance between the two countries should equally be addressed as currently China exports more of their commodities to Kenya than what Kenya exports to Chinese market, including avocado," he stated.

"We need to grow that market in China, not just for Orthodoxy tea alone. I know China consumes a lot of green tea and orthodox teas, which we have in plenty here in Kenya. And that is the reason why we wanted to introduce an auction in Mombasa on Orthodoxy to attract the tea buyers from China, Iraq, Russia, UAE, Turkey to come and have a stake in the teas that we offer at the auction," he said

Mr Omuga remained optimistic that if trade barriers are addressed, the association should be able to improve the volumes of tea trade between the members and Chinese buyers.

In another development, a Kenyan tea manufacturer has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China to enhance the export of value-added tea to the Chinese market and beyond.

The landmark MoU between Zonken and Njeru Tea Factory, aimed at improving the quality of Kenyan tea and expanding its global reach, was sealed recently at the Nairobi International Cultural Festival held at the Nairobi National Museum.

The festival, themed "The World at a Glance," featured the "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon 2024," a highlight of China's rich tea culture. It was graced by Master Xie Yongzhong, a distinguished inheritor of Qimen black tea processing techniques, which are recognised as China National Intangible Cultural Heritage.

We welcome the move to sign the MoU but we must remove trade barriers still experienced by our members.



At the event, Master Xie Yongzhong showcased the unique and time-honoured methods of Qimen black tea processing, serving guests exquisite Qimen black tea and sharing his extensive knowledge.

China, a global leader in tea manufacturing and consumption, boasts tea processing techniques that date back over 1,000 years, which is in contrast to Kenya's tea industry which is about a century old.

The Managing Director of Njeru Tea Manufacturers, Mr Henry Njeru, highlighted the potential benefits of the collaboration which aims to leverage China's advanced skills to enhance the quality and marketability of Kenyan tea.

"This MoU allows us to exchange technologies and gain valuable insights from China's rich tea culture. By incorporating advanced Chinese techniques, we can significantly increase the value of Kenyan tea and boost our revenue from tea exports," Njeru explained.

"With the auction not yielding much for farmers, diversifying our markets is crucial. The Chinese market, with its growing interest in black tea, presents a significant opportunity," he said.

A representative of the Chinese Embassy in Nairobi, Dr Tang Jianjun, emphasised the cultural significance of tea in promoting harmony and the importance of the collaboration.

"Tea embodies harmony, a virtue championed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in advocating for a community with a shared future for mankind. This partnership between Kenya and China is a testament to building such a community.

The Chinese are now seeking black tea, and Kenya, with its unique tea clones and flavours, is well-positioned to meet this demand. This partnership is timely, as the Chinese market shifts from green to black tea



This year, 'Tea for Harmony' has been celebrated in 50 countries, including Kenya," Tang stated.

Master Xie Yongzhong expressed his commitment to the partnership. "With 52 years of experience in the tea business, I am eager to collaborate with Kenyan tea companies. Our goal is to train local tea masters to produce tea of the same high standard as China," he said. "Kenya's high-quality tea leaves, combined with Chinese processing skills, can create exceptional Kenyan black tea."

Njeru remained optimistic about the prospects for Kenyan tea in China's vast market.

In 2022, Kenya and China signed six trade agreements and promised to form a joint working group to address trade barriers between the two countries to reduce trade imbalances. The agreements were signed on trade, investments, digital innovation, and green development.

Kenya has been a net importer from China with imports and exports reaching \$3.6 billion and \$150 million, respectively, by the year 2019.

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@ The Junction

EATTA PROMOTES ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM IN TEA TRADE



Mr. George Omuga, Managing Director of the East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA), talks to George Sunguh, editor of the Tea Junction, about wide-ranging issues affecting the tea industry.

Q1: What do you have in store for the East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA) and the tea industry in general following your recent appointment as the Managing Director?

George Omuga: The East African Tea

Trade Association ensures that Association members enjoy the full benefits of the Mombasa Tea Auction, which is currently the largest tea auction in the world.

My vision is to ensure that we lay out strategies that take the African tea trade to the next level by promoting ethics in the trade, professionalism and ensuring that tea production becomes sustainable.

We appreciate that the cost of production, especially the cost of input, energy, and Labor, has been increasing over the period with relatively static tea prices.

It is therefore in the interest of the trade to

ensure that tea prices at the auction do not go below production cost and that tea is sustainably produced in Kenya and other African-producing countries.

At the same time, I will strive to ensure that the workers in the tea sector earn what we call a living wage with tea farmers earning a living income for the sustainability of the tea sector.

So either way, my vision is to ensure that we broaden the types of teas the auction center has been dealing with for many years through tea products diversification. This auction has been selling just one type of tea – CTC (crush, tear, and curl).

So, as the new head of the association, I would like to introduce and position the Mombasa Tea Auction Centre as a one-stop shop for all types of tea.

We are soon launching the Orthodox Tea auction, a Packers Tea auction, and the

My vision is to ensure that we lay out strategies that take the African tea trade to the next level by promoting ethics in the trade and professionalism and ensuring that tea growing becomes sustainable.

specialty Tea auction.

What do I mean by Specialty Tea? These are of very high-quality teas produced with special manufacture (Artisanal teas) We have producers who are producing purple tea, white teas, silvertip teas, golden tip teas, oolong teas and other artisanal teas that fall under this category. We would to expose these producers to the world so that the world appreciates what we have as an auction and the uniqueness of African teas.

Purple tea is unique and different from conventional tea. This tea brand was developed in Kenya and released for commercialization in 2011.

The world does not know that purple tea is found and traded in the country. We would like to create a platform for purple tea producers and other artisanal tea producers to offer their teas to the world.

By this, they can establish a value for their teas. Currently, Orthodox tea producers are approached by private buyers with offers that are not anchored on price determination mechanism. The buyers have been approaching African orthodox producers with price offers, some of which are arbitrary de to the absence of a price termination mechanism and framework.

We believe that the orthodox teas produced in Africa are of better quality due to the ecological factors as the teas are near organic or completely organic.

African tea producers do not use agro-chemicals, unlike producing countries therefore the MRLare extremely low.

Q2: When do you expect to roll out the new specialty and orthodox tea platform?

George Omuga: We have had our first meeting with all the producers and all the brokers, formed a technical committee to develop the framework of orthodox tea manufacture and the auction architecture. We have discussed how it will be launched and forecast the launch by the end of December 2024.

We are working on the auction structure. We don't want to present orthodox teas



PHOTO: Managing Director EATTA Mr. George Omuga

the same way CTC teas have been presented at the Auction center but will undertake market driven production to optimize returns to producers of orthodox teas A committee has been formed to review the Auction structure and orthodox tea evaluation process.

The committee is already working on the grading nomenclature and grades standardization for uniformity and evaluation purposes.

We will come up with our own African orthodox tea grading system and present it to the world so that the world can appreciate what we have as Africa.

So, by the end of December, we believe we'll be rolling out the fast Orthodox Auction.

Q3: You have ascended to the helm of an Association treated with suspicion. Some people in the industry view its members –

for lack of a better word – as cartels. How do you plan to change this perception?

George Omuga: The notion of the trade members being viewed as cartels is a complete misnomer. This is perhaps because many people do not understand how the tea sector is structured.

