Sericulture industry in Kenya 2023

**In general:**

* Sericulture is still only taken up by a relatively small group of farmers. However, efforts are being made by the Kenyan government to encourage farmers to reverse this trend – for an example, a national sericulture research center (as a part of KALRO) has been made.

**Summary of:** [Kenyan farmers urged to tap into lucrative silk farming for export (linkedin.com)](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/kenyan-farmers-urged-tap-lucrative-silk-farming-export-limited/)

* There are 30 countries globally which produce silk
  + 16 are found in Asia accounting for 90 % of the total world silk production
* Global silk production continues to shrink due to
  + Climate change 🡪 climatic restrictions only allow two crops per year
  + Heavy industrialization 🡪 high cost of labour
* However – in this case, Kenyan farmers have distinct advantage of practicing sericulture all through the year, yielding a stream of about 3-4 cocoon crops because of the country’s tropical climate
* In addition to this, rearing of silkworms is seen as less affected by a changing climate that has hurt some traditional crops such as maize, beans, coffee, and cotton in Kenya because the mulberry trees are relatively drought resistant.
* Silk is 4 times more valuable than coffee, tea and vegetables when grown for export.
* Production of silk is decreasing in China and even more speedily in Japan and though still steady in India, Kenya has great potential to contribute to the global demand of commodity.
* Kenya is in partnership with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to promote silk production in the country by developing technologies and providing farmers with training, seeds, and access to markets.
* 600 sericulture farmers in the country
* Reasons to why Kenyan farmers can make it in silk production:
  + Ideal conditions for mulberry and silkworm rearing
  + Simple structures for rearing the worms
  + Cheap labor
  + Good cocoon quality with the average filament length of 1200 meter
  + Reduced pests’ attack
  + Almost all regions in Kenya can support the activity

Info on the market

Though the investment to start sericulture can seem to be expensive as it is estimated to be between Sh50,000 and Sh100,000 with the first year recording not much income of about Sh56,000, there is steady increase in earnings in the subsequent years and a farmer can pocket up to Sh224,000 worth of income a year.

There is huge market in the country which is yet to be satisfied. Surveys conducted in several cloth shops in the country showed that the finer silk fibre found in the shops is imported hence the great market opportunity in Kenya.

Some of the silk market outlets in the country include Rivatex in Eldoret, Mwingi Silk Market Place in Mwingi, Kakamega Forest Silk Market Centre in Kakamega, Pendeza Weaving in Kisumu, Arabuko Sokoke Silk Market Place in Malindi, National Sericulture Station in Thika and Molo Weavers in Elburgon among others.

Currently, a kilo of dried cocoon goes for between Sh750 and Sh900.

Generally, Kenya’s annual silk production is hardly above 2 metric tonnes of dried cocoons, yet the national potential is over 10,000 metric tonnes despite its introduction in the country in 1972 through a collaboration between the government and JICA.

**Read following article:** [Sericulture: Using Scientific Research,Technology to boost Kenya's Economy - (thetimes.co.ke)](https://thetimes.co.ke/2023/01/14/25559/)

The article describes Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Institute of Science and Technology’s sericulture project with the private investor Silk Origin Ltd.