



YEAR BOOK 2021





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A photograph of a lush green tea plantation with workers visible in the background, partially obscured by a green geometric overlay.

Introduction

Launched in 2013, *trustea* has been fostering sustainable practices in the Indian tea supply chain with specific interventions focused on tea workers and small tea growers (STGs).

trustea is working with STGs, bought leaf factories (BLFs), estates and packers to address issues such as working conditions and entitlements, health and safety of tea workers, prevention of sexual harassment and promotion of gender equality, water pollution, food safety, soil erosion & contamination, gender issues and adverse effects of climate change.

The Program protects and enhances the biodiversity of the tea ecosystem. *trustea* offers a certification based on the global based practices of sustainability in order to create a network of verified sustainable tea producers.

trustea actively collaborates with platforms focused on the welfare of STGs and the safety of women in the workplace.

The three pillars of *trustea* are:

- Environment
- Safety
- Livelihoods

These pillars are based on Indian regulations and the globally-accepted sustainability principles.

Impact Theme



Vision

To sustainably transform the Indian tea industry for the benefit of consumers, workers, farmers and the environment by:

- Verifying tea producers against a world-class sustainability code of conduct
- Working with the tea industry to address key sustainability challenges such as food safety, pest and disease control, legally mandated wages, workers welfare and equality preservation of biodiversity and improvement of STGs' livelihoods.



Mission

The Indian tea industry provides high-quality and safe tea for consumers, good livelihoods for producers, workers and their families, whilst caring for the natural environment.



Impact Theme

Livelihoods



The *trustea* Program supports smallholders, tea estates and BLFs in improving their competitiveness by positively influencing the scale of production, processing, technologies, supply-chain development, market access and regulatory compliance.

Till December 2021, *trustea* has supported livelihoods of more than 88,000 STGs by introducing sustainable business and agriculture practices in the Indian tea sector and facilitating better working conditions, non-discriminatory treatment, health, hygiene (such as proper toilets), safety, remunerations (provident fund, gratuity, etc.) for the workers at their workplace.



trustea's zero-tolerance policy towards child labor and training on wage disparity has led to the elimination of the same at *trustea* verified entities and STGs.



By providing competitive market access, *trustea* helps many STGs to improve their livelihood.



Ensuring compliance of “Equal Work, Equal Pay” and Provident Fund (PF) to 6.7 lakh workers







trustea has been supporting the maintenance of a good quality of life for more than 3.6 lakh women workers. Ensuring compliance of legally mandated maternity benefits, creche facilities, redressal of grievances as per POSH act etc.

Environment





With the implementation of the *trustea* Program, producers are encouraged to move towards the judicious use of chemicals and fertilizers and to create a road map for increasing use of organic products.

-  All verified STGs and BLFs have been introduced to food safety guidelines of Tea Board of India (TBOI) and FSSAI on good hygiene and manufacturing practices
-  In 2021, 9.28 hectares of afforestation was done
-  Enhancement of biodiversity by strict adherence to biodiversity action plan by the estates, factories and STGs towards protecting flora & fauna
-  Efficient waste management protocols are followed for the segregation of hazardous, non-hazardous and biomedical wastes. Practices such as using dustbins for segregated waste, selling hazardous waste to authorized vendors only (and not burning any waste) are helpful for the environment.

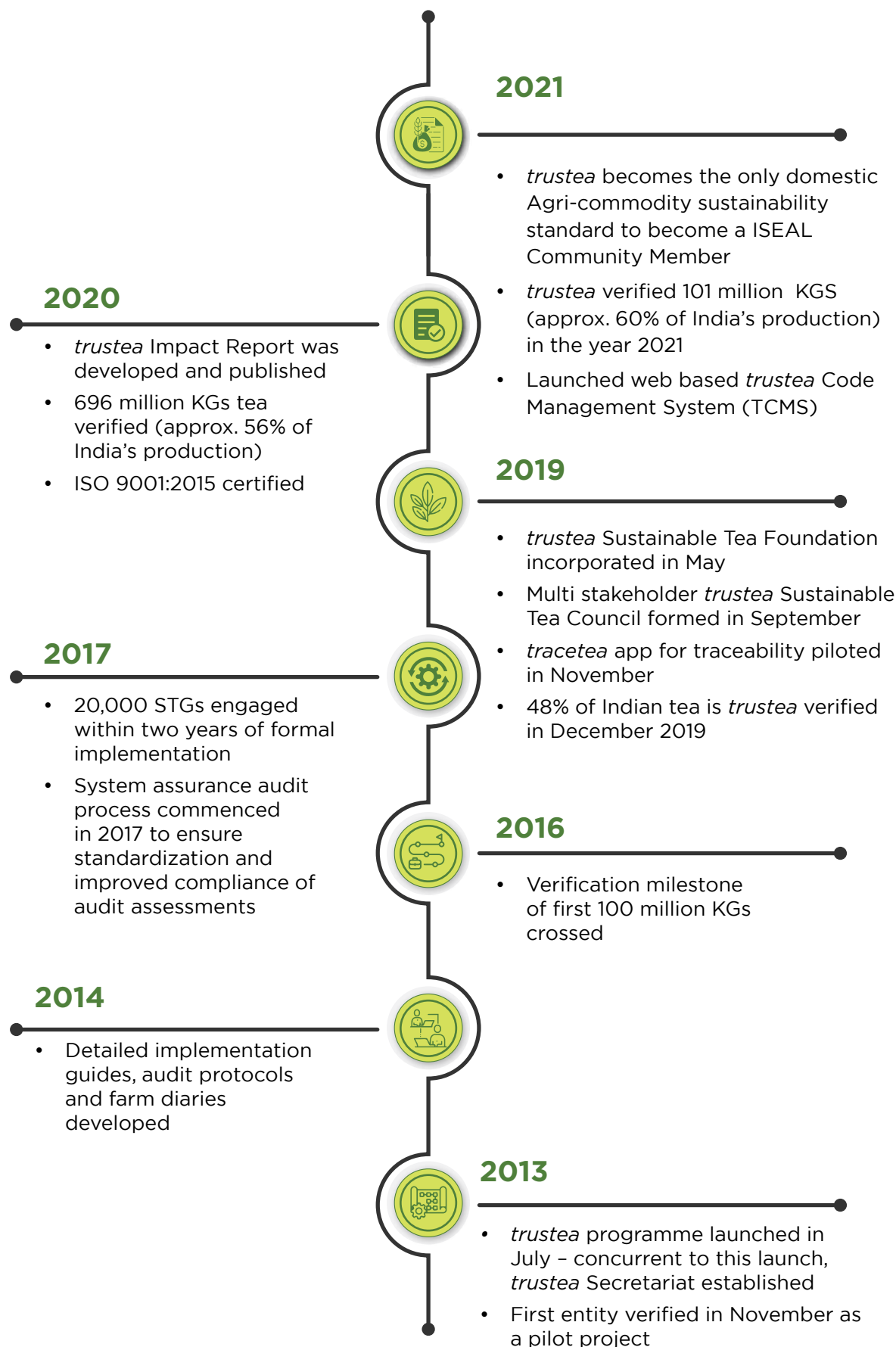
Source: *trustea* Code management system (TCMS) database

