



**trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting- 15 July, 2024**  
**Agenda and Minutes**

<b>Agenda</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome address</li> <li>• Anti-trust statement</li> <li>• Opening remarks</li> <li>• Executive summary</li> <li>• Pesticide issue discussion</li> <li>• AOB</li> </ul>
<b>Program Updates:</b>
System Assurance
IT
Soil Health & Energy Management
Communication
Closing Remarks

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

**Attendees:**

Constitution	Member organisation	Representative
Tea Buyers and Packers	HUL	Daleram Gulia
	TCPL	Vishwa Bandhu Bhattacharya
	GTPP	Rajiv Bhargava
Civil Society /Non-Governmental/ Multilateral Organizations	UN Women	CP Navneet
		Poulomi Pal
Research / Academia	TRA	Dr B Kanrar
Tea Producers & Manufacturers	ITA	Sandip Ghosh
<i>Ex-officio</i> member	tSTF	Rajesh Bhuyan

Special Invitee	Member organisation	Representative
1	WASF	Manisha Majumdar

<b>trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation</b>	
<i>trustea</i>	Anandita Ray Mukherjee
	Dipanjan Sarkar
	Debasish Dutta
	AB Siva Kumar
	Muktajyoti Barua
	Avimanyu Kundu
	Dr. Antara Bera
	Benedict Gomes

### 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

## 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 mid-2024.
  - II. Rajesh informed that non-renewal by a large group and removal of BLF volume by Estate+BLF category has reduced volume below exit numbers coupled with slow new certifications and requested for more priority units from the buyers.
  - III. AOB for 2024 was discussed.
  - IV. Volume certification is under challenge and forecast to be 15-20% below 60 Mn kgs. Review in September 2024.

### Points discussed:

DG: Daleram gave the opinion that exit volume should be at a minimum of 975-980 Mn kgs while Jagjeet stressed on the importance of retention of existing volume and strengthening compliance.

JS: Enquired whether volume will go up to 1000 Mn kgs at exit 2024. Spoke about the importance of continuous engagement with the entities.

RB: Current forecast envisages that volume will be at a minimum of 975-980 Mn kgs at exit 2024.

Sl. No.	Action Required	Action By	Timeline
1	Plan on banned chemicals compliance	trustea	June '24
2	Implementation guide timeline	trustea	June '24
3	Impact areas for STGs with measurable objectives	trustea	July '24
4	Vol plan review	trustea	Sept '24

### Agenda item 3:

**System assurance:** Anandita shared detailed update on system assurance, proposed Ver 3 changes, ISEAL & MEL.

### Points discussed:

Anandita: 20% sampling will be retained for System Assurance Audits as before.

Daleram: 20% will be a very high sampling number

Rajesh: The number will be a combination of 10% of direct audits of entities and the rest will comprise witness of Gap closure audits and gap assessments by IP as part of the assurance system improvement plan. This is being done since it has been observed that there are non-conformities in certification audits even after the issuance of completion of capacity building by the IP. This will also help in the skill gap analysis of the IP consultants. During CB audits it was found that there are many improvements needed to be carried out

Daleram: CB are to be held accountable for auditing lapses

Rajesh: All CB country heads had direct meetings with trustea to discuss the findings of the CB performance review and the corrective actions. Another review will be done in Q3. Also new CBs will be considered for empanelment after review through CDC.

Discussion on V3 code and proposed changes:

Anandita: V3 pilot audits were done in SI and Assam.

Daleram: Enquired about the Pilot audit which could not be done in WB since this is necessary to complete the protocol.

Anandita: Informed that this was because the units selected were not ready. Expected to be ready by end July or August.

Anandita: Discussed the issues in considering intercropping as mandatory in the code and proposed removing the same.

Jagjeet: Proposed it to be retained but an explanation to be added which encompasses practices like Afforestation and other vegetative cover.

Rajesh: Informed that the complaint has to be in writing with an identified complainant for it to be considered valid under the POSH Act. However, anonymous complaints can be considered under the grievance redressal system.

Poulomi: Confirmed about the requirement of a written complaint but advised to remove the word victim in any reference related to the POSH Act to and always refer as “aggrieved person” as that is the appropriate term.

Anandita: Regarding soil test of STGs, proposed to reconsider the mandatory bioassay test of soil due to difficulties related to cost.

