



# trustea

## INDIA SUSTAINABLE TEA PROGRAM



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is an ambitious initiative to develop and implement a sustainability Code for the Indian domestic tea market.

This initiative to transform the Indian tea industry is based on industry realities and globally accepted sustainability principles.

The program, led by the Tea Board of India is jointly funded by The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) and Tata Global Beverages Limited (TGBL).

Solidaridad and Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) are the implementing partners.

Rainforest Alliance (RA) is the technical advisor.

Tea Board of India supports the programme and strongly believes that the effective implementation of the trustea program will significantly improve the social and economic conditions of the tea industry whilst protecting the environment. As a result consumers will be assured of getting a safe and good cup of tea. Securing the long term sustainability of the Indian tea industry will benefit all stakeholders in the tea industry.

The program launched in July 2013 targets 50% of the All India tea production from over 600 factories positively impacting the livelihoods of 500,000 tea plantation workers and 40,000 smallholders.

The India-specific sustainability tea Code has been developed from the industry, by the industry and for the industry.

The program offers producers training in Code compliance free of charge, through three Farm Support Centers (FSCs) located at Tinsukia (Assam), Siliguri (West Bengal) and Coonoor (Tamil Nadu).

IDH acts as the program coordinator. It aims to convene the key stakeholders in the industry in close collaboration with the Tea Board of India to drive behavioural change in the Indian tea industry and also at institutionalization of sector wide cooperation.

The lead implementer Solidaridad in conjunction with ETP, is responsible for the coordination, facilitation and overall supervision of Code development and program implementation. The activities comprise resource allocation, budget management, farm support centre management and verification processes.

### A. WHAT IS trustea THE INDIA SUSTAINABLE TEA PROGRAM?

The India Sustainable Tea Program is a locally-developed sustainability Code for tea. This meaningful, cost-effective and practical Code does not compromise globally accepted core sustainability standards.

It is envisioned that compliance with the Code will not only improve competitiveness for tea farms but also make it possible for them to comply with national regulations and in future international sustainability standards. The applicable control points under 11 chapters need to be adhered to within a three year period, resulting in complete compliance. The verification under the Code provides consumers with the assurance of responsible production and provides producers the opportunity to credibly demonstrate this to their customers.

### B. WHY DO WE NEED trustea?

Increasing number of consumers around the world are insisting that the products they buy are made from sustainable raw material. The effective delivery of the India Sustainable Tea program will:

- Ensure the long term sustainability of the Indian tea industry, prepare for rising consumer demands for food safety and sustainably produced Indian tea.
- Increase competitiveness of the Indian tea industry.
- Improve the international image of the Indian tea industry.
- Realize livelihood improvement of tea workers.
- Improve the tea growing practices of the fast growing smallholder segment and mainstreaming smallholders and small estates into the sustainability fold.

### C. WHAT IS PATH BREAKING IN trustea THE INDIA SUSTAINABLE TEA PROGRAM ?

- **Ownership:** The Code is developed, owned and managed by Indian tea industry stakeholders.
- **Food safety:** Extensive focus on food safety components integrated into the Code.
- **Good manufacturing practices (GMP):** Tea manufacturing and other effective practices covering tea factories integrated into the Code.
- **Lower certification cost:** Innovative verification systems of external audits in alternate years and reduced cost due to the presence of locally-trained auditors.
- **Support:** Investing in experienced field staff and field offices to assist producers in Code compliance.

### D. WHO CAN BE VERIFIED UNDER trustea THE INDIA SUSTAINABLE TEA PROGRAM CODE?

The programme is open to all the Indian tea plantations regardless of their size and ownership, bought leaf factory (BLFs), and the independent producer groups together with

the factory. The entry-point of the Code for compliance will be the factories in estates, BLFs or grower group representatives having processing arrangements, who then work with production sites and smallholders respectively.

#### **E. WHO SUPPORTS trustea THE INDIA SUSTAINABLE TEA PROGRAM CODE?**

- trustea is supported by the trustea Program Committee (TPC) and trustea Advisory Committee (TAC), both constituted of key Indian tea industry stakeholders committed to work together to enhance tea program accountability and credibility. The Tea Board of India chairs both the TPC and TAC.

- Both TPC and TAC are the forums comprising official representatives of key tea industry stakeholders - Tea Board, CCPA, ITA, UPASI, FAITTA, Tea Brokers and National Federation of Small Tea Growers / CISTA.

The Indian tea industry recognizes the need of the journey towards achieving complete sustainability.

#### **F. HOW DOES trustea RELATE TO OTHER SIMILAR CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS (ETP/RA/UTZ/FLO ETC.)?**

The trustea Code has largely been modeled on current internationally recognized standards while taking into consideration Indian realities on the farm and in markets.

The India sustainability verification Code is benchmarked against RA, UTZ and FLO; it highlights steps to be taken by producers to move from compliance with the India Code to international certification Codes should they so desire.

**Benchmarking trustea** – trustea is benchmarked by ITC (International Trade Centre) Standards (Joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations) and in the initial findings, trustea shows a strong alignment with the Rainforest Alliance and UTZ from the preliminary mapping done through the ITC Standard Map database.

#### **G. HOW IS THE trustea CODE DEVELOPED?**

- The Code is developed in accordance with globally accepted principles and local stakeholder involvements including the Tea Board of India, with clear social, economic and environmental objectives. The Code is administered through TPC and TAC.

