

Rwanda has presented its heritage Mibirizi Arabica coffee to international buyers in Japan ahead of its first dedicated auction, scheduled for October 21, as the country seeks to open new markets for the variety.

The coffee was showcased on Friday, October 16, during the Specialty Coffee Association of Japan (SCAJ) exhibition in Tokyo. Industry professionals sampled it and were introduced to its distinctive flavour and aroma ahead of the sale.

The presentation was organised by the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), which has worked to restore the variety and promote it as a distinct offering in the international specialty coffee market.

Mibirizi was introduced to Rwanda in 1904 and became part of the country's coffee-growing history. Its production later declined as other varieties gained ground, but research and efforts to preserve its planting material have helped renew interest in the crop.

At the Tokyo showcase, participants were introduced to its sensory profile, which includes floral aromas. The presentation was intended to familiarise potential buyers with the coffee before the auction.

The October 21 sale will feature Mibirizi coffee separately for the first time at an international auction. It is scheduled to take place alongside the auction of coffees selected through the 2026 Best of Rwanda competition.

Rwanda's Ambassador to Japan, Marie Claire Mukasine, said the revival of Mibirizi connected the country's coffee-growing heritage with opportunities in premium markets.

"Reviving Mibirizi coffee is a source of pride for Rwanda. It connects our heritage in coffee farming with new opportunities in high-end coffee markets," she said. "We are pleased to share this distinctive coffee with our Japanese partners and buyers."

According to NAEB, restoring Mibirizi involved research, preserving and managing planting material, working with farmers and improving coffee quality.

The Tokyo showcase was part of Rwanda's participation in SCAJ 2026, which brought together coffee producers, cooperative leaders, exporters and other industry representatives. The Rwandan delegation was led by Sandrine Urujeni, NAEB's chief operating officer, and included 20 coffee farmers and representatives

of cooperatives.

On October 14, NAEB also held a seminar presenting coffees recognised in this year's Best of Rwanda competition. Participants tasted selected coffees and discussed quality, sourcing and potential partnerships with Japanese buyers.

Launched in 2024 by NAEB in partnership with the Coffee Exporters and Processors Association in Rwanda (CEPAR), Best of Rwanda combines a national quality competition with auctions intended to connect selected producers with international buyers.

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