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Kenya

KIPKELION

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County	Kericho
Altitude	1500 - 2200 masl
Varieties	SL28, SL34, Ruiru 11, Batian
Harvest	October - December
Process	Fully Washed

Kipkelion coffee hails from the highlands of Kenya's Rift Valley, which until it was split into counties was the most economically important province in Kenya. Kipkelion itself lies in the southern half of the Rift Valley, just south of the Equator. This area is renowned for producing specialty-grade Arabica beans; the soil is formed by the now extinct volcanoes that created the slopes and altitude synonymous with Kenyan speciality. Kericho county eclipses that fame with a reputation for and predominance of high-quality tea.

Cultivated by small-scale farmers employing sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices, shade-grown coffee is intercropped with other crops and dairy farming. Organic manure is utilised to minimise the use of inorganic fertilisers. Rainfall is reliable at around 1500-1800mm yearly, falling in two seasons creating the occurrence of two harvests.

Kipkelion's coffee farming community emphasises agroecology, leadership development, and data-driven traceability. Farmers are organised into groups to facilitate knowledge sharing and the adoption of regenerative practices. Initiatives such as water retention systems are employed to combat climate change and enhance sustainability. They produce on average 6000 tons per year.

The SL varietals are ubiquitous in Kenya. Coming from what was then known as Scott Laboratories in the 1930s, SL28 stems from a selection of a single tree from a population that was known as Tanganyika Drought Resistant, that was related to the Bourbon lineage of plants. SL34 was made in a similar way but from a French Mission lineage on the partnered Loresho Estate in Kabete. French Mission has always been assumed to be of Bourbon lineage, though recent genetic tests have shown it to be of Typica lineage. Ruiru 11 and Batian are what is also known as a ‘composite varieties’ – mixing many different seeds to create one profile. The mixes are formed of Sudan Rume, K7, N39 and Catimor, amongst others.