

## Primary Producing Societies Highlight Their Problems



Millions of people around the world habitually wake up to a fresh cuppa. Imagine a morning without a cup of tea. Tea is a source of comfort for many of us. Ironically, though, workers who produce the green leaves for our tea live in vulnerable situations, with incomes barely sufficient for subsistence living.

On December 15, on International Tea Day, several societies in different regions gathered to raise their issues and concerns. The three prime issues were:

- Bought leaf factories (BLFs) should ensure a remunerative price for green leaves and help in protecting livelihoods.
- BLFs must define and disclose quality percentage of the leaves as prescribed by Tea Board of India.
- The Government of India must provide crop insurance. It must roll out the pending Price Stabilisation Fund Scheme (PSFS).

At Itakhuli Development Block of Tinsukia district

(Assam), about 50 growers from Bapuji, Tegera, and Rangagora societies came together at Buraadangaria Lower Primary School to raise an appeal for fair price on their green leaves. The participants discussed their concerns related to the absence of a remunerative price from bought leaf factories for their green leaves, and BLFs not defining and disclosing quality percentage of their leaves as prescribed by Tea Board of India (TBI). The meeting also appealed to the government to roll out the pending crop-insurance scheme

Emphasising the importance of society formation, Ajit Sen, secretary, Tegera Society, said, "Society formation is important for collective voice, collective bargaining from BLFs, and collective leaf trade."

At Prerona and Kunhi Small Tea Growers Societies in Margareitha, the gathering discussed these issues in the presence of Development Officer Jadav Mahon Chutia, Tea Board of India officials, their factory advisor, and managers from two bought leaf factories.

## CEC Encouraging Efficient Societies to Move Up the Value Chain

After successfully forming over 550 STG Societies (STGS), collectivizing more than 43,000 STGs in five states (West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh) CEC is encouraging capable STGs towards sustainable models of Tea Manufacturing.

CEC is working with proficient STGS to super-aggregate them. Super-aggregated entities would become professional procurer of tea leaves from the STGs and would be able to supply a sizeable volume of tea leaves to a BLF. The super-aggregated entities would also have the teeth to enter into an agreement with BLF for regular supply of leaves. BLFs will be assured of regular supply of quality leaves making the arrangement a win-win situation. A dynamic MIS, a proper quality control system, real-time price information and an efficient accounting and business documentation will become a norm for such entities. CEC is actively seeking support and cooperation from Tea Board of India to effect this model.

CEC is also working towards setting up of micro and mini factories of STGs in different locations. The provision of a large area, 200 Hectare for setting up a tea manufacturing unit in (mentioned in 12th plan document), however, is proving to be challenge. CEC is in the process of consulting Tea Board of India on the matter.

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## Tea Cultivation Is a Green Revolution for Us: Small Tea Growers of Udalguri

The scenic Udalguri district is one of the few districts in Assam, besides Kokrajhar, Cachar, and Dhuburi, to share both an international border and an interstate border; it touches the 53 km long India-Bhutan international border and the 27 km long Assam-Arunachal interstate perimeter. Since the mid-1980s, the verdant, picturesque district has been troubled by insurgency as ethnic Bodos initiated a demand for a 'sovereign Bodoland' and 'self-determination of the Bodos'.

The Bodos and other ethnic groups such as Rabhas and Garos have formed an autonomous Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD). BTAD comprises three other districts namely-Kohrajhar, Baksa, and Chirang. The conflict has halted the economic growth of Udalguri, as a result of which job options are extremely limited in the area.

Tea cultivation, which had gathered momentum from 1991, is the

biggest source of income generation in Udalguri. There are approximately 10,000 Small Tea Growers (STGs) in the four districts of BTAD. Udalguri has up to 6,000 STGs.

