



Fairtrade Tea and Climate Change



Sireet OEP (Outgrowers Empowerment Project Company Ltd) is a co-operative of small-scale tea growers in Nandi Hill East Kenya and was Fairtrade certified in 2006. Subsequently, the farmers bought the Siret tea estate and factory with a seven-year loan, with repayments part-funded by the Fairtrade Premium.

Sireet OEP tea is used in more than 40 widely available blends from companies including Cafédirect and Traidcraft and Own Label Fairtrade tea from The Co-op, Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Waitrose and Asda. Unfortunately, in 2016 Sainsbury's stopped using this tea in their own label tea, so Fairtrade Premium projects planned were halted, including bursaries for secondary school and college students as well as community projects.

Above is Daniel Kibitok Kosgey who has been growing tea on his 0.4-acre field since 2002. He has four children and his eldest daughter went to university part-funded by a bursary from the co-operative. Daniel says that Sireet OEP has empowered small-scale farmers and given them the opportunity to invest. By agreement one shilling from every kilo of tea picked is saved for the farmer by SOEP. These funds are invested. The most ambitious project is a 7-storey building in Nandi Hills town costing £2m approx. All members will benefit from income generated by it.

Climate change is a reality for tea farmers in Kenya, causing an increase in pests and disease and reducing both tea yields and quality. Fairtrade encourages good agricultural practices and environmental protection to help farmers ensure their businesses are sustainable. It also provides the Fairtrade Premium to assist with diversification to reduce overdependence on tea. Farmers are encouraged to grow trees that provide shade and wind protection; trees that grow crops to eat or for sale; trees that can be pruned to feed livestock; and trees to fix soil nutrients or mulch for other crops. Eucalyptus trees are no longer being used in tea fields as they take too much water.