Safety

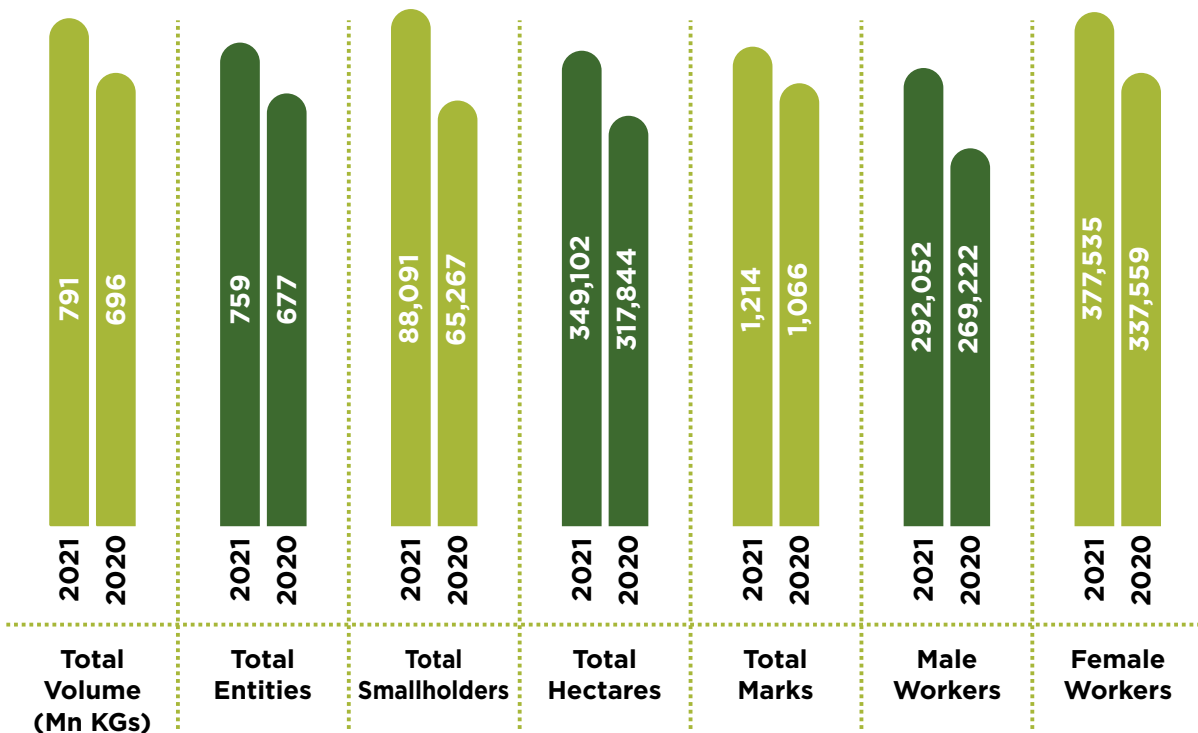
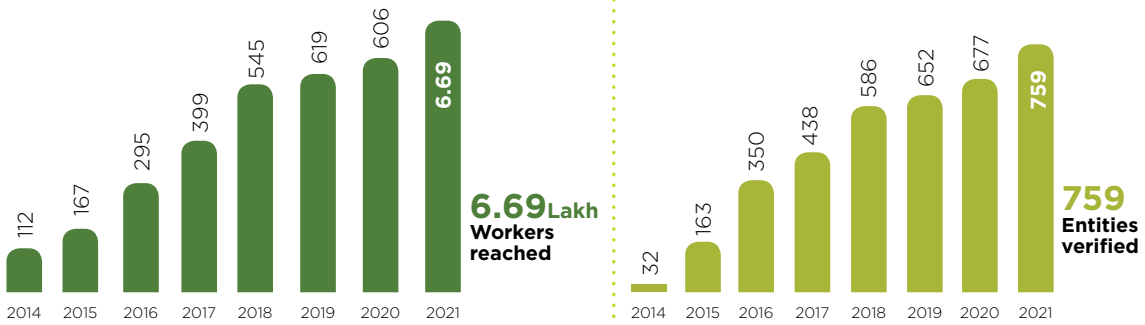
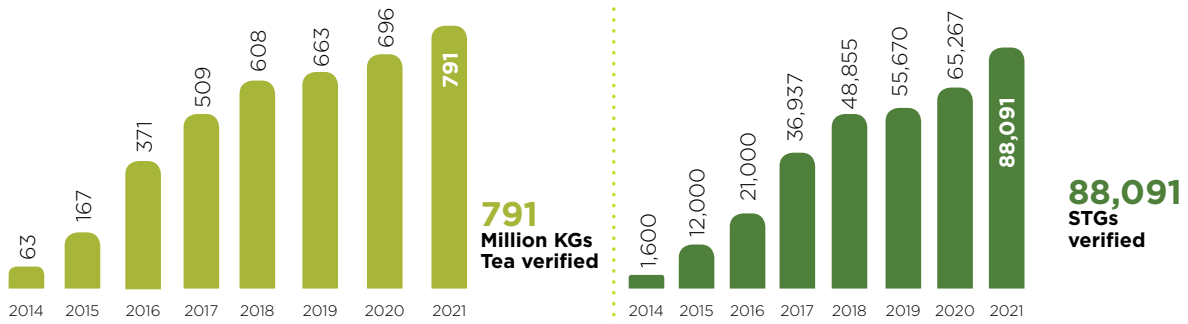


