Kenya Tea and Climate: Why the Weather Is in Your Mug

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **The short version:** Much of the UK's everyday tea is Kenyan and Kenya is climate-exposed, so its weather feeds gradual price pressure into British blends, not empty shelves.

Much of the UK's everyday black tea comes, in the end, from Kenya. Read it alongside other Kenya and climate pages, such as tea and drought.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

These Kenya figures come from public market and climate reporting, correct as of May 2026, and are estimates that change. Not financial advice.

Kenya, climate and your cup

Factor	Picture
Why Kenya matters	Top exporter, major CTC source for UK blends
Climate exposure	Drought and erratic rain drive supply variability
Social risk	Huge workforce depends on the crop
Effect on UK cups	Upward price pressure, small recipe tweaks
Empty shelves?	Not yet, cost and consistency, not scarcity
What helps	Transparent Fairtrade/direct-trade brands

Why Kenya matters

A large share of Britain's everyday black tea is Kenyan at root, even though the word Kenya rarely appears on the packet. Kenya is one of the largest tea exporters in the world and a major source of the CTC black tea that goes into mainstream blends. That dominance is exactly what creates the exposure: when Kenyan supply moves, the cost and consistency of British everyday tea move with it. See Kenyan tea.

The climate exposure

Kenya is climate-exposed. Drought and increasingly erratic rainfall have driven real supply variability, with multi-year drought through 2017 to 2022 causing significant swings in yield. Because a very large workforce

depends on the crop, climate stress there is a social and economic risk at once, not merely a weather story. Its competitive cost and tariff position also shapes global flows, so the price you pay reflects climate and trade together rather than either alone. See tea tariffs.

The supply chain in one picture

It helps to see the chain in one line: Kenyan smallholders and estates grow huge volumes of CTC black tea, international blenders buy that leaf in bulk, the blenders build the everyday British boxes, and you pour the result without ever seeing the word Kenya. Every link is exposed to Kenyan weather, because the volume that makes mainstream blends cheap and consistent depends on a reliable Kenyan harvest. So a drought does not hit one premium product; it nudges the cost base of the whole everyday category at once. The same volume that makes Kenya invisible in your cup is what makes its climate matter to your cup.

What it means for your cup

For a shopper the response is proportionate, not panicky. Kenyan supply swings make blend cost and consistency less stable over time, but this does not, yet, mean empty shelves; it means gradual upward price pressure and the occasional quiet recipe tweak as blenders manage a more variable Kenyan component. The constructive response is within reach: farming that copes with the changing climate and fairer prices for farmers really matter, and buyers support both by favouring transparent brands with credible Fairtrade or direct trade sourcing. That does not require changing what you drink, only buying it a little more knowingly. See ethical sourcing and why tea costs more.

How to judge tea-price news

A filter for the next tea-is-running-out headline, because there will be more and most overstate the case. Ask three things. Is the claim about price or supply? Kenyan climate stress reliably moves cost and tweaks recipes, but empty shelves is almost never the real story. Is the timescale gradual or sudden? This is a structural, multi-year exposure, so a bad season nudges prices rather than emptying cupboards. And what can a buyer actually do? Not panic-buy, but favour transparent, fairly sourced brands, since farmer resilience and fair pricing are the real levers and the ones a shopper can support. See climate change and tea.

What to buy

Buy everyday tea knowingly, by the per-cup price, from brands transparent about Kenyan sourcing with credible Fairtrade or direct-trade certification, such as Clipper or Pukka. For the wider everyday category see the black tea range or the full tea shop.

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (cultivation and trade)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Match the tea to the moment. Your 6am Kenyan blend and your 4pm cup need not be the same brew.

More tea reading

Continue with Kenyan tea, climate change and tea, why tea costs more, ethical sourcing and black tea.

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- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
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