Earlier, several independent small tea growers were producing green leaves working in an isolated and scattered manner. As a result, they were unable to get better price for their leaves. Logistically, too, they faced limitations in terms of transportation of leaves to Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs), storage, and methods of quality tea cultivation

With CEC's intervention in Udalguri, STGs have come together to form Primary Producing Societies (PPSs). This has brought several benefits to the growers; they are now able to realise better price for their produce, have increased bargaining power with BLFs, possess biometric cards for identity, and have increased exposure to trainings related to quality tea cultivation. There is greater financial literacy, too.

"Quality tea cultivation and getting better price for our produce have been a green revolution for us," says Pranay Basumatary, president of All-Bodoland Small Tea Growers Association (ABSTGA). "A lot of youngsters have given up arms as they have found employment in tea cultivation," claims Basumatary.

About 30 members from Rwdwmkhang, SonaBilai, Himalaya, and Hajwsher STG Societies were present in a meeting that was attended by Tarun Machhary, assistant secretary, ABSTGA, and Jousrang Boro, speaker, ABSTGA. Also present were Pramod Hazarika and Davidson Daimari, secretary and president, respectively, of Dimakuchi Zone.

The members concurred that tea cultivation had given the youngsters of Udalguri a new mode of income. However, to sell their leaves, societies are still at the mercy of BLFs, who unilaterally decide whether they want to take, leave, or reject the leaves. The BLFs also dictate the prices on which they will buy the leaves. "We want to establish our own factories now," the ABSGTA office-bearers said in unison.



## Deputy Director of STG Directorate Meets Women Tea Growers in Karbi Anglong

Anupam Dash, deputy director of Small Tea Growers Directorate, Dibrugarh, met a few of the PPSs in Karbi Anglong.

He expressed pleasure on their moving up the supply chain through collectivisation.

In his meeting with Jirsong STG Society, he advocated that societies should start organic tea processing. "Green tea has high value in the market," he said.

A sizeable section of tea growers in Karbi Anglong is women.

In his interaction with Panjan Women Mini Tea Plantation Society, the deputy director encouraged the women growers to obtain enhanced technical training and make exposure visits to Dibrugarh. "This will further improve and broaden your horizon on tea cultivation," he said.

Technical trainings are an important feature in tea cultivation. It makes the growers aware about quality maintenance.

With good quality, the growers are able to fetch a better price for their leaves.

Bhabendra Mohan Borgohain, general secretary, Organic Small Tea Growers of Assam, accompanied Das. Minto Goswami, Senior Project Officer, CEC facilitated the visit



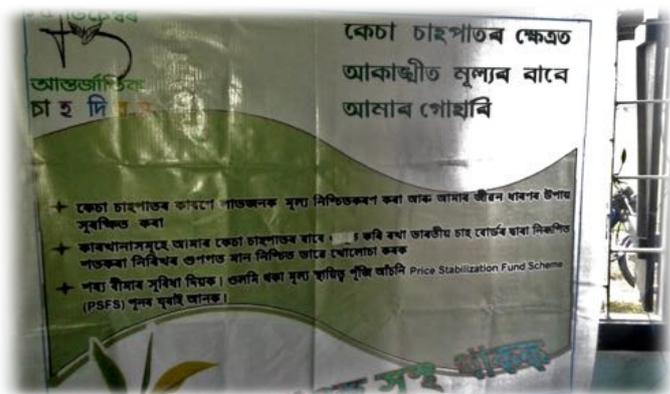
## From Producing to Processing Leaves: STG Collectives Want to Set up Factories

At present, bought leaf factories enjoy an upper hand in buying and rejecting the green leaves of small tea growers and in dictating the purchase price for the same. This situation has left STGs vulnerable. Hence, most of them are now thinking of moving to the next stage - that is, setting up tea-processing factories.

The Gorudharia Society in Dibrugarh, for instance, is seeking intervention from CEC to help them set up own factories. "CEC has helped us to collectivise and form societies. This has helped us a great deal in improving our incomes," said society members. The members also added that earlier when they landed at the gates of BLFs as individual sellers, they were treated shabbily. "They won't even offer us a seat, but now we are treated with respect," one member remarked.

