



# *trustea* Sustainable Tea Foundation

## 12<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting - 21 Jan, 2025

### Agenda and Minutes

| Agenda   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening remarks</li> <li>• Executive summary</li> <li>• Functional reports</li> <li>• New structure &amp; plans</li> <li>• Chemical compliance update &amp; plans</li> <li>• AOB</li> </ul> |
| <b>Program Updates:</b>  |
| System Assurance   |
| IT   |
| Regen agri roll out  |
| Communication  |
| Closing Remarks  |

**Chaired by:** Jagjeet Singh Kandal - IDH

**Attendees:**

| Constitution   | Member organisation | Representative             |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Tea Buyers and Packers   | HUL                 | Mandeep Singh Tuli         |
|  |                     | Daleram Gulia              |
|  | TCPL                | Vishwa Bandhu Bhattacharya |
|  | GTPP                | Nikhil Shah                |
| Civil Society /Non-Governmental/<br>Multilateral Organizations | ETP                 | Ranjana Das                |
| Research / Academia  | TRA                 | Joydeep Phukan             |
| Tea Producers & Manufacturers                                  | ITA                 | Sandeep Ghosh              |
|  | CISTA               | Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty    |
| <i>Ex-officio</i> member                                       | tSTF                | Rajesh Bhuyan              |

| <b>trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation</b> |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| <i>Trustea</i>                            | Anandita Ray Mukherjee |
|   | Dipanjan Sarkar        |
|   | AB Siva Kumar          |
|   | Muktajyoti Barua       |
|   | Avimanyu Kundu         |
|   | Dr. Antara Bera        |

Leave of absence:

| <b>Constitution</b>  | <b>Member organisation</b> | <b>Representative</b> |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Tea Producers & Manufacturers                                  | ABLTMA                     | Gautam Beria          |
| Research / Academia  | UPASI                      | Sanjith R. Nair       |
| Civil Society /Non-Governmental/<br>Multilateral Organizations | UN Women                   | Poulomi Pal           |

## Minutes

### Agenda item 1:

- **Opening Remarks:** Jagjeet welcomed the participants and stated the Anti-trust statement.

### Agenda item 2:

- **Executive Summary:**
  - I. Rajesh walked the council through the key highlights of the respective functions for 2024.
  - II. 2025 AOP was presented & approved.
  - III. 2025 Annual Budget was presented & approved.

### Points discussed:

Mandeep: Highlighted 4 key points

- Ascertain impact assessment & value in the lives of STG
- MRL failure reasons in case of certified BLF
- Develop governance & quality of compliance
- Performance culture driven orientation & evaluation of employees

Rajesh: One of Big Four agencies to be appointed to bring out Impact Report in the lives of STG, MRL training to continue & Wagh Bakri proposed to support training/retraining initiatives.

Root cause of MRL issues as submitted by the entities to be shared.

Bijoy: Appreciated the training initiatives and suggested more STG training on legal chemical use compliance. Offered to support such initiatives.

Jagjeet: Suggested to include Estates who have prolonged association in the impact assessment report

Rajesh: The HR consultant is being taken on board to revamp the HR processes and roll out the systems. The consultant will also do training of employees and proposed HR Asst Mgr.

| Sl. No. | Action Required                                       | Action By | Timeline |
|---------|---|-----------|----------|
| 1       | Focus areas of MEL exercise to be shared with council | Rajesh    | Feb '25  |

### Agenda item 3:

- **New structure & plans:**

The new plans & structure was presented by Rajesh & approved.

### Points discussed:

Jagjeet: Suggested code of conduct to be signed by employees & ensure yearly renewal

Viswa: Suggested data security to be core competency & hire experts to firewall the IT infra to prevent data leak & system vulnerability. To ensure annual re confirmation of the code of conduct and ethics for certification agencies as well as employees.

Rajesh: Shared that budget for this year will not be increased in the new system and non-renewal of existing contracts of Implementation Partners. Hiring of a system manager and HR resource to improve governance and HR processes was mentioned. Plan is to retain about 60% of performing and ethically committed resources and recruit 40% new hires in the new training structure. Individuals identified with adverse findings in the ethics investigation will not be considered for any role in the new training system and also in the Certification Agencies.

An urgent need for new certification bodies and the revision of existing contracts. Four new agencies have been shortlisted. Requested for suggestions on new Certification agencies, if any.

Jagjeet: trustea to share the details with remarks of the shortlisted agencies.

Rajesh: Further discussion will be held and details shared at the earliest.

Nikhil Shah: The Data Security systems is a legal requirement as per Digital Data Protection Act and has to be maintained accordingly. GTPP can help in this process.

Rajesh: A data security agency to be onboarded immediately to review and implement necessary changes.

Vishwa: Emphasized the importance of data security and the need for accountability, suggesting the hiring of expertise if necessary. Rajesh informed action is being initiated on this. Pointed out the importance of governance and robustness of operations, with a focus on digitization and trust management.

