

Kenya now brands its tea

By [Carole Kimutai](#)

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Tea, Kenya's leading export, is set for a massive branding initiative that will be used to identify and promote the tea in local and international markets. Towards this end, the Tea Board of Kenya has appointed the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KeBS) to implement a globally recognised mark of origin for Kenyan tea.

As a key consumer selling point, 100% Kenyan tea and tea blends manufactured or sourced from Kenya will now have an exclusive mark which will distinguish it from other products.

Global reputation

"Kenyan tea is globally reputed to be of the highest quality, flavour and rich colours which are rare brand attributes that we must jealously guard through the Kenya tea mark of origin," says Sicily Kariuki, Tea Board of Kenya MD.

The recent unveiling of the Kenya tea mark of origin is particularly important as Kenya tea exports account for close to 25% of the global tea market with revenues now reaching the KSh 97 billion mark in 2010.

The appointment of KeBS will see the local standards body exclusively undertaking audit and certification for the Tea Board of Kenya Mark of Origin standard for tea packers and producers exporting their produce to international markets.

Speaking during a signing ceremony, Joseph Koskey, KeBS MD and Kariuki said the appointment of KeBS sets the stage for the authentication of pure premium Kenyan tea in the local and global markets.

Exported in bulk for blending

Even with its undisputed position in the global market, more than 94% of Kenyan tea is currently exported in bulk mainly for blending. It therefore ends up being consumed as a "hidden" beverage and most consumers are hardly aware of Kenya as an origin of quality tea. While this is driven by market dynamics, only 6% gets to the market in form of "100%" pure Kenya Tea.

For the last two years, the Tea Board of Kenya has been developing the mark of origin for Kenya tea in consultation with stakeholders. The mark will be used on retail packages containing 100% pure Kenya tea.

Already, the design for the mark has been registered with Kenya Industrial Property Institute alongside the implementation mechanism while the international registration process is underway.

ABOUT CAROLE KIMUTAI

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