Members of the society are now eagerly waiting to be guided in setting up a factory and ways to market their product.

Gorudharia STG Society registered itself with Tea Board of India (TBI) this year. The society has an office and a computer for record-keeping, and is about to obtain a revolving corpus from TBI. Each member contributes towards group savings and also individual savings. Each STG owns a biometric card as well. The daily produce from the society is about 2,000 kg to 3,000 kg.



"We want to process our own leaves and focus on organic tea processing. We will take all measures to maintain quality. For sure, we don't want to be dependent on BLFs anymore. We definitely want better returns for our labour," said the members firmly.



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## TMCO (Second Amendment) Order, 2015, A Financial Setback to Small Tea Growers?

In October 2015, the Ministry of Commerce, through second amendment of Tea (Marketing) Control (Amendment) Order (TMCO), 2015, stipulated all registered tea manufacturers to sell 50 per cent of manufactured tea through public auction.

Earlier, in May the Ministry had mandated to route of 70 per cent of manufactured tea through public auction to Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs)

Reducing the percentage of manufactured tea sale from 70 to 50 per cent puts Small Tea Growers (STGs) in financially vulnerable situation. STGs are dependent on Bought Leaf Factories and Estate Factories for processing their leaves. A lower percentage of manufactured tea sales at public auction translate into poor price realization for STGs.

Registered under TMCO, BLFs are mandated to follow the price sharing formula for fixing the price of green leaf. But when less percentage of made-tea goes into public auction, transparency gets compromised. The effect is manifested with regard to quantity and quality also getting adversely impacted. Facilitating an accurate minimum support price also receives a setback.

CEC's field information reveals that there are instances when BLFs sell as

much as 90 per cent of their production through private channels and fetch better price compared to auction, but due to lack of transparency, this data is not fed in to calculate the price of green leaf.

A lower percentage of manufactured tea at public auction doesn't prove remunerative for STGs.



## UTUC Raises Concerns on Wages of Workers and Abandoning of Tea Gardens



employers for income and survival as well as for other fundamental needs such as access to clean drinking water, electricity supply, sanitation, primary education, and maternity benefits. Increasing closure of plantations comes as an assault on the lives and livelihoods

strongly highlighted in the discussion.

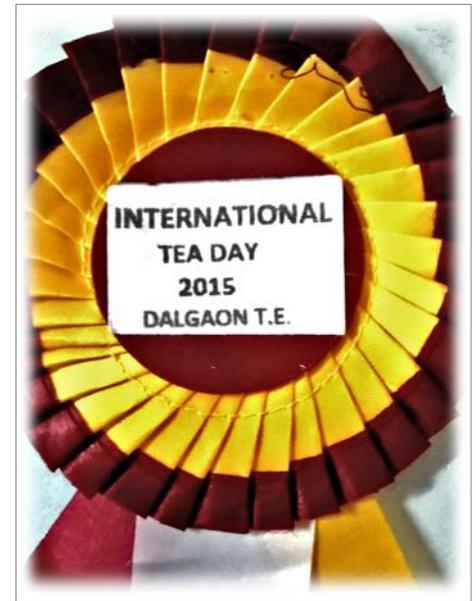
The open session was attended by about 400 tea workers, most of whom were women, state- and district-level representatives of UTUC, other mainstream trade union representatives, factory managers, social activists, and academicians from North Bengal University.

An open session was organised by United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) on 15 December, International Tea Day, at Dalgaon Tea Estate, Birpara, Jalpaiguri district (West Bengal) to discuss issues pertaining to plantation workers.

Workers in the organised sector of tea plantations continue to live in deplorable conditions owing to poor wages and apathy of employers in providing basic amenities. Tea gardens are getting closed and abandoned, jeopardising lives and livelihoods of workers, who have no other source of income. The tea workers are entirely dependent on their

of several thousand workers tied to the plantations.

