



Navigating Origins

T A N Z A N I A

Coffee Characteristics

About 80 percent of Tanzania's coffee is classified as arabica, while the other 20 percent is robusta.

Typically, Tanzania coffee is divided into two regions: Southern and Northern, each of which offers a distinct flavor and market. "Tanzania coffee is unique because of its East African flavor," says Bridget Carrington, director of C Dorman Ltd. "The German market looks for the fruity flavors of the Southern Tanzania coffees, while the Japanese market buys the coffees from the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Meru in the North. These coffees offer less acidity, good body and African characteristics."

Hurdles

While Tanzania has the climate and altitude necessary to produce premium specialty coffee, the industry has declined in the past decade. Income from coffee exports has fallen steadily, and yields are some of the lowest in the world—just one-quarter kilo per tree. "Tanzania's coffee industry faces some serious challenges which, like most other producer-countries, have been exacerbated by the current global coffee crisis of record-low prices being paid to growers," says Thomas Dixon, country director of TechnoServe Tanzania.

Other challenges include:

- A high poverty rate among Tanzania's smallholder growers, who cannot afford to maintain or invest in their coffee farms.
- The country's changing infrastructure. The

nationalization in 1976 split coffee estates and turned them over to small-scale farmers, many of whom did not receive the necessary training and support to run the farms.

- A lack of processing facilities and skills, which limits the ability of smallholders to capture higher prices.

Creating Change

Many organizations, exporters and cooperatives are working to increase the quality and salability of the coffee.

Tanzania Coffee Research Institute has developed several coffee hybrids that are resistant to major coffee diseases and can produce up to 13 pounds per tree. Organizations such as TechnoServe are working to establish new tree farms to phase out the older, more unproductive trees.

And changes are occurring within the governmental structure as well. In the early 1990s, the country was liberalized, allowing private companies to buy coffee directly from the farmers. During that time, many of larger exporters set up mills and infrastructures that increased coffee quality. "Previously, the primary processing of coffee in Tanzania was very much a domestic operation—coffee was washed in buckets in back gardens rather than on a commercial basis, hence a resulting generally poor quality," says Carrington. "These areas of production are now on the increase in terms quantity and quality."



TANZANIA FACTS

Location The largest country in East Africa, Tanzania borders the Indian Ocean and lies between Kenya and Mozambique.

Capital City Dar Es Salaam

Languages The majority of Tanzanians speak one of the estimated 120 local languages and dialects as their first language. The official language, Swahili, is taught in all grade schools. English is often spoken as well.

Monetary Unit Tanzanian shilling

Population 35,922,454 in 2003

Climate There are two rainy seasons: February–May/June and October–December.

Exports Agricultural products account for more than half of Tanzania's exports, including sisal, coffee, cotton, nuts and cloves. An estimated 20 percent of the country's export earnings comes from coffee, making it the eighth largest exporter in Africa.

Growing Regions Some of the country's most fertile growing areas are the Southern Highland regions, Mount Meru in the North, and the rich volcanic area around Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain.

Farms More than 90 percent of Tanzanian coffee is grown on small family farms. The remainder comes from large plantations and estates.

Harvest Arabica coffees are harvested October–February, while robusta harvests take place from June–December.



KEEP AN EYE ON

Traditionally, coffee from Tanzania's southern regions was considered too fruity and winy by some buyers; now it is becoming a popular choice. "The new upcoming region is the southern highlands of Mbinga and Mbeya, where the stretch of Mt. Livingstone ranges provide unique-tasting coffees, and the young generation is involved in the production," says Adolph Kumburu, executive director of the Association of Kilimanjaro Specialty Coffee Growers. "The area is also relatively new to coffee, as it has been farmed for less than 50 years and has enough land for expansion of new farms, as well as the proper altitude for growing high-quality arabica coffee."