The tea sector is the only agriculture sub-sector in Kenya and the African-producing countries that is appropriately structured as opposed to other agriculture subsectors and industries. All the players across the value chain have their interests safeguarded within the tea trade structure.

The structure of the tea sector safeguards the interests of the smallholder farmers, large-scale farmers, the plantations and all the stakeholders in the tea value chain (Producers, buyers, brokers, warehouses and the Tea Packers).

So, to dispel this notion that the trade has cartels, we are working closely with the Government to ensure they understand how the trade operates.

For instance, producers are mandated to produce the best quality tea to compete effectively in the auction and earn the farmer a decent income.

Now, the teas are sold at the auctions through brokerage firms. It is in the broker's interest to sell a producer's tea at the highest price possible. The higher the selling price, the more the broker and the producer benefit. In case a broker sells tea to the buyer at depressed prices, both parties lose, even the brokers lose since they earn a commission on a value basis. However, the prices of teas in the auction are dictated by a number of factors; the quality of the teas and the global market dynamics. These include economic factors, geopolitical factors and climatological factors.

Generally, we have production-related factors across the tea-growing countries that also affect prices. Supply and demand influence prices.

In 2023, Kenya increased its production by almost 40 million kilos. This was from 535 million kilos to 570 million kilos.

African tea production was at 795,000,000 kilos in 2023 while what was sold in the auction was 482million kilos with some teas sold privately through Direct Sales and the balance carried over to 2024.

That means high carry-over teas from the previous year coupled with the government policy of reserve prices introduction in 2021 distorted the tea trade more. Remember, tea production in Africa is done throughout the year hence the high outlots volumes from the negative impacts of reserve prices implementation exuberated tea market depression.

At the same time, the carryover from the previous years worsened the auction absorption situation. That is why we went out of our way to engage the Government to understand how the trade is structured and to enable them to remove Reserve Price policy to stabilize the tea trade.

Our position as a trade has been adopted by Government and are now willing to

let the market forces dictate prices in the auction because you can only dictate prices for commodities you have absolute control over its marketing and consumption.

Q4: You have come in when the industry is saddled with a significant backlog of unsold tea - What would be the best solution to this problem?

George Omuga: There was that huge backlog because of the government policy in 2021 of introducing reserve tea

prices at US\$ 2.43 and 2.65 per kilo for smallholder farmers from West and East of the Rift Valley, the two tea producing regions in Kenya.

The government believed they were protecting the farmer's interests by implementing the reserve prices which has actually worked against the farmer.

The same information was disseminated to farmers and once farmers were guaranteed of income regardless of the quality of teas they offered in the auction, nothing therefore motivated them to uphold the manufacture of high-quality teas. The quality disparities that was in contrast to the buyers expectations suppressed the prices further and contributed to huge backlogs of old teas from the outlots.

The price was not proportional to the quality of the teas offered in the auction hence buyers shied away from buying these teas.

We have engaged the Government, and they have agreed to remove the reserve price for teas older than six months in stock. But our push is to ensure that there is a blanket removal of reserve price so that the market is not distorted again. If the reserve price has not worked since 2021, we don't foresee it work in the com-

Q6: What is the accrued storage cost on the unsold tea so far?

George Omuga: I'm glad that the government during our meeting with the PS and the CS they said the warehouse charges will be waived.

So I hope the government will pay the warehouse charges. It's not just a waiver because the warehouses have incurred costs to store these teas.

ing years.

So the best thing to do is to convince the government, which we are doing to ensure that the reserve price is completely removed.

We are also working with the government to review the Tea Act introduced in 2020. There is a new amendment bill (Tea Bill 2023) going on in Parliament. We have engaged the Parliamentary Agriculture Committee and the Senate Agriculture Committee on the same. We presented our memorandum to them on areas we

believe should be reviewed to ensure the Kenya tea sector remains competitive. We therefore look forward to the government removing the reserve prices completely and letting teas be sold on the premise of quality (Letting the teas meet the market).

At the same time, we have met all the producers in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, to build their capacity to appreciate that it is only quality teas that sell in the auction. Classical examples are of teas from Rwanda and teas from east of the Rift Valley Kenya. Despite the introduction of the reserve price, those two producing regions have been selling teas at very competitive prices of above \$4.00 per kilo on quality preposition.

Before the removal of reserve prices, the auction only had an absorption rate of 47% but when the government removed the reserve price for teas older than six months, the absorption rate went to almost 60%. We look forward to days when the auction can absorb between 85 and 90% of the teas presented at the auction as was previously pre-reserve prices introduction.

Q5: The Principal Secretary of the State Department for Agriculture, Republic of Kenya, met the players in the tea sector at the Mombasa Auction Centre on 1st

So with the quality drive, I believe there will be a turn-around in the tea sector”

August and subsequently announced to the media that all the unsold tea will be cleared within a month -What is the progress on this front?

George Omuga: The progress has been positive. We had advised the government to ensure that the older teas are distribut-

ed to all brokers to sell privately, and last week alone, the teas that were sold privately within the week was 1.72 million kilos. This means the trade has taken this positively, and we are very optimistic that by the end of September, all old teas up to December 2023 should have been sold.

We are in constant communication with the Mombasa buyers, constant engagement with the tea brokers, constant engagement with KTDA and other member producing countries to ensure that they become flexible and allow the teas to meet the market. There is nothing a producer gains by storing teas in a warehouse for two years as tea loses value with time.

Q6: What is the accrued storage cost on the unsold tea so far?

George Omuga: I'm glad that the government during our meeting with the PS and the CS said the warehouse charges will be waived. I hope the government will pay the warehouse charges to our warehouse members on behalf of smallholder farm-

ers, since they have incurred costs to store these teas to mitigate any form of losses to the warehouse membership.

Q7: Going forward, how can the industry forestall a repeat of this glut of tea at the auction?

George Omuga: We have discussed with Government on the need for comprehensive consultations and engagements with the stakeholders before any policy is formulated and implemented. We have formed a committee with the Ministry of Agriculture and Tea Board of Kenya to push for quality drive, not just quantity of teas offered in the auction.

This is because some teas are being offered in the auction which is difficult to classify. They are presented as premium grades, but when you look at them critically, they do not meet the threshold of being classified as premium grades.

So with the quality drive, I believe there will be a turn-around in the tea sector and there will be no backlog since this will address the current mismatch between supply, demand and the quality discrepancies.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PLANTATION MANAGEMENT
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND PLANTATION INDUSTRIES- SRI LANKA
 Professional Programme in Tea Tasting and Grading for East African Tea Traders Association (EATTA) 2024
 24th September to 2nd October 2024



SEATED (LEFT TO RIGHT)
 Ms. Soi Brenda Cherolich, Mr. Tushabe Saad, Ms. Ruvini Lokuhetti (Training Specialist-NIPM), Mr. Upali Premalal (Consultant), Mr. George Okoth Omuga (MD, EATTA), Dr. Prasad Dharmasena (Director/CEONIPM), Mr. Avi de Silva (Consultant), Ms. Nishamini Illanganthilaka (Head of the Academic Division NIPM), Mr. Suleiman Wako Jillo, Ms. Mary Annet Muthanje

STANDING (LEFT TO RIGHT)
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All Roads Lead to Kigali

AS RWANDA HOSTS THE
6TH AFRICAN TEA
CONVENTION





The 6th African Tea Convention and Exhibition - a global event for the tea industry organized by the East African Tea Trade Association is set for Kigali in Rwanda, between the 9th and 11th of October 2024.