-  The *trustea* Code ensures workers' safety in the tea sector. Workers are given extensive training on handling chemicals and fertilizers and use of safety equipment for the same. This has resulted in reduced exposure to harmful chemicals and overall improvement in the health conditions. Monitoring the usage of legally mandated safe chemicals helps in delivering safe tea to the consumers.
-  The *trustea* Code facilitates PPC and FSSAI-compliant tea that helps eliminate the dangerous agrochemicals from Indian tea production. As a result, the toxic load in tea production is reduced and it assures the consumers that the tea they are consuming has been produced responsibly and is safe for consumption. Till Dec '21, *trustea* has sustainably transformed 791 million KGs of tea.

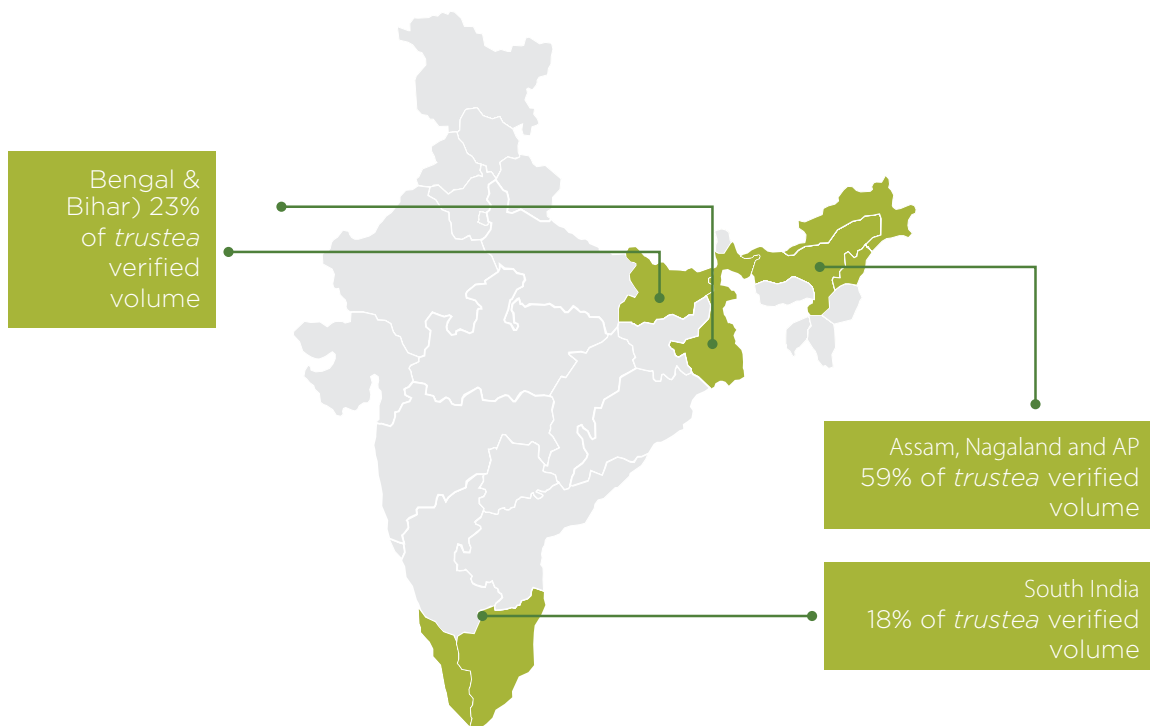
trustea's journey



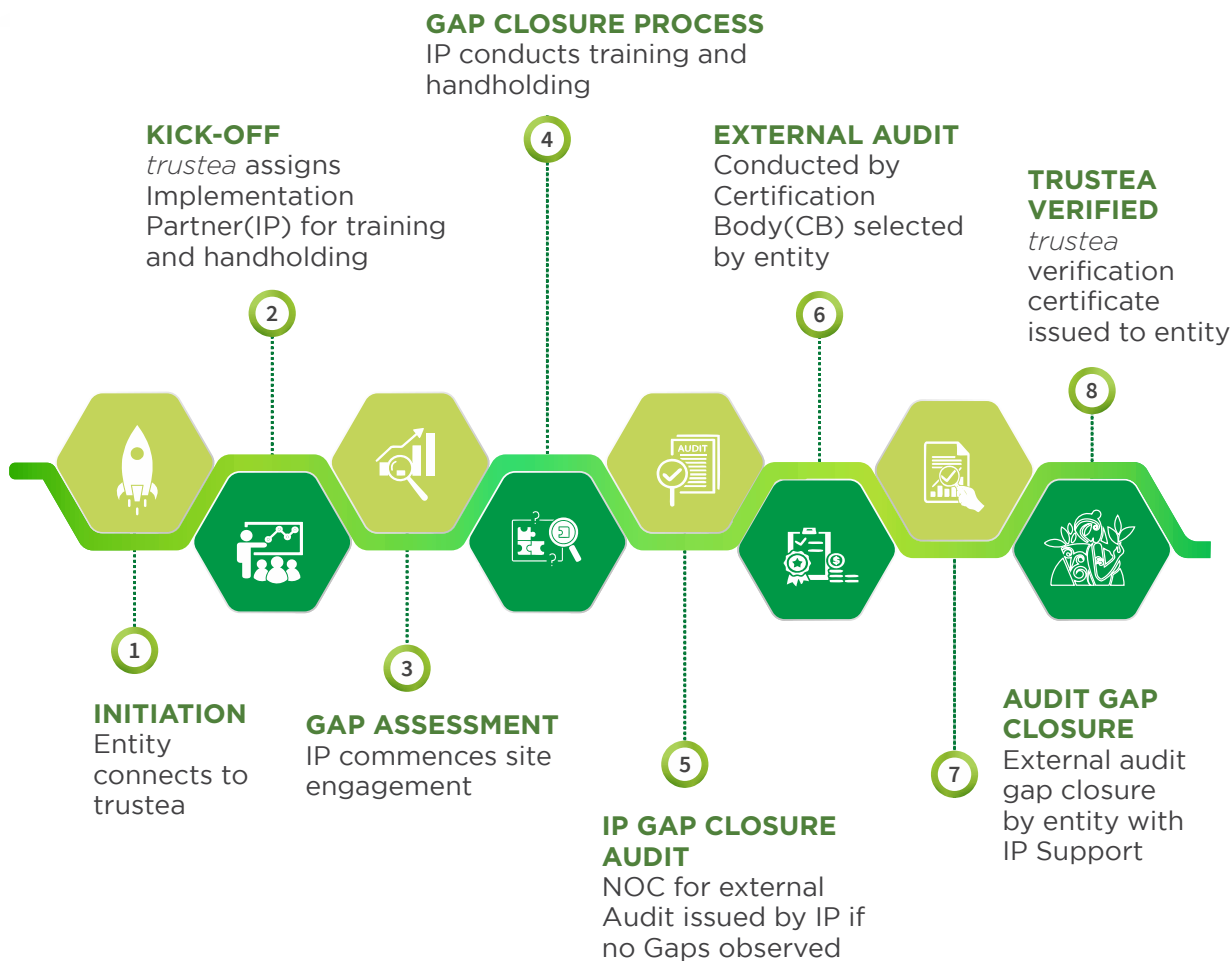
Program updates as of Dec 2021



Cumulative Volumes - by Region



trustea Certification Process:



