



# PERA FOODS

*Commercialisation of research-led food innovations from underutilised crops*

University of Nairobi, Upper Kabete Campus · Innovation Profile

## OVERVIEW

Pera Foods is a startup company incubated at the University of Nairobi's Upper Kabete Campus, within the Department of Food Science, Nutrition & Technology. The company was founded by Dr. Gekonge Duke, whose entrepreneurial concept originated from his PhD research under the FRUVASE project (2018–2021). The core innovation is the development and commercialisation of food products — primarily whole fruit juices, nectars, therapeutic products, and tropical fruit wines — derived from underutilised Kenyan food crops such as guava, mango, tamarind, cactus, seaweed, soursop, baobab, and hibiscus.

Dr. Gekonge has developed and patented over 45 commercial food products. During the incubation period, Pera Foods has grown to over 25 product lines. The company is among the pioneer 15 incubatees inducted into the University of Nairobi's Innovation Incubation and Commercialisation (IIC) Programme.

## FOUNDER & ORIGIN

**Founder:** Dr. Gekonge Duke

**Role:** Founder, Pera Foods

**Academic origin:** Former PhD student, Department of Food Science, Nutrition & Technology, University of Nairobi

**Research project:** FRUVASE Project (2018–2021)

**Research basis:** Guava nectars developed from the Kenyan guava — an underutilised value chain

## INSTITUTIONAL HOME

**Incubation host:** University of Nairobi, Upper Kabete Campus

**Department:** Food Science, Nutrition & Technology

**Programme:** UoN Innovation Incubation and Commercialisation (IIC) Programme

**Programme status:** Pioneer incubatee — among the first 15 inducted

## PRODUCT INNOVATION

Pera Foods has developed and commercialised food products from a range of underutilised Kenyan crops that have very limited industrial processing in Kenya. Product categories documented in the source include:

Whole fruit juices / nectars	Tropical fruit wines	Therapeutic products
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Crops documented as source materials:

Guava	Mango	Tamarind	Cactus	Seaweed
Soursop	Baobab	Hibiscus		

## KEY METRICS (AS STATED IN SOURCE DOCUMENT)

<b>45+</b>	Commercial food products developed and patented by the founder
<b>25+</b>	Active product lines commercialised during incubation
<b>5,000+</b>	Monthly customers — locally and globally
<b>75%+</b>	Customer return rate (repeat purchase)
<b>6–10</b>	Direct employees (daily casual workers in marketing, sales & processing)

## BUSINESS MODEL

**Model type:** Business-to-Consumer (B2C)

**Primary channel:** Digital marketing channels

**Customer profile:** High return rate (>75% repeat customers) with increased referrals

**Additional beneficiaries:** Indirect employees including farmers, suppliers and associated personnel

- Socio-economic empowerment of farmers through new market linkages
- Job creation for youth — 6 to 10 direct casual workers daily, plus multiple indirect employment opportunities
- Consumer access to processed, quality, and safe food products from underutilised crops
- Income generation to the University of Nairobi through incubation service charges
- Capacity building — practical and theoretical training to students and the public in standard food processing technologies
- Youth CSR — quarterly football matches for local youth teams around CAVS to combat drug use and promote youth responsibility
- Media visibility — featured in a Citizen TV 'Made in Kenya' shoot, promoting the Faculty and Department

### DOCUMENTED SUCCESS STORIES

- Successfully developed, patented, and commercialised innovative products from guava, cactus, tamarind, baobab, seaweed, and hibiscus
- Customer base of over 5,000 monthly, both locally and globally
- Attracted social media and mainstream media coverage including Citizen TV
- Among the pioneer 15 incubatees inducted into the UoN IIC Programme
- Demonstrated a sustainable business model derived directly from academic research

### CHALLENGES DURING INCUBATION

- Limited capacity of processing equipment — constrains marketing at wider national levels
- Limited access to funds and grants to scale up production
- Technological limitations preventing full exploitation of product range (e.g. jams, wines, tetrapack products)
- High costs of business operations and legal documentation

### FUNDRAISING ASK (AS PRESENTED IN SOURCE DOCUMENT)

*The following figures are drawn directly from the Fundraising/Ask slide. They represent the capital structure and projected startup expense breakdown as presented by the founder.*

SOURCES OF CAPITAL	AMOUNT (KES)
Investors	55,000,000
Personal and bank loans	10,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65,000,000</b>
STARTUP EXPENSES	AMOUNT (KES)
Machinery and equipment	40,000,000
Rental and factory setup costs	5,000,000
Raw materials and packaging	8,000,000*
Licences and certifications	2,000,000
Salaries	4,000,000

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Advertising / promotional expenses	3,000,000
Insurance	2,000,000
Other associated expenses	1,000,000
<b>TOTAL STARTUP EXPENSES</b>	<b>65,000,000</b>

*\* The source document lists this figure as '8,000,00' — reproduced as KES 8,000,000 on the assumption of a typographical error. This has not been independently verified.*

**Disclaimer:** This profile is compiled exclusively from information contained in the Pera Foods pitch presentation ('Opportunities and challenges for commercialisation of innovative research outputs: The case of Pera Foods') as presented by Dr. Gekonge Duke. No information has been added, inferred, or supplemented from external sources. All figures, metrics, and claims reflect statements made in the source document and have not been independently verified.