According to Mr. George Omuga, the Managing Editor of EATTA, preparations are in top gear for a World Class event.

The EATTA organizing Committee was in Kigali recently, where they met the team, government officials, the Rwanda Convention Bureau team, and association members.

“We had a long meeting and surveyed the facilities identified as hosts of the convention. I can guarantee you that the facility exceeded my expectations.” Said Mr. Omuga.

The team also surveyed the conference

hotels, and I am confident that whatever Rwanda offers is adequate for hosting an international convention.

“We attended the Colombo Tea Convention hosted by the Colombo Tea Traders’ Association & Sri Lanka Tea Board between 24th - 26th July 2024. We intend to give the world something slightly better than we experienced in Colombo.”

The event provides an excellent opportunity for its stakeholders to interact with world tea leaders and technology experts. In attendance will be industry experts, agriculture input suppliers, practitioners, researchers and scholars, financiers and investors, logistic and warehousing experts, tea packers and retailers, shippers and freight agents, supply chain corporates, commodity traders, tea brokers, tea value adders & blenders and other inputs suppliers among different stakeholders.

The event has attracted 26 speakers, 35 exhibitors and 600 from 13 countries with

various experiences across the tea value chain, both in Africa and globally.

These include Japan, Sri Lanka, India, Britain and Egypt.

“We look forward to a very thought-provoking and very interactive convention.

We’ve also invited several critical stakeholders across the value chain, machinery suppliers, parking machine suppliers, parking material suppliers, and all the buyers,” added the MD.

Most of the globally known buyers will be attending the convention. Questions that members of the trade, the tea trade in Africa, and the world have will be addressed in that convention.

The trade looks forward to one of the best conventions of this century in Africa, and I believe we have sufficient expertise to make it meet the global threshold. Exhibitors will showcase latest trends and tea products from all over the world.

KENYA CONSIDERS *Tea Value Addition*



Kenya is geared towards encouraging more tea producers and traders to add value to the beverage commodity locally. Tea value addition includes activities such as packaging, branding, blending, quality certification, and accreditation. Flavouring the beverage and selling various forms of instant tea varieties are also part of the process. The government has remained steadfast in achieving its goal by initiating several initiatives, including allocating funds to operationalize key value-addition facilities in the country. These centers are primarily located in Dongo Kundu, Kericho, and Nairobi. Additionally, the regime had intensified plans to zero-rate tax on local tea. The move aimed at discouraging businesspersons from re-importing processed tea products. Most salespeople

indulge in such practices as a strategy to avoid paying the value-added tax (VAT) levy. These measures will significantly lower the cost of tea, increasing its affordability. With increased consumption, the sector is poised to witness exponential growth over the years.

Despite Kenya being one of the largest exporters of tea globally, local consumption has remained low because the price of the finished commodity is still expensive. However, such unaffordability will be a thing of the past as the current governmental measures aim to increase tea-value addition from five percent to 20 percent. With an investment of close to Ksh2 billion in value-addition plants in Nairobi and Kericho counties, State Department of Agriculture Principal Secretary (PS) Paul Ronoh said Kenya could get better prices for its teal globally. In achieving the

benefits, the PS asserted that the Ministry would help small-scale farmers know the suitable packaging and the manufacture of the types of tea sought in the international market.

The launching and commissioning of

**The more we sell
branded,
processed tea, the
bigger the
earnings, the
more jobs we
create**



the facilities by the government in Kericho occurred in the Western Kenya tea growing region at KETEPA for Ksh500 million. During the launch in June 2024, President William Ruto unveiled Chai Gold, a flagship tea brand of KTDA, for foreign markets. In his maiden speech following the event, the President asserted, “The more we sell branded, processed tea, the bigger the earnings, the more jobs we create, and the more enterprises we create.” On the other hand, Ksh1.5 billion was allocated to put the Eastern Kenya Tea Zone in Nairobi.

Farmers will reap maximum benefits from these investments, given that the quality of value-added tea produced locally will automatically increase. The upgrade and automation of the facilities will also enhance the quantity of the value-added tea produced annually. Therefore, foreign earnings from selling the commodity will improve, guaranteeing stakeholders better bonuses compared to previous years. The PS noted that in 2023, the sector recorded an increase in tea production to 575 million kilograms from 538 million. The positive trend will likely be replicated again this year and in the future.

Even though the government has set the pace in facilitating tea value-addition in the country, it reiterates the importance of growers and stakeholders adhering to better farming and production practices. The President urged KTDA officials to support micro and small enterprises in finding better ways to utilize the facilities to expand branding and value addition. On the other hand, the PS sensitized farmers to the importance of embracing good agricultural practices (GAP) and stipulated guidelines for the World Trade Organisation. The PS made the assertions while speaking at a recently state-sponsored event to engage and train Directors of Tea Factories in the Zones. “The Ministry has put up an advertisement to engage close to 20,000 youths in different agricultural sectors to assist the gov-

The Ministry has put up an advertisement to engage close to 20,000 youths in different agricultural sectors to assist the government and farmers in enhancing good farming practices and technologies



ernment and farmers in enhancing good farming practices and technologies,” PS Ronoh added.

The Dongo Kundu plant in Mombasa is a common user facility (CUF) that industry stakeholders will specifically use to add value to their tea before exporting. Therefore, establishing the CUF was aimed at growing Kenya’s manufactured exports. Launched in 2023 by Mithika Linturi, the then Cabinet Secretary of Agriculture and Livestock Development, the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) has enabled farmers in the tea sector to earn more from their produce. As a central blending and packaging point, the traders can enjoy economies of scale while maintaining their different identities. The centrality also helps kick out intermediaries who used their positions to exploit growers. Brokers used to buy from farmers at low prices while reselling at higher prices. Through the stewardship of the Deputy President, Rigathy Gachagua, Kenya’s government has prioritized protecting the value addition project by curbing the activities of brokers. Before the commissioning of the CUF, the country’s tea export earnings were relatively lower compared to other nations producing a similar commodity. Such meager earnings were recorded despite Kenya being the leading exporter of black tea globally.

Launching the value of additional facilities in the three counties shows the government’s commitment to reducing the country’s reliance on the importation of food. It is estimated that Kenya

spends US\$3.86 Billion (Ksh500 billion) annually on food imports. Such costs are incurred despite the nation’s capability to produce locally. Food scarcity and insecurity in the country are partly attributed to massive post-harvest losses due to low-value additions. Therefore, increased agro-based processing and manufacturing may address these inefficiencies and wastages.

With more tea sales, Kenya will boost its food security and increase its agricultural Gross Domestic Product. The goal aligns with Kenya’s 2019-2029 Agriculture Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy. The strategy focuses on enhancing product diversification and value addition along the agricultural value chains. Moreover, it strives to enhance Kenya’s produce’s authenticity, originality, and traceability. Improving the traceability of the country’s tea from production, processing, and distribution helps build customer trust and make marketing easier.