The discussion agenda included issues related to ensuring basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, providing a salary of Rs 15,000 per month, and making drinking water, sanitation, and education accessible. The other aspects that were discussed included employment scope for youngsters belonging to families of tea workers, and extending their sphere of rights. Reopening of abandoned tea gardens and stopping the starvation deaths and torture of innocent girl children and young women in tea gardens were



## India Plans to Pep up Tea Exports Abroad

The Indian tea industry, in association with Tea Board, has drawn up plans to intensify promotional activities in global markets like Kazakhstan, Russia, the United States, China, Iran, Egypt and Latin America – KRUCIEL, in short – to boost its annual exports.

It also plans to develop a 'single estate' and marquee brands for the overseas markets and embark on promotion through tea houses and tea boutiques in prime overseas locations.

The aim is to take exports to 300 million kg in the next 10 years and achieve higher price through value addition and better product mix, said AK Bhargava, chairman of the Indian Tea Association and managing director of Apeejay

Tea. The industry wants to adopt the 'Make in India' policy by procuring third-party packaging business from private-label brands for supermarkets in the West.

India's tea exports in 2014 fell to 207 million kg from 219 million kg in 2013, owing to a loss of crop during the peak months. In 2015, while exports were initially sluggish in the first half, they started to improve since and are expected to cross 215 million kg. In the domestic market too, the Indian tea industry is trying to beef up its presence to increase per-capita consumption, which is languishing at 733 gm, which is lower when compared to neighbouring countries.

([www.economictimes.indiatimes.com](http://www.economictimes.indiatimes.com))

## Tocklai Institute Studies the Impact of Climate Change on Tea

As an agricultural product, tea will not be immune to the impact of changes to climate. Scientists at the Tocklai Tea Research Institute are preparing for this future.

Researchers have collected more than 200 tea plant varieties and developed 33 additional clones from the parent plants. They have placed the plants in chambers where the temperature and carbon levels can be adjusted and varied over time. The experiments are in response to data that annual rainfall in Assam has dropped

200 mm in the last century and temperatures are rising. Beyond the overall reduction in precipitation, other climate changes have impacted tea growing, including wild swings between drought and unusually heavy rains. Too much rain can reduce photosynthesis, which can affect tea flavour. Too little rain hurts overall production levels. Rising temperatures can increase the impact of pest damage and plant diseases.

(Source: World Tea News)

## Tea Production under the Weather

Erratic weather has hampered tea output in Assam and West Bengal as the two largest tea-producing states saw a dip in production to 25-30 million kg.

"There's a definite shortage of tea this year – production has slipped to 25-30 million kg. Every year, domestic consumption is rising by 30 million kg. So, if we take the drop in production and rise in consumption, the shortage could be 50-55 million kg," DP Maheshwari, managing director, Jay Shree Tea & Industries, told Economic Times.

Tea prices have appreciated by Rs 4-5 per kg at the auctions since October.

At present, leading packet tea players such as Tata Global Beverages and HUL are buying heavily at the Kolkata and Guwahati auctions for meeting the demand. "They are buying because even if there's a shortage of good-quality tea, they can offer the same quality to its discerning consumers," said Maheshwari.

Indian tea companies can also gain in the coming season as the Kenyan crop hasn't been adequate this year – output in the first nine months of 2015 fell to 271.4 million.

## Call for an International Body to Address Concerns of Small Tea Growers

Although more than two-thirds of the world's tea output originates from small growers, there is no agency yet to represent the interests and needs of small tea cultivators. In an effort to form an agency, in November, an inter-session meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Milan, Italy, took place.

Representatives from countries including India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Malawi, and Indonesia submitted a report from the Working Group on Tea Smallholders.

The group led the call for a new organisation, a confederation that can look out for the key interests and needs of small growers. Other countries represented at the meeting included Japan, China, Turkey, Argentina, Canada, and the United States. The proposed name for the group is Confederation of International Tea Small Holders.