Once an entity initiates the engagement with *trustea*, the completion of the process depends on the achievement of the mandatory milestones and is organisation specific. A study of the successfully completed certification processes in 2021 indicates an average time period of 173 days from the initial connection with *trustea* till the issuance of the verification certificate. (Source data: *trustea* Code Management System-TCMS)

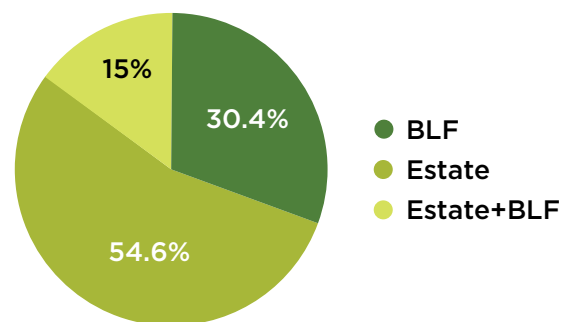
Average Total Journey in [173] Day(s)

Average CB selection to Audit completion: [13] Day(s)

Average Audit approval to Final certificate: [38] Day(s)

327 audits were conducted in the year 2021. A total of approx 817 mandays of assessments were carried out in the year 2021 in the tea growing regions of the country. This not only facilitated the verification process for the *trustea* Program but also provided valuable insights on the sustainability journey of the Indian tea industry.