- The Code is based on Indian realities and existing legal provisions. References have been drawn from existing global standards like Rainforest Alliance, Ethical Tea Partnership, UTZ Certified as well as the Unilever Sustainable Agriculture Code.

- A Standing Code Development Committee (CDC) comprising experts well conversant with the sustainability standards continuously monitor the implementation of the programme and reviews the Code from time to time to make the code a dynamic one matching changing international standards.

- As part of Code development, field tests have been carried out in six pilots, in three regions-West Bengal, Assam

and Nilgiris covering large and small estates as well as smallholdings. The pilots have provided practical information on what works and what are the bottlenecks in reaching the objectives of the Code.

#### **H. HOW DOES ONE GET VERIFIED UNDER THE trustea CODE?**

- The Code is designed towards a progressive achievement of complete compliance by year three. The “Mandatory” (highlighted in red) and “other criteria” have been divided into four parts covering eleven chapters. In each segment, the verified unit will need to meet 100 per cent of Mandatory control points and 50 per cent of other criteria in year 1, 65 per cent in year 2 and 80 per cent in year 3. The total compliance percentage points (Mandatory + Other criteria) in year one shall not be less than 82%, in year two 88% and in year three 93%.

- In the first year, the entity entering for verification needs to undertake external verification audits by auditors approved and empaneled with the Code Secretariat as per the verification protocol and then such audits will be conducted every alternate year. In the years with no external audits, the verified unit must conduct internal audits and share the audit report with concerned Certification Body that carried out the verification in the first year and with trustea Code Secretariat.

- An audit protocol has been created which specifies requirements for audit bodies, auditors, internal auditors, Internal Documentation System (IDS) managers, and other interested parties on procedures for trustea audit. Observance of these requirements is intended to ensure that audit bodies carry out trustea verification in a competent, consistent and impartial manner.

- To support the audit process under trustea all the auditors being nominated for the trustea verification audit (by the Certification Bodies empaneled with trustea secretariat) have been trained according to the requirements of the Code so as to enable them to carry out the verification audit as per the agreed trustea audit protocol.

#### **I. WHY JOIN trustea INDIA SUSTAINABLE TEA PROGRAM?**

trustea India Sustainable Tea Program supports smallholders and estates in improving their competitiveness by positively influencing the scale of production, farm organization, processing, new technologies, supply chain development and improving the livelihoods of smallholders and estate workers.

- Improved consumer safety leading to reputational benefits and better consumer loyalty.

- Better productivity addressing supply security.

- Improved hygiene in factories addressing food safety issues.

- Controlled and safe handling/use of pesticides.

- Improved environment.

- Improved image of Indian tea locally and globally.

## THE FARM SUPPORT CENTRES (FSCs)

Under the program three Farm Support Centres have been set up at the following places for closely working with tea estates, BLFs, producer associations, Tea Board offices and tea research institutions like TRA, UPASI-TRF, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) and district authorities.

- a. **Assam: Tinsukia**  
Bye-Lane 1, Sector 3, Bordoloi Nagar, Tinsukia:786125  
Tel: 0374-234-2502  
Email: Diggvijay.Jamwal@solidaridadnetwork.org.
- b. **West Bengal: Siliguri**  
Purnima Niwas, Jotinagar, Ward No.41, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mile,  
Sevok Road, Siliguri- 734 001  
Tel: +91 9933011270  
Email: rohin@solidaridadnetwork.org.
- c. **South India:Coonor**  
Harsham, 265D, Brooklands, Coonor 643 101.  
Tel: 04232233772  
Email: Arjun.V.M.@solidaridadnetwork.org.

**The main function of the FSCs will be:**

### 1. Technical support on-field

- Identify specific bottlenecks for adopting sustainable production amongst smallholders and estates and provide advice and solutions.
- Provide tailor-made solutions to smallholders on good agricultural practices in collaboration with the Tea Research Institutes.
- Set up and manage demo plots for imparting practical training of smallholders and trainers.
- Strengthen smallholder cooperatives.

### 2. Support smallholders in forming or strengthening groups and associations

- Train farmers in the governance and management of the group/association.
- Assist in the implementation of the sustainability strategy within the group.
- Improve the participation of women in smallholder groups.

### 3. Provide training to trainers

A series of trainings are being conducted by FSCs with the purpose to develop competent peer sustainability trainers with the skills to design and implement training programs.

### 4. Provide support to estates and smallholders in preparing for audits and undertaking improvements

- Carrying out gap audits.
- Extend hand holding Support in improving compliance where the FSC team work along with the trainers and farmers.

## trustea INTERIM SECRETARIAT

The lead implementing partner, Solidaridad, is hosting the interim Secretariat of trustea in Kolkata. The Secretariat is located at

### trustea Secretariat:

158/5 Prince Anwar Shah Road, Kolkata - 700 045  
Tel: 033 4060 to 2209 and 2211  
Fax: 033 4060 2206  
Email: boriah@solidaridadnetwork.org.

The Secretariat besides providing communication and secretarial support also manages a website: ([www.trustea.org](http://www.trustea.org)) for India Sustainable Tea Program and set up Code management systems.

### Plant Protection Code of Tea Board

The Secretariat also represents trustea in the technical committee set up by Tea Board for reviewing the Plant protection code at periodic interval. The latest version (Ver. 6.0) of the PPC is available in the trustea website.

The program is open for all to join and participate in, with all being welcome to be a part of the change!

### For more information, please contact:

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