



## #BehindTheCup

### **Arup Sen** **Director, Elegant Tea Producer,** **Daspara, North Bengal**

We are a bought leaf factory, producing tea since 2013. We have 141 small tea growers with us, with almost 605 hectares under tea. In the last couple of years, our production has been around 13,00,000 kilos of tea annually.

We got our trustea certification in 2016. I do believe we were one of the earliest gardens in this area to get it.

This is an unconventional tea area and tea planting only arrived in the late 80s. There was a lot of fallow land, some seasonal crops were cultivated. But there was no visible source of income. Tea changed that. The tea industry, the bought leaf factory sector, have contributed to the economy significantly. We have more than 40,000 small tea growers in this district and most of the land is owned by the farmer, not leased by the government.

We chose trustea as we knew we wanted to have some measure of standards. Trustea is the only sustainability code for tea in India. And we were attracted to trustea because they help us maintain all the parameters for making good tea, while also addressing the livelihood of farmers and those dependent on us.

We share a close relationship with our small tea growers and our workers.

We hold regular meetings to take the trustea norms, protocols and other guidances to the small tea growers. We have tried to educate them on areas such as the Plant Protection Code, as per trustea's advice. This has definitely helped them and us in procuring better raw material and ensuring that our tea maintains a standard quality.

Hygiene and cleanliness has become a regular part of our work. We have been training our farmers on the use of chemicals and now they are more concerned about what they should use, how much they should use and how they should use it. They are also more concerned about protecting water reserves, proper drainage and managing storage and disposal of the chemicals. There is a lot of scope for improvement and trustea's guidelines and norms have really helped us.

It is not easy to bring about change, it will take time and also a lot of work to make sure that the small tea growers understand why this is important even though they will not see immediate benefits from it. Sustainability is a long-term strategy that needs to be understood by all of us. Results will not come in a day and benefits will take time, but it will come. And unless we produce very good and certified tea, it will not be fit for the consumer.