The break-up of the total 327 audits is depicted below:

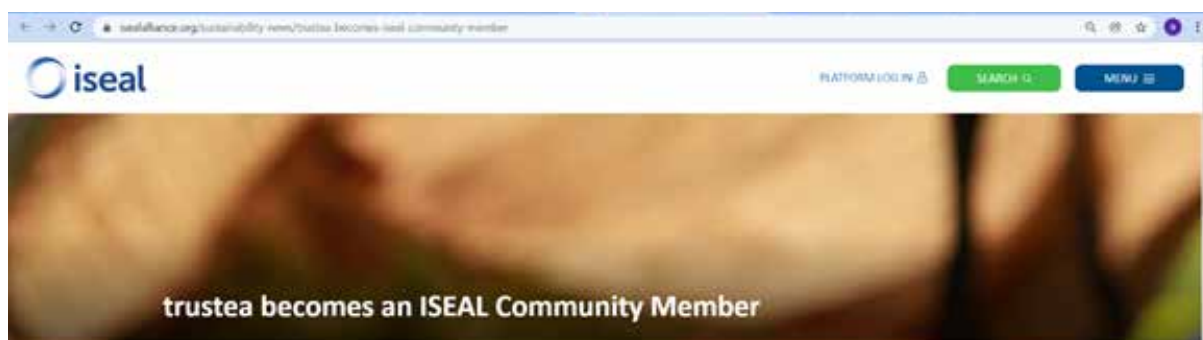


Innovative aspects of the program

STG's training across border

ISEAL Community Member

trustea is the only domestic sustainability code which has become "ISEAL Community Member", the global membership organisation for ambitious, collaborative and transparent sustainability systems. This is a very cherished milestone for trustea as it is now a leading global sustainability standard. This provides a pathway for trustea to showcase and offer trustea's proven sustainability methodology to other countries. At the same time, this will foment continuous improvement in trustea's own systems and processes to be at par with the global best practices in the field of sustainability, enabling us to offer these improvements to all members.



Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (ME&L) program

trustea has put in place a structured and defined Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (ME&L) program, in line with global best practices in sustainability. This ME&L program ensures that outcomes and impacts is scientifically analyzed and actions taken to ensure maximum impact are achieved.

Strong IT infrastructure

Towards enhancing the overall reach and effectiveness of the Program, *trustea* has developed a strong IT infrastructure through a strategic and long-term approach. Key components of the system are:



The 'Tracetea App' - the "farm to gate" proprietary digital traceability solution



The *trustea* e-learning portal, a comprehensive video-based online training tool on the *trustea* Code, with built-in assessment and certification capability.



Multilingual animated learning videos for the STGs to supplement field training.



Customised operation management system called *trustea* Code Management System (TCMS).



Dedicated and secure cloud database to ensure storage and retrieval of Program data.



Bringing in Farmers Producers Organization (FPO) & Co-operative Society into the ambit of Sustainable Certification

This is part of *trustea's* initiatives to empower the STGs and enhance their presence in the sustainable tea supply chain.

Innovation in driving compliance

trustea does not stop at just verification but also invests in capacity building of the STGs, BLFs, tea workers, and other tea producers to ensure compliance. *trustea's* capacity-building processes are tailored for easy comprehension by STGs and employs multi-step verification, community engagement, community building, and experiential learning.

Partnerships for going beyond certifications

trustea is focusing on partnerships with social sector organisations which work for the benefit of STGs and the female workforce.

Tracetea digital farm diary for the STGs

Farm Diary' facilitates the record keeping of monthly farm operations, monthly yield and expenses for the tea growers. A total of 4,285 STGs are using the Tracetea digital farm diary.





Implementation Partners

In 2021, *trustea* added two new Implementation Partners (IPs) namely, National Skills Foundation of India (NSFI) and Ambuja Cement Foundation(ACF). This adds to our base of three existing IPs-Tea Research Association (TRA), Action for Food Production (AFPRO), Reviving Green Revolution (RGR) – an initiative of Tata Trust. Over 28 experts from these IPs were instrumental in providing the on-ground handholding support in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal.

These implementation partners are selected after a careful evaluation based on their alignment with *trustea* and local presence and play an instrumental role in providing training and hand-holding support to the stakeholders. Implementation partners deploy personnel at all major tea growing areas to provide on-ground support and execute capacity-building activities ensuring seamless service delivery. Over 28 experts from these IPs were instrumental in providing on-ground handholding. In 2021 hand-holding services were provided to 91 entities and 23505 STGs were trained on sustainability practices in tea cultivation.



Driving Innovations

Towards enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Program, *trustea* has implemented the following IT initiatives:

