

PRODUCER PROFILE



PRODUCER NAME: Patrick Kaberia Muthaura

PRODUCTS: Tea

COUNTRY: Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Patrick Kaberia Muthaura has been farming tea for 24 years, ever since he left school, but his relationship with tea goes back further still. Growing up in the Nyambene hills, near Mount Kenya, Patrick's father was an employee of the then Nyambene Tea Company, which previously owned Michimikuru tea estate and factory until both were bought by small scale farmers to create the Michimikuru Tea Company.

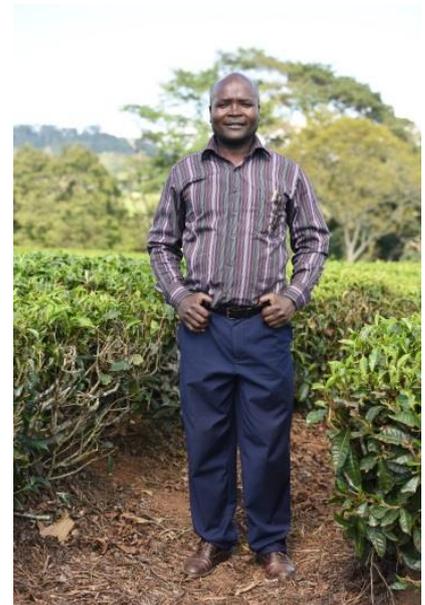
Patrick, who is married with three children aged 10, 6 and 3, has a two acre tea farm of his own, and has held various positions at Michimikuru giving him a wide knowledge of tea and the company operations. He is currently employed as a Tea Extension Assistant in the Field Services Department, which advises farmers on how to improve their farm practices, and how to grow and handle tea.

Patrick has also been elected to represent workers on the Fairtrade Premium committee for Michimikuru, as well as acting as Chairman of a Workers' Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO), and elected trustee of a pension fund for staff of the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) who are contracted to provide management and secretarial support to Michimikuru Tea Company.



MICHIMIKURU TEA COMPANY

Michimikuru Tea Company was established and began operating in 1964. The factory was established by Eastern Produce Kenya Limited (EPK) in the early 1960s under the name Nyambene Tea Company limited with its own farm of 260 hectares called Michimikuru Tea Estate. The factory also used to buy some green tea leaves from small scale farmers in the area. The factory and the estate were bought from EPK by the small scale tea farmers in 1994, and the estate, leaf base and factory merged under the name Michimikuru Tea Company Limited. The Kenya Tea Development Agency KTDA has been contracted to give management and secretarial services through a team of management staff posted to the company.



Patrick Kaberia Muthaura ©Fairtrade Foundation

TEA GROWING AND PROCESSING

Small-scale tea farmers in Kenya grow 60 per cent of the country's tea. On average Michimikuru produces 21 million kilos of green leaf annually which is processed into five million kilos of tea.

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BENEFITS OF FAIRTRADE

Michimikuru has been selling tea under Fairtrade terms since July 2007. In the UK Michimikuru tea is sold by Cafedirect. The Fairtrade Premium has been used to undertake a number of projects in the area.

Since 2010 the Premium has been used to sponsor six children from within the tea catchment area to attend secondary school. The last of this group finished in 2015 but the initiative will continue.

Premium has also been used to construct an additional classroom at a local secondary school. Seven students were sponsored to attend technical courses to address a shortage of skills in the community.

Construction of a maternity ward is underway to serve expectant mothers in the community.

Falling water volumes in the rivers have been a problem in the area, and the farmers have used the Fairtrade Premium to improve environmental management. Farmers were planting fast-growing eucalyptus to sell as fire wood but this thirsty tree sucks the rivers dry. The environmental management programme has trained river bank scouts to recognise the types of trees planted close to the rivers and educate farmers about replacing them with alternative, indigenous trees. This has seen noticeable improvement in river volumes. The Premium has also been used to establish tree nurseries so farmers are given saplings to replace their eucalyptus with for free.

FOOD INSECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Tea is the farmers' main source of income but production and incomes are increasingly threatened by changing weather patterns caused by climate change. In collaboration with Fairtrade Africa and funded by international partners, Michimikuru has implemented a diversification programme to reduce economic dependency on tea, mitigate the impacts of climate change and address food insecurity. Twenty-five per cent of members are now growing traditional food crops such as maize, cassava and yams; they are also growing cash crops such as cabbage, onions and passionfruit and keeping dairy cows, goats, poultry and other livestock. Around 40 per cent of farmers are now more food secure and intensive training is proposed to reach the remaining farmers.

“ FAIRTRADE HAS BROUGHT MICHIMIKURU OUT OF THE TRADITIONAL SET UP [...] THE ENVIRONMENT MATTERS, WHAT YOU DO, HOW YOU TREAT YOUR ANIMALS, HOW YOU TREAT YOUR PEOPLE, HOW YOU TREAT YOUR WORKERS, IT WAS A NEW ASPECT. SO THAT IS A BIG CHANGE I HAVE OBSERVED. ”

Patrick Kaberia Muthaura



Plucking of tea at Michimikuru

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Tea baskets © Fairtrade Foundation

