



Name: Kiunyu Factory
Affiliated to: Karithathi Farmers Co-operative Society (FCS)
Province: Central
District: Kirinyaga
Location: Ngariama
Nearest Town/Centre: Kerugoya
Annual Rainfall (mm): 1400
Altitude (masl): 1644
Producers: 1100
Average Annual Production (kg): 547 050
Drying Method: Sun
Harvest Method: Handpicking
Harvest Season: October – January
Varieties: SL 34
Soil: Red volcanic

About

Kiunyu, currently affiliated to Karithathi Farmers Co-operative Society, was established in the 1960s and rests on seven acres of land, serving the villages of Kagumoini, Kianduma, Kiambuku, Kiambatha, Gature and Kiamuki. Mathew Nthiga is the current factory manager and he works with eight permanent staff members. During the peak season the factory employs about 12 casual workers; during off-peak season, three casual staff are retained. Permanent staff are responsible for weighing coffee, cherry selection and grading coffee, paying farmers and addressing farmers' concerns.

The factory is located in the Kirinyaga region, known for its deep, fertile and well draining red volcanic soils, which are ideal for coffee production. The surrounding area is densely populated with indigenous trees, which are well protected by the community.

The area undergoes a biennial production cycle with the early harvest running from April to June and the late second harvest running from October to December. The main varieties of coffee grown are SL34 and Ruiru 11, with SL34 accounting to 99% of all coffee produced.

In line with a rising awareness of the need for environmental conservation, the factory has initiated a couple of projects, including the construction of a waste water soak pit, so that water is allowed to re-absorb back into the soil, rather than being wasted.

Karithathi farmer members carry out all agronomic practices according to guidelines coordinated through the Coffee Research Station and fieldwork involves weeding, pruning, spraying, and the application of fertilizer, mulching and other technical activities. Technical advice is offered through farmer training programs coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Compliance to the agreed guidelines is checked and supervised by the FCS field committee, which check that coffee is not inter-grown with other crops such as maize and beans, though they do allow intercropping with macadamia. The committee also encourages farmers who have abandoned their coffee bushes to return to coffee production, which have in recent years returned to higher prices.

After harvesting, coffee is delivered to the factory and undergoes the wet processing method: Water is pumped from the Karithathi River into reservoir tanks for pulping and recirculation. After pulping, the coffee is stored overnight, washed, soaked and spread on drying tables. The parchment is frequently turned on the drying tables and is then sorted and stored before being delivered to dry mills. To ensure that the processing is carried out efficiently, the factory has invested in a pulper, recirculation system and about 20 conditioning bins.