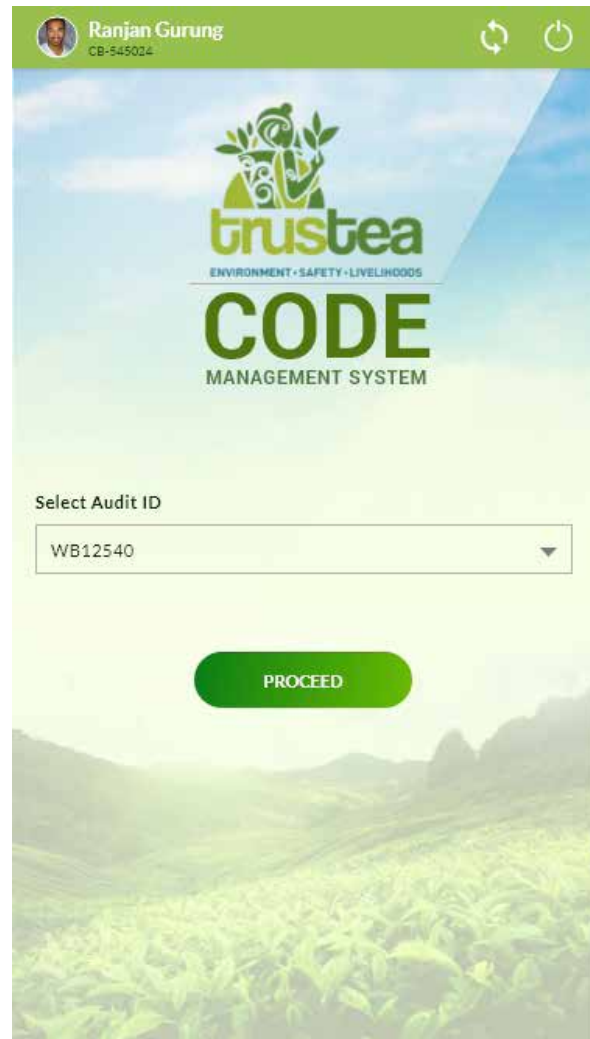
***trustea* Code Management System:**

trustea has released another digital initiative named *trustea* Code Management System (TCMS) on 19th June 2021. This application conducts good practices of regular functionalities and runs on the basis of standard operation procedure of *trustea* certification cycle and continued process development. All assurance systems and standard operations of *trustea* and the entities, IPs and CBs are incorporated into the TCMS software including MEL related data points. Entire operations are now paperless and online, with a click to get access for all the Program data and assessment records including legacy data since inception with adequate dedicated cloud data storage.

Benefits

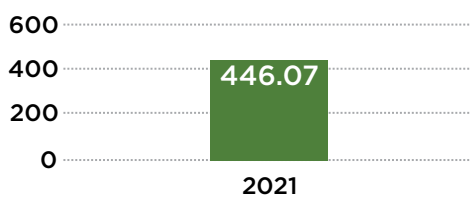
- Single online application for all *trustea* stakeholders of the entire operational process that brings together the entities, implementation partners, certifying bodies and *trustea* into one platform wherein all the operational steps of assessment and certification are recorded and processed.
- Drilled down details of entities and entity level interface for certification related activities.
- Transparent appeal process for certified entities and grievance redressal mechanism for all stakeholders.
- Standard operating system for empanelment of certification body and implementation partner.

- Single portal for Certification Bodies, Implementation Partner, Commercial Partner and Secretariat for all of their activities in *trustea* life cycle.
- Robust dashboard consisting of tabular and graphical information for *trustea* stakeholders.
- SMS and Email trigger for notification alert.
- With the addition of the legacy data into TCMS, we are now able to offer a transparent database of the Program which is updated in real-time and accessible to relevant users.
- The MIS function of TCMS database provides analytical insights of the performance parameters which is a powerful tool to monitor and improve the performance metrics.
- It was the TCMS system that enabled us to provide remote auditing services to our members during the pandemic.

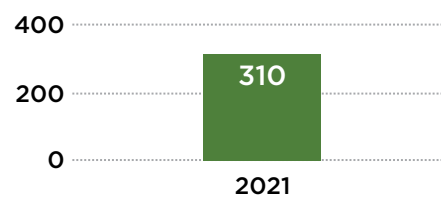


Flow of data through the TCMS system in 2021 after “go live”. From 14th June onwards, 310 VC generated in 2021.

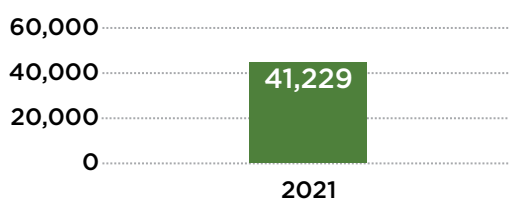
446.07 Mn KG of tea is *trustea* verified



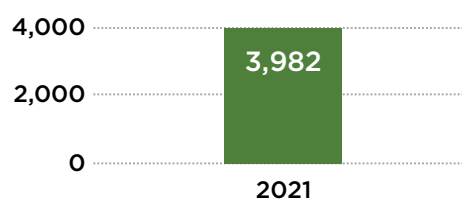
310 Nos of Entity verified



STG Verified 41,229



Workers Reached 3,982



Feeling the change: *trustea*'s beneficiaries' stories

These stories highlight the progress and the positive impact, *trustea* has created in the entire tea value chain. The stories of beneficiaries make it evident that the adoption of *trustea* Code has brought multifaceted benefits to many beneficiaries in the tea supply chain.

The communities associated with *trustea* are feeling the difference and are expecting a long-term partnership with the Program.

Supriya Sahu IAS
Principal Secretary,
Govt. of Tamil Nadu &
CEO Indcoserve



I am quite glad that as a Govt. backed cooperative, Indcoserve (a 60 years old organisation, working with 30,000 STGs) received support from *trustea*'s local team that took us on the path of sustainability. Obtaining the *trustea* certification, for some of the factories associated with us, is a key milestone. I have personally witnessed 3 significant improvements due to *trustea* certification:

1. Changes in the perception of the buyers
2. An awareness within the organisation to change towards betterment. For the first time, the organisation has been subjected to a different kind of third party audit. Although, we are audited by the government, we are now being audited by a third-party agency. Thanks to *trustea*'s certification, we have started churning; we are complaint on safety system, water quality, environment, machinery, equipment, labour welfare, toilet facilities etc. .
3. Significant awareness has been created among our growers; they are cautious about not just the quantity of leaves but also the quality/ value addition.

It is heartening to note that *trustea* has become a widely recognised Indian sustainability code. I believe it is a great step for the Indian tea industry. Benchmarking and quality certification is absolutely essential in a highly competitive tea market. It is in this context that *trustea* can become a game changer for the sector.

“ We are delighted to partner with *trustea*. It has definitely helped us in making our organisation several notches better.

Bijeet Goswami

Small Tea Grower
Pengeri, Digboi, District
Tinsukia, Assam



As per the guidelines of the program, I have created a buffer zone between the plantation and areas of public use or residences.