Boosting earnings from agricultural products such as tea through value addition is one of the government’s mechanisms for stimulating the economy. The established value-adding facilities will enhance the country’s competitiveness in the global markets and create more direct and indirect job opportunities for people working therein. Those employed will engage in activities such as packaging unbranded bulk tea. Additionally, more money in the pockets of smallholder farmers will push them to increase the acreage under tea, boosting production and profitability. As such, the investments have a positive trajectory in resolving the unemployment challenges faced by the youth



The Evolution of the Mombasa Tea Auction: *A Journey to Digital Excellence*

The Evolution of the Mombasa Tea Auction: A Journey to Digital Excellence
 The Tea Auctions journey globally has been with us for a very long time, it is worth noting that by the beginning of the 20th Century, the London Tea Auction had been in existence for over 200 years and by the time African teas made their debut, this Auction centre was mature and very effective, a vital platform of exchange for bulk producers and buyers. In the world of tea trading, few places hold as much historical and economic significance as the Mombasa Tea Auc-

tion. This Tea Auction Centre in East Africa was established in Nairobi in 1956 by a group of pioneering traders who had joined forces a year earlier to form the East African Tea Trade Association, before this, all teas from the region were sold through the prestigious London Tea Auction. In 1969 it was relocated Mombasa; whose port facilities, well integrated logistics and ample warehousing facilities were a major factor in the relocation decision. In due course, the small trickle of Teas sold at the Mombasa Auction grew into a flood. Offerings were initially limited to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, as Tea planting in Africa prospered, other pro-

ducers such as Rwanda and Burundi were also offered, this set the stage for what would become the largest Tea Auction in the world. Today the Auction serves 11 countries and over three hundred members of the East African Tea Association comprising of Producers, Buyers, Brokers, Warehouses and Associate members. Over the decades, the auction has transformed, embracing technology to keep pace with an expanding Global Tea industry. But its early days were defined by tradition and manual processes. Let's explore the fascinating journey of the Mombasa Tea Auction, from its humble beginnings to the cutting-edge digital

platform it is today.

The Humble Beginnings: The Open Outcry Era

Imagine a room filled with the lively sound of brokers shouting bids, buyers raising their hands and the rhythmic pounding of a hammer signalling the sale of a Tea lot. This was the Mombasa Tea Auction before automation, where the open outcry method reigned supreme. Brokers and buyers gathered in person, competing for Tea lots through verbal bids and counteroffers. It was a system fuelled by human interaction, relying on quick negotiations and keen judgment. While the process had its charm, offering a personal touch, it lacked efficiency, the volumes had grown from a few lots in the early years to thousands of lots which was taking longer to sell it was clear that the manual process couldn't keep pace with the increasing volumes of Tea. Yet, in its simplicity, the open outcry method laid the foundation for the future of Tea auctions.

The Rise of Excel Catalogues: Semi-Automation Takes Hold

As the global demand for tea grew, so did the need for a more organized and efficient auction system. The introduction of Excel catalogues marked the first step toward digital transformation. While still printed and distributed through email, these catalogues allowed brokers and buyers to handle tea lots much faster and with more accuracy.

It was a small but significant shift and an early acknowledgment of the need for better organization. However, the core of the auction remained unchanged, the bids were still verbal and the process remained manual. The seed of digital transformation was planted, but full automation was still a distant dream.

Live Data Capture: A Leap Toward Transparency

By the time live data capture was introduced, it was clear that the future of Tea auctions lay in technology. Large screens were installed in the auction room, displaying real-time data as Tea Brokers placed bids and the hammer fell on winning lots. This system offered a new level of transparency, allowing everyone in the room to track transactions more accurately.

But, like its predecessors, this system had its limitations. Manual data entry still played a role, and those outside the auc-

tion room remained in the dark. Nevertheless, it was a vital step forward, setting the stage for greater technological integration.

Bringing Auctions to the World: YouTube Live Streaming

In a bold move towards better information sharing and transparency, the Mombasa Tea Auction introduced live streaming of its sessions on YouTube. For the first time, producers and stakeholders from around the world could witness the auction proceedings in real-time. This groundbreaking initiative opened the doors to a global audience, adding a layer of accountability previously unseen in the auction world.

However, despite its success in broadening access, YouTube live streaming couldn't solve the core issue of efficiency. Viewers could watch, but they couldn't participate. The need for full automation became increasingly apparent.

The Digital Revolution: Full Automation (2016–2020)

In 2016, Mombasa Tea Auction began its most ambitious project yet: full automation. By 2020, the entire auction system all the way from cataloging to payments was digitized. No longer bound by the confines of a physical auction room, Brokers, Buyers, and other stakeholders could now actively participate from anywhere in the world.

This transformation dramatically increased the auction's efficiency, transparency and inclusivity. Participants no longer needed to be physically present, and the system was able to handle larger volumes of Tea with unprecedented speed. While the transition required a hefty investment in infrastructure and training, the payoff was immediate. Mombasa Tea Auction Centre had firmly entered the digital age through the new integrated Tea Trading system or ITTS as it was referred to. This marked a major break from the outcry auction that had been part of Mombasa since the early beginning.

The Multihall System: October 2023

The introduction of the Multihall system in 2023 was the latest leap in the auction's quest for efficiency. With Tea volumes continuing to rise, this new system allowed for multiple auction sessions to be conducted simultaneously. The once-limited auction process had now expanded to accommodate the growing demand. This system allowed the auction to man-

age multiple markets concurrently, offering stakeholders the flexibility to participate in different sessions without sacrificing efficiency. However, with increased capacity came increased complexity, requiring robust technological infrastructure to support the concurrent processes.

The Smart Auction System: A New Era Begins (August 2023)

In August 2023, Mombasa Tea Auction unveiled its most comprehensive platform yet, the Smart Auction System. This groundbreaking platform integrated both pre-auction and Multihall sessions, streamlining the entire auction process under a single, unified system.

Producers, Buyers, Warehouses and Brokers can seamlessly transition from pre-auction activities to the auction itself, tracking the entire process from cataloging to sale. The Smart Auction System has not only enhanced efficiency but also solidified Mombasa's position as a global leader in modernized commodity trading.

The Power of Payment Management: EBB Module

As early as 2012, the introduction of the Electronic Bill Board (EBB) payment management system by banks revolutionized the auction's financial processes. By digitizing payments, the EBB ensured faster, more reliable settlement of auction proceeds. This critical transition laid the groundwork for the full automation of the auction, eliminating delays and errors caused by manual transactions.

A Change in Currency: The Shift from Kenyan Shilling to US Dollar

Another significant milestone in the auction's history came in 1992, when the auction currency transitioned from the Kenyan Shilling to the US Dollar. This shift reflected the growing internationalization of the Tea trade and the need for a stable, widely accepted currency in global markets. The move not only streamlined transactions but also cemented the Mombasa Tea Auction's role as a key player in the international Tea trade.

Looking Ahead: A Future Shaped by Technology

The Mombasa Tea Auction's journey is far from over. From the early days of verbal bids to the fully automated, multi-session Smart Auction, each stage of this evolution reflects a commitment to meeting the growing demands of the global tea industry. As technology con-

tinues to advance, one can only imagine the innovations that will shape the future of Tea auctions.

But one thing is certain: Mombasa will remain at the forefront, continuing to play a vital role in bringing the world's finest Teas to market with efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity.