'Price realisation' is the core issue for these growers. There is a need for support on the back-end to help small growers recoup the expenses incurred in tea cultivation.

The small tea growers need to efficiently and consistently grow high-quality crops with reasonable production costs and with some opportunities for direct product sales.

In Sri Lanka, 73 per cent of all tea grown is from

small share farmers. In Kenya, small tea growers produce 60 per cent of the tea. The numbers stand at 47 per cent in Indonesia and 36 per cent in India.

The need for support for small farms has been a priority of the FAO. The discussion will continue at the May 2016 FAO meeting in Kenya.

([www.worldteanews.com](http://www.worldteanews.com))

## Tea Export of Indonesia Spirals Down

A combination of weather, competing cash crops, and economics is expected to cut Indonesia's tea production by 40 per cent this year, reducing exports to 48,000 metric tons.

In a report published by the Jakarta Globe, the Indonesia Tea Council predicted a 2015 crop of 120,000 metric tons with exports falling under 50,000 mt for the first time in decades.

Tea production has declined an average 1.7 per cent annually for the past few years, according to Karyudi, director of the Research Center for Tea and Quinine.

Competing cash crops such as palm groves used to produce palm oil convinced many smaller farmers to abandon tea.

(Source: [www.worldteanews.com](http://www.worldteanews.com))

## Sri Lanka to Allow Tea Imports

The apex tea industry body Tea Exporters' Association (TEA) lobbied for and received approval for the much-discussed tea hub in Sri Lanka in the 2016 Budget. Liberalising the industry would allow tea exporters to import and blend foreign teas for re-export. The concept of a 'tea hub' has been in debate for more than two decades amongst the stakeholders in the country.

Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake, while delivering the Budget 2016 speech at the Parliament, said that in the last few months the tea industry had made strong submissions to liberalise tea imports to Sri Lanka. He said that Sri Lanka should move towards being a tea-blending country.

"As such, with the aim of developing Sri Lanka as a tea hub, I propose to liberalise tea imports to the country within a regulatory framework with a view to encouraging value addition through blending, etc.," he said.

Karunanayake further added, "I note that strict labelling requirements will be made mandatory so that the brand name Ceylon Tea remains uncompromised."

A Working Committee consisting of both the government and private sector officials will be established for the purpose.

(Collected from various sources)



## Organic Tea Production

*Dr Soumen Palit, an alumnus of IIT Kharagpur, has worked in different industries in various capacities - as chief scientist, as research and development head, and as technical director. He has developed and disseminated modern agricultural technologies related to agricultural industries and tea industries, in India as well as abroad. Dr Palit, currently director of Eco Yes Technologies Pvt. Ltd, shares with Centre for Education and Communication a few nuggets of information related to organic tea farming.*



Q: What does organic tea cultivation imply?

A: Organic tea production involves growing a healthy bush and conserving natural enemies of insect pests, diseases, and weeds to minimise crop losses caused by them. This is done by following all modern agronomic

no use of chemicals?

A: Organic tea requires around 20 per cent lower input costs by way of not applying chemicals, fertilizers, and pesticides. In organic farming, use of synthetic chemicals is prohibited. Pest management is done by: (i) cultural or agronomic practice, (ii) mechanical practice, (iii) biological practice, or (iv) application of organically acceptable botanical extract or some chemicals such as copper sulphate and soft soap. Organic fertilisers generally used in organic farming are time-tested materials for improving the fertility and productivity of the soil.

They also have a corrective effect on adverse soil conditions caused by the continuous and excessive use of inorganic fertilisers.

Q: How does a farmer authenticate that his/her tea has been organically grown?