I refrain from application of agro-chemicals and chemical fertilisers in the buffer zone. This ensures a harmonious condition all around my plantation and I have not faced any problem. I am using indigenous practices of applying organic elements like neem, cow dung, cow urine etc. I have also created a specially created chemical mixing area to prevent contamination of the environment.

“ **Part of the *trustea* program since 2018 Supplying green leaf to *trustea* verified factory, Pangreegarh Tea Company, DPG Group, Pangree.**

Tankeswar Orang

Small Tea Grower, village- Kathiatali, Dist.
Golaghat, Assam



Part of the *trustea* program since 2021 supplying green leaf to *trustea* verified factory Kamarbondha tea factory, Radha tea factory and Gopal Bhoroli tea factory (all three are in golaghat) from 2021.

I am now handling all the waste generated in my small tea garden in a systematic way. The organic and inorganic waste is segregated and managed based on the training received from *trustea*. I have started using PPEs (Personal Protective Equipments) during preparation and application of agro-chemicals. My association with the *trustea* program has been beneficial and I feel it will help in achieving my goals as a small tea grower.

“ **My association with the *trustea* program has been beneficial and I feel it will help in achieving my goals as a small tea grower.**

Dharmalingam

STG Supplier to
Billicombai Tea Plantation



We became aware of the tea field maintenance only after the *trustea* Program was introduced to us. We were given training on water management and trench development in the tea farms. With the storage of water in the trenches, we have witnessed a rise in yield.

During the training, we were also trained on shade tree plantation. We used to plant silver oak trees in our farms. Subsequent to the training, we started planting trees with adequate spacing, in line with the training imparted. While we used to apply 5-6 bags of manure in our area, we reduced it to 150 KGs of manure in an acre in three installments. Enabled with *trustea's* training, we are now able to save money through optimal usage of manure/ fertilizers, in turn enhancing the yields.

“ We thank *trustea* for providing the ‘Farm Diary’ which facilitates the record keeping for our monthly yield and expenses.

Vijayan

STG (growing in 1.5 acres) Selling Leaves to ‘Top Hill Tea Estates’ in Nilgiris



Earlier, I was not keeping track of my expenditures pertaining to tea plantations. I used to spend without looking much into the cost. Having received the Farm Dairy from *trustea*, I have now started noting down the expenditures. Further, I am able to make various calculations with respect to expenditures, incomes and the profits.

“ Thank you *trustea* for having taught me to implement such an important practice

Chanchal Aich

Director, Nijbari Tea Company,
Jalpaiguri, West Bengal



We have all the infrastructure in the factory and the field but those were not streamlined. At the STG level, the required set up was there but the critical factor i.e. knowledge was lacking.

Now the workers are well versed with activities such as proper use of chemicals, proper storage, safety, preservation of the environment etc. Upon implementation of *trustea*, workers have become more disciplined, and now they are aware of the various risks and hazards associated with each activity and how to prevent them. Further, they are happy to work in a neat and clean atmosphere where they are being provided with various amenities such as safe drinking water, proper toilets, PPE kits, changing rooms etc.

“ Now the workers are well versed with activities such as proper use of chemicals, proper storage, safety, preservation of the environment etc

Md. Alam

Nijbari Tea Factory, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal



I am working at the workshop and we are very happy with *trustea* implementation, as our safety is now being taken good care of. We can see that there have been a lot of changes in the factory with regards to cleanliness and various other matters. We are quite glad working in a clean and safe environment.

“ I am working at the workshop and we are very happy with *trustea* implementation

Mukti Rai

working at Nijbari Tea Factory for last 5 years states



We are now provided with the specific dresses, along with separate changing room, toilet, canteen, safe drinking water etc. All of us are being provided with PF and other monetary benefits. We are now aware of our rights, and we know what to do, in case we face any misbehaviour

“ We are now provided with the specific dresses, along with separate changing room, toilet, canteen, safe drinking water etc

Thirukesawaran

Manager
Siva Tea Plantation



We have been witnessing various improvements in our factory while implementing the *trustea* Code. With *trustea's* support, we have been able to install bird proofing that prevented contamination of tea, in turn our factory is clean and well maintained now. *trustea* motivated us to construct soak pits to purify the waste generated from the factory. The requisite documents, in line with *trustea's* guidelines are well maintained in the office of our factory. We are able to improve the standard of our factory by maintaining hygienic aspects, water tests, sound effects, pollution tests, registers etc.

Further, we are able trace the quantity of the leaves received from growers through the Traceability App. We guide the laborers on the hygiene practices ensuring they cut their nails regularly etc. Moreover, we issue caps, gloves and masks to all the workers. We also provide PPE kits to ensure their safety. As a result, they are happy working with us.

“ Overall, implementation of *trustea's* guidelines have been critical towards upgrading our factory and motivating our workers.

Uttam Baishnab

Manager,
Goodricke Group Ltd.



Goodricke got associated with *trustea* in 2016. Currently, all our bought leaf marks are *trustea* certified. During the initial years, we faced a little hindrance in implementing the *trustea* Code to our STGs however it's quite smooth now. The impact created by *trustea* includes:

- *trustea* has facilitated in sustainable production of our tea.
- *trustea's* Code of Conduct has helped us in understanding Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) such as pruning, plucking, spraying, manuring etc. s benefiting our STGs.
- *trustea* has enabled us in conducting seminars wherein we distribute write-ups on PPC compliance, chemical list, banned chemical list, correct doses of manuring, correct way of storing chemical/fertilizers, young tea upbringing etc. in line with the *trustea* Code of Conduct.
- *trustea* has provided the opportunity to conduct regular visits/ interactions for our STGs, avoiding the middleman/ intermediaries.
- *trustea* takes care of the social aspects such as health & welfare of workers including their safety, working conditions, workers' rights, waste and pollution management etc.