Auction Insights: A Statistical Glimpse

| Year | Avg. Price Per Kg | Weight (Kgs) | Total Value (\$) |
|------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 2015 | 2.47 | 358,582,975 | 887,284,917 |
| 2016 | 2.01 | 272,991,446 | 548,006,236 |
| 2023 | 1.91 | 489,684,654 | 935,423,664 |
| 2024 | 1.89 | 360,323,348 | 681,021,793 |

As the Mombasa Tea Auction moves forward, its journey continues to be defined by both tradition and innovation—a legacy of excellence in the global Tea trade.





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THE POWER OF TEA

*A Deep Dive into its Medicinal
Marvels*

In a world filled with superfoods and miracle supplements, one humble drink has quietly stood the test of time for thousands of years: tea. From the ancient dynasties of China to the tea rooms of England, and now to modern homes and cafés worldwide, tea is much more than just a comforting beverage. It's a liquid treasure trove of health benefits that has been researched and revered for its medicinal properties.

As you pour yourself a steaming cup of green, black, herbal, or oolong tea, you might not realize the extent to which that warm drink could be improving your body and mind. In this feature, we explore the vast and impressive medicinal values of tea, from its power as an antioxidant to its role in weight management, heart health, and even skin rejuvenation.

The Secret Weapon: Antioxidants in Tea
If tea could have a "superpower," it would be its extraordinary antioxidant capacity. Antioxidants are molecules that fight free radicals—unstable atoms that can damage cells, leading to aging and diseases such as cancer. Tea is particularly abundant in polyphenols, with green tea boasting high levels of a specific antioxidant known as epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG).

Research suggests that these polyphenols, especially those found in green and black teas, help neutralize oxidative stress. This not only protects our cells from damage but also slows down the aging process at a cellular level. So, that cup of tea you enjoy could be doing wonders to keep you feeling younger, both inside and out.

Cardiovascular Health: A Heart-Healthy Brew

In recent years, tea has garnered a great deal of attention for its role in maintaining cardiovascular health. Studies consistently show that both green and black tea can lower the risk of heart disease—still the leading cause of death worldwide.

But how exactly does tea keep your heart ticking healthily?

- **Cholesterol Control:** It's all about

balance. Tea, especially green tea, can help reduce levels of LDL cholesterol (the "bad" kind) while maintaining or improving levels of HDL cholesterol (the "good" kind). This ensures your arteries stay clear of the plaque buildup that can lead to heart attacks and strokes.

- **Blood Pressure:** If you're one of the millions battling high blood pressure, tea might be a simple (and enjoyable) part of the solution. Green tea, in particular, has been linked to modest reductions in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure, helping reduce the strain on your cardiovascular system.

- **Better Circulation:** The antioxidants in tea improve the health of the endothelium—the thin layer of cells lining blood vessels. A healthier endothelium means more elastic and better-functioning blood vessels, reducing the risk of blockages and other cardiovascular issues.

Next time you sip on your favorite brew, you can do so knowing you're taking a proactive step towards a healthier heart.

Tea and Cancer Prevention

When it comes to cancer prevention, research is more cautious, but there are promising findings. Some studies suggest that regular tea consumption—especially green tea—could help reduce the risk of certain cancers.

The cancer-fighting properties of tea once again come down to those potent polyphenols. The antioxidant EGCG is thought to inhibit the growth of cancer cells by protecting DNA from damage and triggering a process called apoptosis, or programmed cell death, in unhealthy cells.

While results are not definitive, research points to potential protective effects against cancers such as:

- **Breast Cancer:** Women who regularly drink green tea may lower their risk, thanks to the anti-inflammatory and anti-proliferative effects of tea compounds.

- **Prostate and Colorectal Cancer:** Emerging studies show promise in tea's ability to slow the growth of cancerous cells in the prostate and colon. Does this mean you can drink your way to being cancer-free? No. But tea's impressive effects make it a valuable ally in an overall health-conscious lifestyle.

Weight Loss

Weight loss is a tricky topic. With fad diets coming and going faster than fashion trends, the promise of any natural support for weight management is worth exploring. Tea, particularly green tea, has been recognized for its role in promoting a healthier metabolism.

Here's how it works:

- **Boosting Metabolism:** The combination of caffeine and catechins (especially EGCG) found in green tea stimulates thermogenesis—your body's process of burning calories to produce heat. This means your body can burn more calories, even while resting.

- **Fat Oxidation:** Tea can enhance the process of fat oxidation, especially during exercise, meaning your body breaks down fat cells more efficiently for energy. If you're working out regularly, adding green tea to your daily routine could give you that extra edge in burning fat.

- **Gut Health:** Black tea also plays a role in weight management, though its pathway is slightly different. Black tea polyphenols help alter gut bacteria, leading to increased production of short-chain fatty acids like butyrate, which are associated with improved metabolism. While tea won't magically melt away pounds, drinking it regularly can help support a balanced diet and active lifestyle for weight management.

Cognitive Function and Mental Health
Tea doesn't just energize your body—it sharpens your mind as well. Ever felt that gentle buzz of focus after a cup of tea? That's because of L-theanine, an amino acid unique to tea, which works alongside caffeine to promote alertness, mental clarity, and relaxation.

Unlike coffee, which gives you a quick jolt of energy followed by a crash, tea offers a more sustained, focused energy thanks to L-theanine's calming properties. This makes it the perfect drink for students, professionals, or anyone needing to stay sharp without feeling jittery. There's more to tea's brain-boosting abilities:

- **Neuroprotection:** Research has shown that tea drinkers have a lower risk of neurodegenerative diseases such

as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. The polyphenols in tea reduce inflammation and prevent the buildup of harmful substances in the brain, potentially slowing down cognitive decline as we age.

So, while you might reach for tea to wake up in the morning, it's also helping protect your mind in the long run.

A Friend to Diabetics

For those managing or at risk of type 2 diabetes, tea can be a valuable addition to the diet. Both green and black tea have been shown to help regulate blood sugar levels and improve insulin sensitivity.

- **Green Tea and Insulin:** Research suggests that the catechins in green tea can improve how the body responds to insulin, the hormone responsible for regulating blood glucose levels. This means more stable blood sugar levels and a reduced risk of blood sugar spikes and crashes.

- **Post-Meal Blood Sugar:** Black tea, meanwhile, has been shown to help control blood sugar after meals. It works by inhibiting enzymes that digest carbohydrates, meaning sugar is released more slowly into the bloodstream, preventing those dreaded post-meal sugar spikes.

Tea and Digestion: More than Just Soothing

Many of us reach for herbal teas like peppermint or ginger when our stomachs feel off, and for good reason—these herbal teas are time-tested remedies for various digestive issues. But what's really going on?

- **Peppermint Tea:** Known for its ability to relax the digestive tract's muscles, peppermint tea is a godsend for those suffering from indigestion or IBS. Its antispasmodic properties make it a natural remedy for bloating and abdominal discomfort.

- **Ginger Tea:** If you've ever been nauseous, chances are someone offered you ginger tea. This spicy root is famous for its ability to reduce nausea, whether from morning sickness, motion sickness, or chemotherapy-induced nausea. But herbal teas aren't the only ones aiding digestion. Black tea's polyphenols can positively affect gut health by increasing beneficial bacteria in the gut, contributing to better overall digestion and metabolism.