Rajesh: Informed action is being initiated on this. Also provided an update on the recruitment process for three positions, with the aim of completing interviews by the end of February and onboarding new hires by April.

| Sl. No. | Action Required   | Action By | Timeline |
|---------|---|-----------|----------|
| 1       | Hire experts to conduct an extensive data security study and implement immediate fixes for data protection. | Rajesh    | Feb 25   |
| 2       | Develop criteria for evaluating new certification bodies and circulate to council for input.                | Rajesh    | Feb 25   |

**Agenda item 4:**

- **System assurance:** Anandita shared detailed update on code revision, action plan, training, New CB enrolment & ISEAL
- Informed MEL exercise finalised with KPMG as advised in the previous Council meeting.

**Points discussed:**

Jagjeet: Suggested putting down CB criteria for evaluation & debar past ethical violators from working with trustea through any other agencies.

Daleram: The current implementation manual for V3 requires improvement. The document should be comprehensive and robust.

Rajesh: The design and roll out of final implementation guide has been kickstarted and will be completed on priority.

Jagjeet: The manual should be simple and user friendly.

Daleram: The understanding on regenerative agriculture should be improved amongst entities. Field training to be arranged.

Rajesh: Apart from classroom training, opportunities will be provided to visit pilot regenerative agriculture locations for practical learning.

Informed that the training module for the auditors was based on classroom training. Now the training will have a mandatory field training component. The process will have eLearning qualification followed by class room training and will end with a defined field training module. Certification as trustea auditor will only be given after successful completion of these three modules.

A complete module on ethics and compliance will be added to the auditors training programme.

| Sl. No. | Action Required   | Action By | Timeline |
|---------|---|-----------|----------|
| 1       | Share assessment questionnaire for approval prior to MEL survey rollout     | Anandita  | Feb '25  |
| 2       | Set up call & discuss new implementation guidelines draft under preparation | trustea   | Feb '25  |

**Agenda item 5:**

- **Communication:** Dipanjan provided an update on the various social media stats, consumer ad campaign, comms initiatives, webinar, media & PR engagements & E-learning videos

**Points discussed:**

Rajesh: Focus to shift from SMS to WhatsApp for communication outreach in regional lang for STG as well as auto messaging in TCMS.

Daleram: Review quality of social media communications for improvement opportunities. Trustea to explore how to increase engagement on LinkedIn

#### Agenda item 6:

- **IT:** Rajesh shared an update on tracetea, E-learning & teaplus+.

#### Points discussed:

Daleram: Emphasised that compliance to legal chemical usage is a critical issue & enquired on ways to improve teaplus+ app reach

Rajesh: teaplus+ has become an integral part of all training, to be part of STG implementation training henceforth.

Flex with QR code for teaplus to be implemented at all trustea verified BLF premises

#### Agenda item 7:

- **Regen Agri practices:** Dr Antara shared progress on Ver 3 field implementation, focus on regen practices, soil management.

Informed that 33 estates have been certified through V3 after adoption of regenerative agriculture and energy management requirements. The focus is now on improving soil cover and on-farm composting

#### Points discussed:

- Arrangement of practical field visit for training of the new entities.
- All V3 entities have implemented regenerative agriculture practices.
- The carbon footprint of trustea verified entities will be calculated through the TEC app to see the impact of regen agri and energy management activities of trustea code V3.

#### Agenda item 8:

- **Chemical compliance update & plans:** Rajesh shared the tea sampling data collected & its corresponding results.

Sought the opinion of the members on the continuation of the sampling programme for which a budgetary provision had already been made in the budget proposal.

The meeting also discussed the need for more integration and coordination in efforts for greater impact of the pesticide training of STGs.

#### Points discussed:

Jagjeet: Suggested to conduct root causes analysis for BLF & estates on sampling failures, conduct resampling, educate & extend the sampling to South as well.

Arijit: Suggested taking into confidence district administration bodies, associations to take part in the training to ensure greater compliance.

Rajesh: Informed that the training calendar will be shared with ITA.

Actions will be planned as advised. trustea had conducted close to 210 training sessions last year and planned to continue this level of engagement as discussed.

| Sl. No. | Action Required  | Action By | Timeline    |
|---------|--|-----------|-------------|
| 1       | Increase focus on raising awareness about MRLs through seminars and targeted communications with entities. | trustea   | Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 |
| 2       | Coordinate with tea associations to get slots in their monthly meetings to discuss chemical compliance.    | trustea   | Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 |
| 3       | Share chemical compliance training calendars with Sandeep for coordination with district administration.   | trustea   | Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 |
| 4       | Share details of teaplus+ app to Sandeep for potential distribution to association members.                | trustea   | Feb 25      |

**Council Chairman:**

Since the two year term of the current Chairman is over, Rajesh to write to Council members on course of action.

**Next Council Meeting:** The next Council Meeting is proposed to be conducted in July 2025.

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