We endeavor to implement these practices for the STGs associated with us. We have empowered the STGs through correct usage of chemicals. Further, we collect all the empty chemical containers from the STGs and then it's provided to the authorized vendor.

“ Overall, *trustea* has facilitated a better understanding towards growers/ producers that would take both STGs and our organisation a long way.

User Experiences

User experiences on the *trustea's* IT initiatives:



Paran Kumar Chaudhury

Lead Auditor
DNV - Business Assurance
India Pvt. Ltd

trustea team had put so much hard work into getting this TCMS, and it really paid off. Thanks to your focus and determination in going the extra mile to introduce such a robust system which

is absolutely exceptional. Thank you for taking extra effort to make sure the entire team (all the Entities, all the CBs, IPs and Secretariat) was on the same page. Also, I do appreciate the efforts taken by the entire team to guide us in all possible ways to get easy with the new system. The entire effort taken to get one step forward is really appreciated. Working in CMS has become user friendly; all auditors are now well acquainted with it. Generation of certificates from CMS has become easier now, data fed by the entities directly in CMS paid great

dividends for generating certificates with absolute correctness. Innovation of CMS by *trustea* was definitely a challenging job which ultimately resulted in a robust

system driven user-friendly process for all. We are very happy to be associated with such a robust system in *trustea* certification.



Buna Mitra

STG, Kurti Tea Estate,
Dooars, West Bengal

We have started using the tracetea App and it has been a very useful app for us.

Before the launch of this app, we were maintaining all the farm details manually (in hard copies) e.g. plucking, manuring, applying pesticide etc. There were instances wherein we missed entries but now it's very convenient. We just need to open the app (available in our cell phones) and feed the details. It helps us in keeping a proper track of the leaf harvested and supplied, and there is a lot of transparency.



Srinivasan Sreeram

Advisor
Indcoserve

A digital traceability system, Tracetea App facilitates tracing at a click of a

button. It is well thought-out and laid-out, and we have experienced quite amazing features. It has in-built features capturing the various aspects pertaining to the growers e.g. what kind of crop they are cultivating, what cycle they can go for harvesting, what is the level or maturity of the crop at any given time, what are the pesticides and fertilizers that they are supposed to use and how to address if something goes wrong”.



Leela Ramachandran

a small tea grower and a member of Manjoor ICTF, Ketchigatty Village, Nilgiris

Over the last 20 years, I have been maintaining all my farm accounts in a notebook. *trustea* trained us on using the Tracetea App that enabled us to make entries on farm activities such as plucking, using chemicals, wage details etc

We are now empowered by maintaining our accounts digitally. It's quite helpful to all of us



Kavitha

STG (growing in 1 acres),
Manjoor Village, Nilgiris

I have been using a notebook to mark down all my chemical and leaf details. Now, we are able to enter all our field activities to the Tracetea App. Moreover, my kids are helping me upload the farm details in the mobile App. It is quite user-friendly.



Akila Kaikatty

Joint Director
Indcoserve

Through *trustea's* support and guidance, we are able to procure good quality raw materials from our members which has helped us in producing quality tea and fetching good price in the market.

Since 1967, all our records were maintained manually. Through the traceability app of *trustea*, we are able to digitize all our records.

We are having 1800 STGs, out of which over 50% are women. Since 2015, we are associated with the *trustea* Program.

***trustea's* traceability app is beneficial to all the people of the tea value chain**



Key events during 2021

29th January

trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation Fourth Council Meeting



23rd and 24th March

trustea Auditors Training

The 2 days virtual training program for *trustea* auditors with participation from 7 empanelled certification bodies.



18th and 19th June

trustea auditors training

The 2 days of virtual training program for *trustea* auditors witnessed 24 valued participations from 8 organisations.



28th October

Webinar on “trustea’s traceability system

The Webinar witnessed over 100 wonderful participants from diverse backgrounds!



24th September

Webinar on ‘Foreign Matter in Tea’

This webinar was hosted by HUL on the topic foreign matter in tea. *trustea* shared a detailed presentation on the hazard risk prevention in a tea factory based on *trustea*’s mandatory criteria on food safety. The webinar was attended by over 60 participants including tea producers, factory owners etc.



3rd March

Webinar on ‘trustea’s Impact Report’ - Deliberating the impact created by trustea’s work on the ground

(The webinar witnessed 75+ participants from diverse backgrounds).

30th June

trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation Fourth Council Meeting

30th June

Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) training for employees

An instructor-led virtual *trustea* was organised for *trustea* employees on ‘Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH)’.

21st September

Webinar on ‘Consumer Demand for Sustainable Products in Asia: Successes and Challenges’

trustea was happy to be a speaker during the webinar titled ‘Consumer Demand for Sustainable Products in Asia: Successes and Challenges’, organized by the International Institute for Sustainable Development and Evidensia.

7th December

trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation Sixth Council meeting



Campaign during Covid 19

trustea supported HUL in their mission HO₂PE - *trustea* proudly partnered with HUL in their Mission HO₂PE with support from AFPRO. Under the initiative, oxygen concentrators were distributed to tea estates, covering 30% tea gardens in Assam and 10,000 STGs & workers





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