Strengthening the Immune System

As the cold season approaches, many people turn to teas that can help ward off infections or at least make symptoms

more bearable. Green tea's catechins have been shown to enhance immune function, making it easier for your body to fight off viral infections like the flu. Herbal teas, too, offer immune-boosting properties:

- **Echinacea Tea:** Widely regarded as an immune stimulant, echinacea tea is a popular choice for preventing colds or reducing their duration.

- **Elderberry Tea:** Another potent immune booster, elderberry tea is packed with antioxidants and vitamins that help the immune system stay strong.

Drinking tea can provide that extra layer of protection during flu season, helping you bounce back from colds faster and stay healthier year-round.

Skin Deep: Tea and Beauty

Beyond its inner health benefits, tea works wonders for your skin. Its antioxidants help fight off the free radicals that accelerate aging, while also protecting against the sun's harmful UV rays.

- **Green Tea for Acne and Wrinkles:** Applied topically or ingested, green tea has been shown to reduce inflammation and bacterial growth, making it a helpful ally for acne-prone skin. Its antioxidants also prevent collagen breakdown, which keeps the skin firm and elastic.

- **Black Tea for Hydration:** Looking for a natural glow? The antioxidants in black tea have hydrating properties that improve skin's appearance and promote overall radiance.

Bone Health

Yes, tea even has benefits for your bones. Long-term tea consumption has been linked to greater bone mineral density. This means that regular tea drinkers—especially older adults—may have a lower risk of osteoporosis, keeping their bones strong and resilient.

The Takeaway

In a world of quick fixes and fast cures, tea remains a timeless elixir, offering a host of medicinal benefits that modern science continues to validate. From your heart to your brain, from your waistline to your immune system, tea is a powerhouse of health. Whether you enjoy it for its soothing flavor or its vast health properties, one thing is clear: this ancient beverage holds a rightful place as one of nature's greatest gifts to humankind.

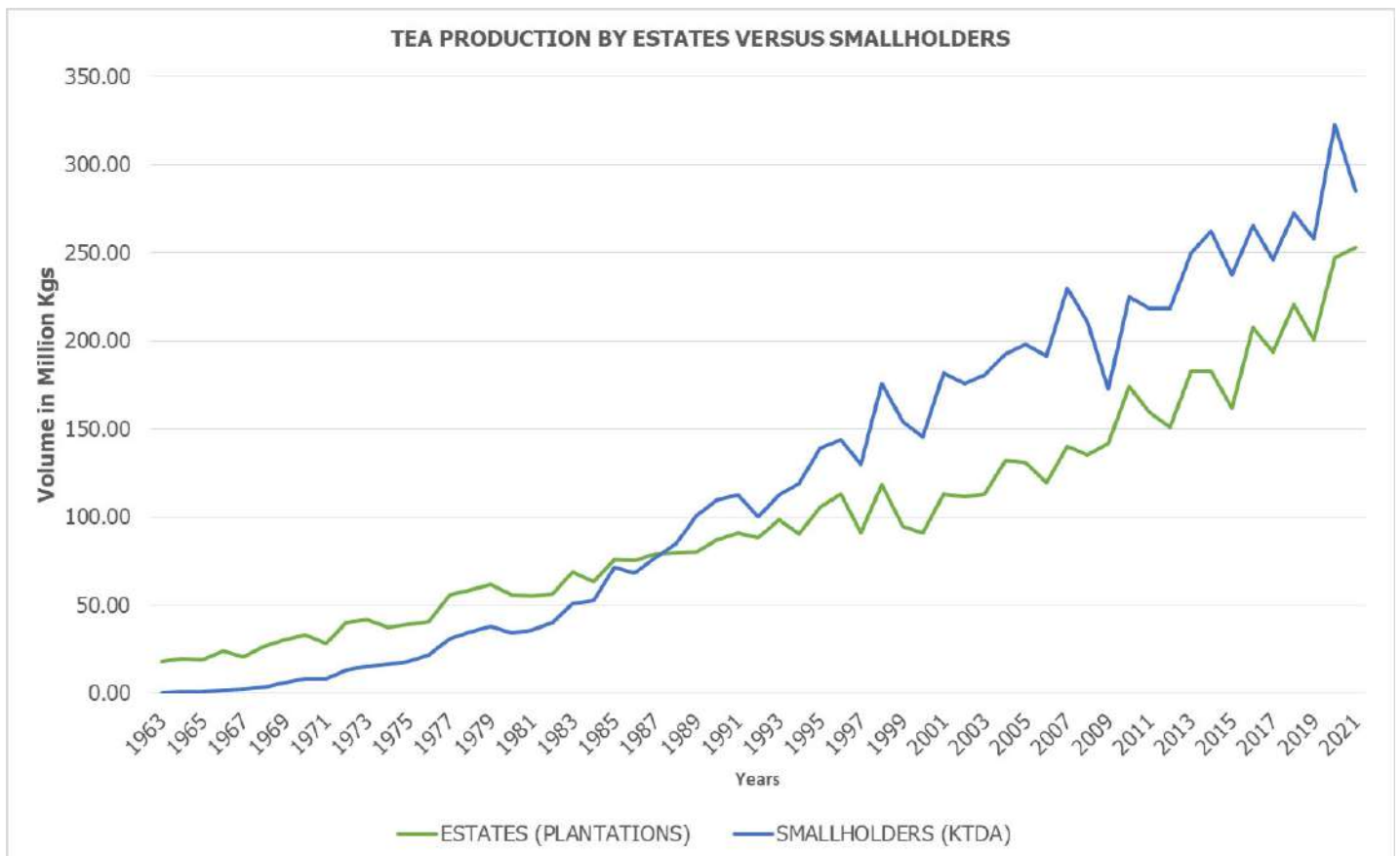
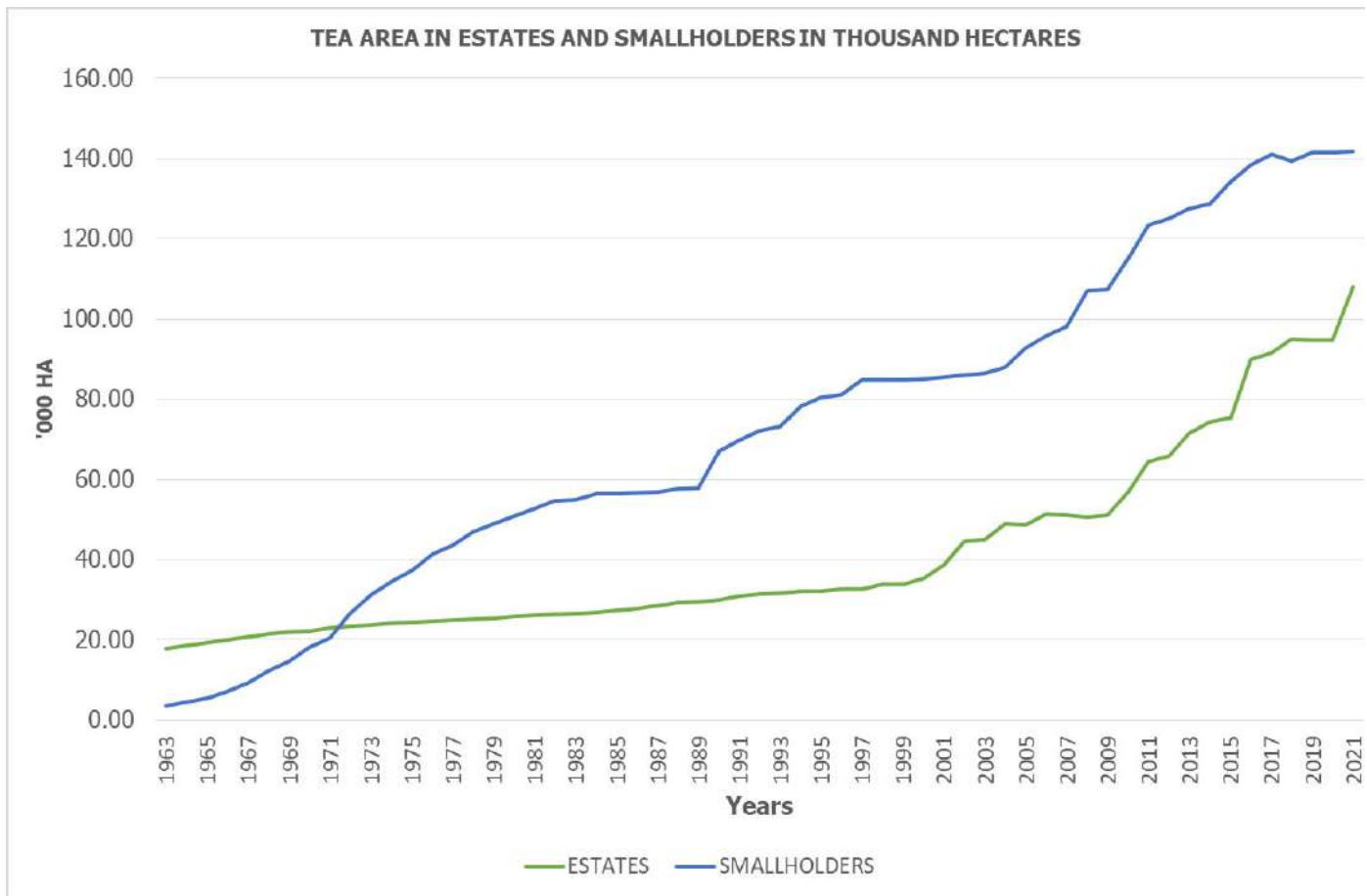
So next time you steep a cup, take a moment to savor not just the taste, but the incredible health benefits it offers—because, in every drop of tea, wellness awaits.

