

Samuru Gituto Farmers Co-operative Society Limited

A long-established farmers' cooperative in Kenya, best known for coffee farming and land ownership. Its history reflects both the growth of Kenya's cooperative movement and the governance challenges that many agricultural cooperatives have faced.

Historical background

Formation (1964)

- The cooperative was established in 1964, shortly after Kenya gained independence.
- It was formed by coffee farmers in Murang'a to enable members to market coffee collectively, improve bargaining power, and own productive agricultural land together.

Growth and expansion

During its most successful years, the society:

- Grew to more than 4,500 members.
- Acquired extensive coffee farms, with reports indicating ownership of up to 1,700 acres at its peak.
- Became an important source of employment and income for farming families in Murang'a.

Financial challenges

Like many coffee cooperatives in Kenya, Samuru Gituto was affected by:

- Falling international coffee prices.
- Rising production costs.
- Financial difficulties in servicing loans.

To recover outstanding debts, part of the cooperative's land was sold by the lending bank. Members state that approximately 1,200 acres were disposed of through this process, leaving a much smaller portion of the original holdings.

Leadership disputes (2006 onwards)

Around 2006, the cooperative entered a prolonged period of:

- Leadership wrangles.
- Disputes over legitimate office bearers.
- Allegations of irregular land sales.
- Numerous court cases concerning governance and ownership of cooperative assets.

According to the Court of Appeal, the disputes involved rival groups claiming leadership and disagreements over the sale and transfer of society land. The judgment notes that the society had previously operated without major leadership problems before these conflicts emerged.

Court of Appeal decision (2019)

A major turning point came in March 2019, when the Court of Appeal of Kenya ruled in favor of the cooperative in a landmark case. The court:

- Found that certain land transfers had been irregular.
- Ordered that the affected parcels be returned to the cooperative.
- Cleared the way for renewed governance and the resumption of members' meetings after many years of disputes.

Recent developments

Since 2019, the cooperative has reported efforts to:

- Strengthen governance.
- Recover and protect its assets.
- Revive coffee production.
- Increase member participation through regular annual general meetings.
- Promote sustainable farming and value-addition initiatives. Some legal proceedings relating to land and property management have continued in subsequent years.

Timeline

Year	Event
1964	Samuru Gituto Farmers Co-operative Society established.
1960s–1990s	Expansion of coffee farming and membership; became one of the significant farmer cooperatives in Murang'a.
Early 2000s	Coffee sector difficulties and loan repayment problems.
2006	Leadership disputes and litigation began.
2019	Court of Appeal ordered reversal of irregular land transfers.
2020s	Ongoing asset recovery, governance reforms, and cooperative revitalization efforts.

Overall, Samuru Gituto Farmers Co-operative Society's history is one of early success in Kenya's post-independence cooperative movement, followed by years of governance and land disputes, and more recent efforts to restore member confidence, recover assets, and revive agricultural production.

Board of Directors (2019–2026 term)

The Board of Directors comprises the following members:

Position	Board member
Chairman	John N. Thuo
Vice Chairman	Julius Gatimu
Secretary	Andrew Githua M.
Treasurer	Esther Wanjiku
Committee Member	Betty Wangari
Committee Member	Julia Marigi T.
Committee Member	Kamau Numiathi
Committee Member	Michael K. Githenji

The society states that this board is responsible for governance, oversight of cooperative assets, transparency, and representing the interests of its members.