Kenya plays a pivotal role in the East African tea industry and it also hosts the world’s biggest tea auction at Mombasa, selling produce from nine African nations. Conversely, Uganda leads both coffee and cocoa regional production, and it is positioned as Africa’s largest Robusta exporter, a cheaper bean used in instant coffee. Cocoa production in East Africa remains minor coming mostly from Uganda and Tanzania.

Kenya is the third largest producer of tea worldwide, after China and India. The tea sector is a prominent pillar of Kenya’s Vision 2030. Smallholder farming dominates tea and coffee in the region, but with significant differences between countries. Half a million smallholders produce two thirds of Kenya’s tea and coffee, whereas most tea in Uganda is grown on large estates. Cocoa production in East Africa remains minor coming mostly from Uganda and Tanzania.

Regional production and trade

Kenya’s tea consumption in cups 2015

Regional tea consumption (tonnes) 2015

Regional coffee consumption (tonnes) 2015

Regional cocoa consumption (tonnes) 2015

Kenya’s tea consumption in cups 2015

Kenya’s coffee consumption in cups 2015

Kenya’s cocoa consumption in cups 2015

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65% of all hot drinks are sold in supermarkets and hypermarkets, which offer wide variety in brands, formats and flavours. 95% of urban consumers bought their hot drinks there.

35% of sales come from small grocers, open air markets, kiosks and corner shops, with 55% of urban consumers regularly buying from local convenience stores.

Proportion of households drinking a beverage daily*

Tea Water Milk Coffee Cocoa Fruit Juice Beer Wine Spirits

In the concentrated Kenyan hot drinks market, competitive intensity is high

Only two products on Kenyan retail shelves are Fairtrade certified

Volume sales of Fairtrade certified hot drinks (tonnes) 2015

Quality and good taste are most common drivers of consumer choice

Awareness of Fairtrade is low across consumers, foodservice and institutions. Only 36% of tea drinkers, 43% of coffee drinkers and 13% of the sample for foodservice and institutional have heard of Fairtrade.

As the most populous countries in East Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania also have the largest hot drinks markets in the region. Kenya leads with highest per capita consumption volumes, a reflection of higher incomes than in the rest of the region.