A: There is a certification process for producers of organic food and other organic agricultural products like tea and coffee. In general, any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including seed suppliers, farmers, food processors, retailers, and restaurants. Requirements vary from country to country, and generally involve a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging, and shipping. Such requirements include:

- ♣ Avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives, etc) and genetically modified organisms
- ♣ Use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for a number of years (often, three or more)
- ♣ Keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail)
- ♣ Maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products
- ♣ Undergoing periodic on-site inspections

Q: What purpose does certification serve?

A: Organic certification addresses a growing worldwide demand for organic food. It is intended to assure quality and prevent fraud. For organic producers, certification identifies suppliers of products approved for use in certified operations. For consumers, 'certified organic' serves as a product assurance, similar to 'low fat', '100 per cent whole wheat', or 'no artificial preservatives'. Certification is essentially aimed at regulating and facilitating the sale of organic products to consumers. Individual certification bodies have their own service marks, which can act as branding for consumers.

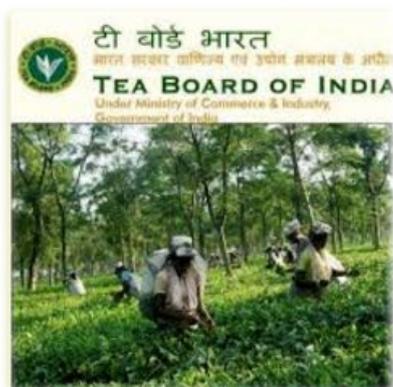


practices but completely eliminating synthetic pesticides and fertilisers.

Q: So, organic tea cultivation means absolutely



## Tea Board of India, Under Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Modalities and Scheme Guidelines, Tea Development & Promotion Scheme For the XII Plan Period – 31.03.2017



### Organic Tea Production

Due to growing demand for organic tea, it is proposed in the 12th Plan that organic tea production will be encouraged. Financial support will be extended by way of capital subsidy on the investment to be made for new planting/replanting or conversion from conventional to organic cultivation. The subsidy to be provided will be 25 per cent more than the subsidy applicable for conventional extension/replanting/replacement planting, except for those regions for which cost of organic cultivation has been worked out separately.

#### 6.2 One-Time Grant for Common Facilities to Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

6.2.a. Objective: To encourage small tea growers in collectivisation and formation of SHGs to move up in the value chain.

#### 6.2.b. Conditions for Setting up of Self-Help Groups by Small Growers

- Each SHG will have at least 30 small tea

growers as members under its command. Individual growers holding tea area up to 10.12 hectares (25 acres) are considered to be small growers.

- Minimum command area of the SHG will not be less than 20 hectares.
- All members of the SHG must hold valid identification cards issued by Tea Board.
- Each SHG must include one development officer from Tea Board as ex-officio member in its management committee. This committee will meet at regular monthly intervals.
- Each SHG must have a valid bank account in its name. In addition, the SHG must open a joint account with Tea Board for operating the revolving corpus.
- Any expenditure to be charged to revolving corpus shall be incurred only with the prior approval of the Tea Board; also, for this, the proposal must have the endorsement of the management committee.

#### 6.2.c. Assistance to Small Growers' Self-Help Groups

For holistic and sustained development of small growers, the operational module given below will be adopted during the XII Plan period - this module aims at establishment of proper leaf-collection systems, transport arrangements, and proper partnership arrangements with tea-processing factories. In order to overcome the problem of financial constraints in purchasing and application of field inputs, a revolving corpus is provided to each self-help groups so that funds are available all the time for

procurement and timely application of required inputs. By putting in place an escrow arrangement, the corpus will get replenished from the green leaf price fetched by the growers.

Tea Board will park a certain amount in advance as revolving corpus in the bank account to be opened jointly with the concerned self-help group (SHG), with an agreement that the bank will release the funds to the SHG only with prior approval of the Tea Board towards the purchase of the inputs. (The amount to be deposited by Tea Board as revolving corpus will be worked out @ Rs 15,000 for every hectare of tea area under the command of the SHG.)