Daleram: Soil health monitoring is critical since STGs are a big contributor in Indian tea and regen in STGs is crucial.

Jagjeet: Advised to look into all facilities available and at government labs before taking a decision. The information can be circulated via email.

Anandita: Top management definition is being expanded to include person assigned by Top Management but to be other than local management since they lack the authority for major policy decisions that are required for program related actions like statutory requirements that need financial decision making.

Jagjeet: Representative appointed by the Board /top management can be considered for this definition.

Anandita: Clarified how the calculation will be done on area of afforestation based on the number of trees per hectare.

Vishwa Bandhu: Said that trustea should encourage the type of forestry that has good impact on the environment like Miyawaki forests.

Jagjeet: Advised to provide advice to the STGs how to plant trees and other vegetation within the constraint of their plantations so that afforestation can be undertaken for increased bio diversity.

Vishwa Bandhu: Miyawaki forests are better for sequestration of GHG, so a better option from emission reduction point of view.

Anandita: Will make the required changes to cover the suggestions.

#### **MEL report:**

Anandita: Informed the MEL report was uploaded with an Independent Assessment Statement by Consultivo.

Vishwa Bandhu: Advised to have a different approach with respect to selection of making the report as well as having a third-party independent Assessment of the report. Further, he added that getting the report made and independent assessment certified by the same agency does not add value.

Daleram: Credibility of the program is very important and trustea should look at getting the MEL report done by the Big 4.

Vishwa Bandhu: Big 4 agencies do a lot of work in sustainability. Also, from an ISEAL standpoint, credibility of the report is very important.

Rajesh: ARM will include this action of reporting of MEL by the Big 4 as part of corrective action for ISEAL audit remarks.

Daleram: suggested in including farm workers in clause S3.12 under STG checklist

Jagjeet: Advised to include forward calculation equation for afforestation area calculation to help the farms to understand what would be resultant area coverage due to afforestation.

Sl. No.	Action Required	Action By	Timeline
1	Define intercropping which constitutes shades trees & other plants also	Anandita	July '24
2	Proposal to reduce energy audit frequency from 5 to 3 yrs to ensure frequent review	Anandita	July '24
3	Set specific soil test guidelines for STGs & clarify cluster definition	Anandita/Antara	To be discussed
4	Promote Miyawaki model of afforestation to obtain max benefit	<i>trustea</i>	To be discussed with entities during Ver 3
5	Commission an independent assurance agency to ensure assurance statement credibility in MEL report and get the MEL survey done by one of the Big 4 consultancies	Anandita	Q1/2 '25 for '24 report

#### Agenda item 4:

**IT:** Debasish shared an update on existing & future tech tools, Teaplus+, STG/LTG enumeration.

#### Points discussed:

Dalaram and Jagjeet: Enquired about the number of STGs registered in TCMS being higher than the number of certified STGs.

Debasish: Clarified that the number includes both certified and those registered in the system pipeline of implementation work.

Dalaram: Said the number is very significant should be used for impact validation.

Rajesh: LFA of MEL for STGs will be relooked and required changes made to reflect the required points for impact evaluation.

Debasish: Tea plus app for farmers has been launched and took the team through the app features.

Dalaram: For banned chemicals the purpose of usage of banned chemicals should be removed and replaced by the harmful impact of the chemicals.

Dalaram: Updated that pre harvest interval has been incorporated. But this was shown individual chemical wise.

Jagjeet: The consolidated one-page Pre-Harvest Interval sheet of PPC should also be incorporated.

Poulomi: Requested for addition of links to UN Women information of women's safety in the app. Suggested a discussion on this.

Debasish: Informed will connect to discuss further.

Dalaram: The STG enumeration timeline is not meeting the expectations

Debasish: will engage with all the service providers to work out how to reduce the completion timeline.

Sl. No.	Action Required	Action By	Timeline
1	Modify Banned chemicals description with harmful effects on environment & life	Debasish	June '24
2	Incorporate monthly events calendar as per TRA guidelines for STGs	Debasish	July '24
3	Review timeline for STG enumeration project	Debasish	July '24
4	Explore total carbon footprint calculation possibility in a farm for other crops in TEC app	Debasish	To be discussed

#### Agenda item 5:

- **Soil Health & Energy Management:** Dr Antara shared progress on Ver 3 field implementation, focus on regen practices, energy management & carbon footprint baselining.