EATTA Sports day





STATISTICS



STATISTICS

TOTAL PRODUCTION VERSUS HECTARAGE

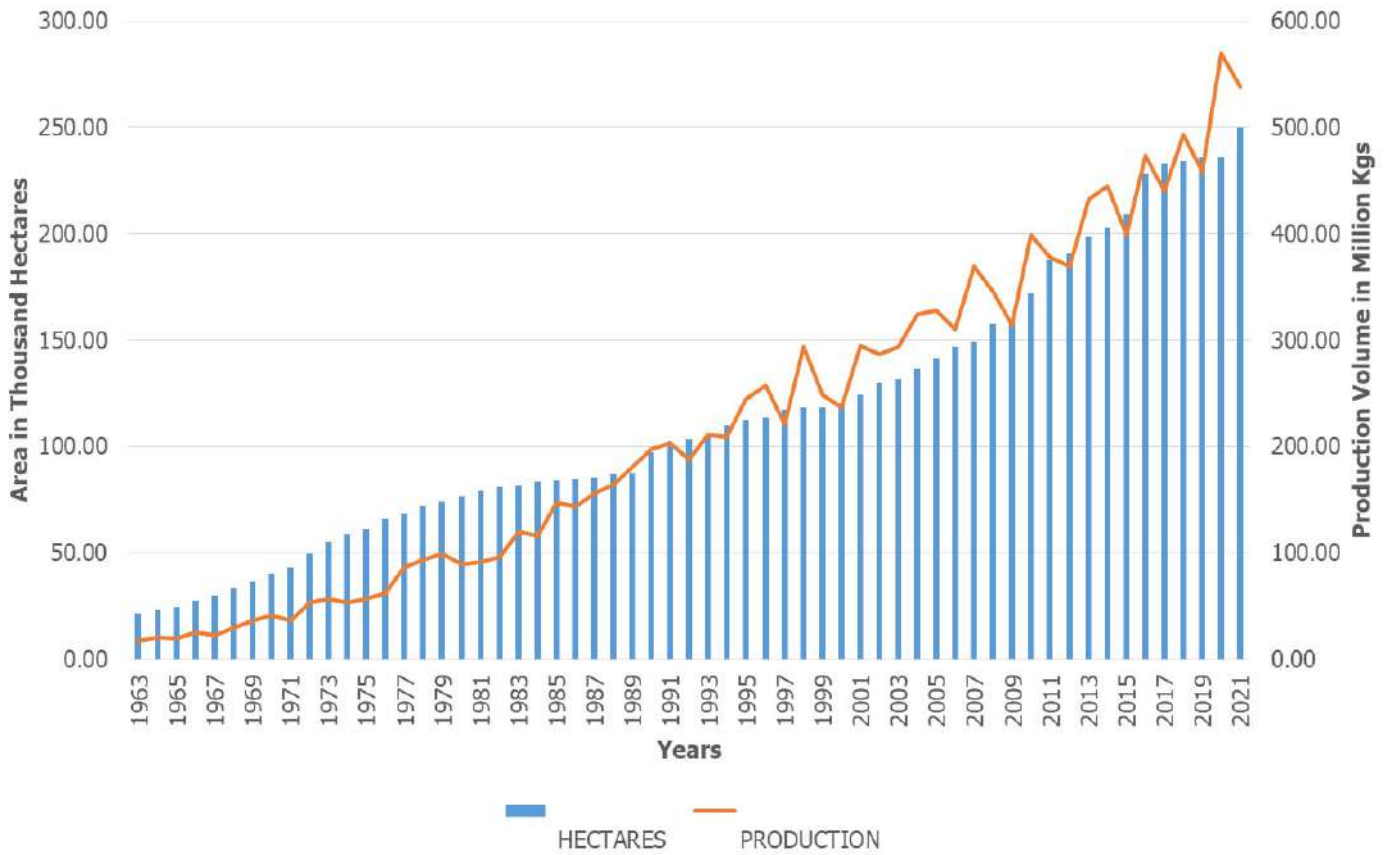


Table 1: Production (Jan-June 2024 vis-à-vis Jan-June 2023)

| | 2024 | 2023 | VARIANCE | % VAR. |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | Kgs | Kgs | Kgs | |
| January | 58,966,889 | 54,919,185 | 4,047,704 | 7% |
| February | 55,447,323 | 32,730,272 | 22,717,051 | 69% |
| March | 52,054,578 | 30,488,793 | 21,565,785 | 71% |
| April | 53,852,778 | 49,491,391 | 4,361,387 | 9% |
| May | 54,529,182 | 57,885,909 | (3,356,727) | -6% |
| June | 46,242,161 | 48,127,888 | (1,885,726) | -4% |
| January-June | 321,092,912 | 273,643,439 | 47,449,473 | 17% |