Self-help groups will enter into an agreement with a tea factory for a) purchase of green leaf supplied by the SHG without any quantity restriction so long as the leaf so supplied conforms with the leaf standard fixed by the factory; b) payment of green leaf price as per the agreed price-sharing formula notified by Tea Board; and c) deducting from the green leaf price payable to SHG the actual cost incurred by the SHG towards purchase of inputs, and remitting the amount so deducted to the revolving corpus bank account. (The amount to be deducted from the green leaf price will be notified to the concerned factory by Tea Board as and when the amount is withdrawn from the revolving corpus bank account by the SHG.)

6.2.d. The following are the details of financial assistance that will be extended to SHGs under common facilities:



## Modalities and Scheme Guidelines, Tea Development & Promotion Scheme For the XII Plan period

Sl No.	Item	Remarks
1	Revolving fund for field inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, and sprayers	Ceiling limit of Rs 15,000 per ha
2	Capital cost for input storage godown and office	Ceiling limit of Rs 100,000 per SHG for storage godown and office of the SHG
3	Leaf-collection shed @ 1 shed for every 5,000 kg leaf harvested in a day	100 per cent of the actual cost or the maximum ceiling amount of Rs 50,000/shed, whichever is lower, shall be provided as subsidy
4	Two weighing scales per SHG	Two weighing scales per SHG
5	Plastic crates and nylon carry bags for carrying the green leaf from leaf-collection shed to tea factory	Plastic crate @ Rs 300 for each crate and Rs 40 for each nylon bag. The number of crates will be limited @ 1 crate for every 20 kg of green leaf handled in a day, and nylon bags @ 1 bag for every 15 kg of green leaf
6	Pruning machines @ one pruning machine for every 10 ha of tea area owned by members of the SHG	100 per cent of the actual cost or the maximum ceiling amount of Rs 40,000/machine, whichever is lower, shall be provided as subsidy
7	Transport vehicle (tractors/trailers/LCV @ one vehicle for every 2,000 kg of green leaf handled (during June to Sept)	@ 50 per cent subsidy on actual cost
8	Harvesting machine	@ 1 machine for every 10 ha owned by the members of SHG. 50 per cent of the actual cost of the machine to be provided as subsidy
9	For setting up new factory by SHG/ cooperative/producers' company	Detailed guidelines furnished at Point No. 6.3 on . Setting up of Factories -micro/mini/Big factories ( <a href="http://www.teaboard.gov.in/pdf/schemes/Modalities-and-scheme%20guidelines-12th-Plan.pdf">http://www.teaboard.gov.in/pdf/schemes/Modalities-and-scheme%20guidelines-12th-Plan.pdf</a> )
10	Desktop computer	One desktop computer along with one printer and other accessories/peripherals for each society for maintaining records of the society. Subsidy limited to 80 per cent of the actual cost subject to a ceiling of Rs 40,000
11	Tea nursery grant	Tea nursery grant @ Rs 2 per plant to be raised by SHG (planting materials and shade trees raised in the nursery shall be in accordance with TRA/UPASI-TRF specifications)
12	Annual awards for best-performing SHGs	The best SHG, STG, and BLF from each tea region will be given a recognition certificate and cash awards ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 1 lakh, at appropriate functions to be organised by Tea Board annually
13	Engagement of NGOs for forming SHGs	NGOs/accredited institutions with good track records will be empanelled by the Board for motivating small growers to organise themselves into primary producer groups/self-help groups. A group-formation incentive @ Rs 500 per ha will be paid to the NGO, provided each PPG/SHG owns a command area of at least 20 ha and the membership of small growers is not less than 30
14	Micro irrigation	Subsidy will be paid @ 40 per cent of the investment made towards irrigation facilities including procurement of water pumps, sprinkler irrigation equipment, check dams, etc. While this subsidy is admissible for individual tea growers, it can also be made available to SHGs having a contiguous area that can be brought under the coverage of common irrigation facilities



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