#### Agenda item 6:

- **Communication:** Dipanjan provided an update on the various brand initiatives & communication, media engagements, E-learning videos

#### Agenda item 7:

##### **Pesticide issue discussion:**

Rajesh updated on the actions undertaken by trustea on the issue.

- Extensive training of STGs in Assam and WB in collaboration with BLFs with the support of HUL
- Sampling of tea from 300 entities based on the trade sample failure report shared with trustea as per sampling protocol of trustea. During sampling the management personnel are also provided a training on the regulatory requirements for application of pesticides and the importance of maintaining Preharvest Interval and complete avoidance of any banned chemical. Entities will be given an option to retest at their own cost if they are not aligned with the results.

It was proposed that a minimum suspension of 1 month can be considered for entities who fail on requirements so that corrective actions can be taken. Sampling and retesting will be done at entities cost after the completion of the required corrective actions to determine the continuance or restoration of certification, post suspension.

- Dr Kanrar from TRA shared progress regarding various MRL issues faced by the industry & its subsequent mitigation plans.

#### **Points discussed:**

Dr Kanrar: Dimethoate has been approved for emergency use for a year but the MRL has not been specified.

Also informed that Acetamirpid and Imidachloropid are required by plantation for pest management. TRA has written to CIBRC with test results, for setting the MRL for these molecules as existing approved molecules Thychloropid and Thiamethoxam are not sufficient to manage pest infestations. This is under consideration by CIBRC and the minutes of the June 24 meeting is awaited for confirmation on this.

Further, he informed only FSSAI is empowered to specify approval/bans of chemical usage

Out of 56 combinations and 42 unique molecules on PPC V16, 30 have defined MRLs but the rest do not have the MRL set so default level of 0.01 becomes applicable. Had taken up with FSSAI for fixation of MRL for these chemicals. A draft MRL fixation has been published but not yet notified.

Daleram: Informed that many verified entities are failing in MRL of both approved and banned chemicals. This is very serious concern. trustea has been notified of the same to include in the sampling plan.

Jagjeet: Failures in approved chemicals are related non-compliance to pre harvest interval requirements set out in PPC. Trustea training should focus on this. This could also be due to using higher dosage beyond recommendation.

Rajesh: Inquired from Dr Kanrar why entities are failing on MRL of approved chemicals.

Dr Kanrar: Many companies sell branded PPFs with higher percentage than the ones considered for setting MRLs and hence this is also reason for failure. Moreover, companies resort to repeated use of the same molecule which is not recommended.

Daleram: Failures are more in BLFs but a significant number of estates are also failing in compliance. The impact reports can be more impactful.

Sl. No.	Action Required	Action By	Timeline
1	Training to focus on banned chemicals & acceptable recommended MRL dosage %	trustea	Sept '24
2	Implement new action plan for MRL non-compliance including 1 month suspension & retesting of 3 samples	trustea	July '24
3	Sampling & testing of failed entities as per trade reports	trustea	Sept '24

#### AOB AND CLOSING:

Jagjeet: Detailed discussion is required on the impact areas. Trustea to set up a call on this.

Daleram: Focus on coverage now should move to impact and quality of implementation. There is a serious concern on compliance since trustea verified entities are failing on chemical compliance. The impact areas can be more impactful and have more focus on STG impact.

Jagjeet: trustea should identify the key areas of intended impact and then evaluate against that, evaluating what the program should like to see in those areas. Can be compiled in a tabular form. Reassessment of where we are today versus the benchmarks will be helpful.

Daleram: The reports published by trustea in public domain like Annual Report or MEL report should be circulated to Council for feedback before publication.

Rajesh: Will ensure compliance to this and publish only after Council feedback on the draft reports.

Rajesh: MEL report coverage and quality should be such that it adds value to the stakeholders.

Jagjeet: Change of director is to be informed to the Council.

Rajesh: This was done since there was a statutory compliance issue as certain documents have to be signed and uploaded within fixed timeline for regulatory compliance. Physical signature is required and hence now this will be resolved, The CV of the new director will be shared.

**Next Council Meeting:** The next Council Meeting is proposed to be conducted in Nov 2024.

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