STATISTICS

TEA BOARD OF KENYA
P. O BOX 20064, NAIROBI
KENYA TEA INDUSTRY INFORMATION

PRODUCTION BY COUNTY (Green Leaf in Kgs)

| COUNTY | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| WEST OF RIFT | | | | | |
| KERICHO | 387,110,995 | 363,547,729 | 435,968,487 | 435,289,445 | 432,942,324 |
| BOMET | 339,556,007 | 342,307,630 | 388,904,155 | 393,139,166 | 412,947,191 |
| NANDI | 335,696,799 | 284,776,163 | 393,976,902 | 380,706,414 | 369,808,464 |
| NYAMIRA | 168,920,662 | 142,320,583 | 176,210,755 | 165,251,944 | 160,831,410 |
| KISII | 97,846,675 | 84,128,130 | 100,429,842 | 79,026,525 | 84,436,904 |
| NAKURU | 21,356,535 | 17,019,610 | 21,796,894 | 22,500,962 | 33,754,129 |
| TRANS-NZOIA | 17,552,904 | 15,776,166 | 15,532,186 | 11,496,816 | 10,950,158 |
| KAKAMEGA | 15,404,656 | 15,085,137 | 14,119,034 | 10,899,848 | 9,018,857 |
| NAROK | - | - | 13,757,905 | 13,418,704 | 13,216,042 |
| ELGEYO MARAKWET | - | - | 5,348,663 | 10,763,282 | 9,998,907 |
| SUB-TOTAL WEST | 1,383,445,231 | 1,264,961,146 | 1,566,044,823 | 1,522,493,106 | 1,537,904,386 |
| EAST OF RIFT | | | | | |
| MURANGA | 184,793,494 | 180,077,249 | 228,081,839 | 207,426,312 | 201,752,575 |
| KIAMBU | 165,590,434 | 161,966,403 | 203,993,750 | 176,117,931 | 167,566,554 |
| MERU | 122,153,989 | 116,313,392 | 136,675,160 | 125,329,901 | 134,965,561 |
| NYERI | 91,463,264 | 81,750,055 | 105,658,005 | 95,722,202 | 82,083,412 |
| KIRINYAGA | 74,741,733 | 76,250,066 | 96,019,187 | 88,297,120 | 77,449,931 |
| EMBU | 53,519,222 | 50,818,155 | 62,749,779 | 52,951,182 | 53,442,682 |
| THARAKA - NITHI | 19,537,205 | 17,988,567 | 21,303,236 | 17,451,813 | 18,770,605 |
| SUB-TOTAL EAST | 711,799,339 | 685,163,888 | 854,480,955 | 763,296,461 | 736,031,319 |



THE FUTURE OF TEA: *Insights from the Colombo International Tea Convention 2024*

In late July 2024, the tea world converged in Sri Lanka for the Colombo International Tea Convention, a highly anticipated global forum that brought together over 700 delegates from more than 40 countries. Held at a time when the tea industry is grappling with significant challenges, the convention aimed to rethink tea's role not just as a commodity but as an integral part of global lifestyles, econom

After a seven-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the convention's return to Sri Lanka felt symbolic. Under the theme "Tea: A Lifestyle and a Livelihood," the event offered a platform for in-depth discussions on sustainability, innovation, and market dynamics, focusing on how tea can adapt to meet the needs of both producers and consumers in a changing world.

Navigating Climate Challenges: Tea's Fragile Future

One of the primary discussions at the convention was tea's vulnerability to climate change. With roughly 70% of the world's tea produced by smallholders, many from developing countries, extreme weather patterns are already disrupting production. Producers from countries like Kenya, Sri Lanka, India, and China shared stories of unpredictable rainfall, temperature fluctuations, and crop losses, highlighting how climate change threatens not only the tea trade but the livelihoods of



millions.

Speakers urged for an industry-wide shift towards sustainable farming practices. Experts from Sri Lanka presented research on innovative methods to increase crop resilience, while Kenyan representatives shared their success in adopting eco-friendly production techniques. The message was clear: without action, the world's most beloved beverage faces an uncertain future.

The Global Tea Market: Rising Challenges, Shifting Preferences

For many, tea is more than a drink; it's a cultural cornerstone and an economic driver. However, the tea industry has seen a glut of oversupply in recent years. As mentioned during the convention, the Mombasa Tea Auction—the world's largest auction for black tea—has faced a surplus, causing significant drops in prices and leaving tons of tea unsold.

The convention also spotlighted shifting consumer preferences in key markets like the UK, Japan, and the U.S., where traditional black tea consumption has stagnated. To combat this, industry leaders are advocating for more diverse, premium, and specialty teas that appeal to modern consumers. A growing demand for health-focused teas, such as green tea and herbal blends, has opened new avenues for the market, with retailers noting the potential for these products to re-energize the trade.

The convention's marketplace buzzed with innovation as companies showcased

new tea products that promise to tap into this health-conscious trend. Herbal infusions, organic blends, and teas with added functional benefits, like detox properties and stress relief, took center stage. According to one industry expert, "This is where the future of tea lies—combining health benefits with sustainability."

Ceylon Tea's Legacy: A National Treasure
The convention wasn't just about global trends; it also placed a spotlight on Sri Lanka's Ceylon Tea. The Sri Lanka Tea Board and the Colombo Tea Traders' Association celebrated the rich history of Ceylon Tea, showcasing its deep connection to Sri Lankan culture and its economic significance. For decades, Ceylon Tea has been a symbol of quality, known for its distinct flavor and strong export market.

Through interactive sessions and immersive tours, delegates experienced firsthand how Ceylon Tea is intricately woven into the social fabric of Sri Lanka. In fact, Ceylon Tea is one of the country's largest export earners, and the government has been pushing hard to maintain its Lion logo as a mark of superior quality and authenticity.

New Standards for a New Era

The convention also hosted the International Standards Organization (ISO) Technical Committee on Tea, which convened in person for the first time since 2020. Representatives from over 40 countries discussed global standards for tea production and quality, emphasizing the importance of maintaining high bench-



marks in an era of rapidly changing consumer demands.

Sri Lanka, as the host country, proudly announced that it remains the only tea-producing nation fully aligned with ISO standards. This commitment to quality positions Ceylon Tea as a global leader in an increasingly competitive market. **The Road Ahead: Innovating for Sustainability**

As the event concluded with a grand gala, the future of tea seemed brighter, but the road ahead is still filled with challenges. Sustainability, both environmental and economic, remains at the forefront of the tea trade's agenda. The Colombo International Tea Convention 2024 successfully brought fresh thinking to the table, emphasizing the need for the entire tea value chain—from farm to cup—to work collaboratively toward a more resilient, innovative, and sustainable future.

For the world's tea producers, traders, and enthusiasts, the convention reinforced the idea that tea is not just a drink—it's a lifestyle, a livelihood, and a crucial part of our global culture. The next steps for the industry will determine whether tea can continue to be a cornerstone of social life and economic stability for generations to come.

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CALENDER OF EVENTS

20
24

09 – 11

OCTOBER

6th African Tea Convention and Exhibition
Klgali, Rwanda

15 – 18

OCTOBER

World Tea Expo
Las Vegas, USA

26

OCTOBER

Nevada Tea Festival
Carson City, Nevada, USA

14-18

NOVEMBER

Global Tea Fair, Shenzhen
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