



#BehindTheCup



## **Mathew Sebastian** **Founder and Executive Director** **IINDOCERT**

In 2013, we did the pilot study and the first certification was done in September 2013. There was absolutely no awareness about sustainability that time.

We prepared a guidance document offering details on the intent of the trustea standard and what is to be done to comply with it. We conducted training to educate people to build awareness.

Trustea has done tremendous work in India at a large scale because the awareness about importance of environment, food safety and livelihood was not widespread. This message has been spread. It has brought sustainability into tea plantation.

Trustea is addressing food safety with pesticide residue monitoring. Twice a year, farmers have to do pesticide residue analysis. This has reduced contamination. Farmers have had to adopt several measures, such as application of approved chemicals and good hygiene practices in factories so that there is no metal or chemical or microbial contamination.

Workers are trained on basic hygiene practices. They are trained on applying pesticides in a proper manner that doesn't harm them or the environment. The code ensures that the water bodies are not polluted with agro chemicals. A trustea certified entity has to properly segregate and manage waste.

You can see the difference between a certified and a non-certified farm, both in farm and factories. trustea is doing a lot of training through field implementation partners and this handholding is excellent.

An area that has been most impacted by trustea is livelihood, in ensuring minimum wages, and limitation for overtime, getting overtime wages, PF, gratuity. We can see social impact as workers are more aware of their rights. Where there was no grievance mechanism or POSH, now there is freedom of association and this helps workers feel secure. Women workers especially women who feel safe knowing there is a responsible person to whom they can take their grievances and union leaders.

Certifications are required for sustainability. We are an independent third party to cross verify and confirm how a factory or estate is running. The standard is stringent with a lot of requirements. Factories and farms are required to invest in meeting these standards. The third party audit is an assurance for consumers that there is a social, environmental and safety compliance.

Today 60% of the tea is verified and this is a huge impact. The value of a trustea certified product will be recognised by consumers as complying with regulatory and food safety requirements. Once the consumer understands this value, they may be willing to pay higher price which will have a financial impact on the farmer.