



**trustea**

ENVIRONMENT • SAFETY • LIVELIHOODS

**YEAR BOOK**

2020





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# Introduction

Launched in 2013, *trustea* is an Indian sustainability code and verification system for the tea sector. The *trustea* Code is a locally-developed code (based on Indian regulations and globally-accepted sustainability principles) which validates that tea has been produced in a sustainable manner, in line with the three pillars of *trustea* viz. environment, safety and livelihood.

The program is working with Small Tea Growers (STGs), Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs), estates and tea retailers to address issues, such as working conditions, health and safety of tea workers, water pollution, food safety, soil erosion and contamination, gender issues and the adverse effects of climate change.

The programme aims to promote sustainable agricultural practices which improve productivity and reduce cost, ensuring sustainable tea supply in India, while simultaneously protecting the ecosystem (soil, water and biodiversity) and improving the quality of life for producers and workers. *trustea* certified sustainable farms become part of a pool of sustainable tea supply chains, providing access to a growing segment of buyers. This makes tea cultivation a viable source of income for smallholder farmers and contributes to improving their standard of living. The programme protects and enhances biodiversity and endeavours to create a safe workplace that is free from discrimination.



## 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, stagnating yields, pest and disease control, living wages, worker welfare and equality, preservation of biodiversity and improvement of smallholders' livelihoods

## MISSION

The Indian tea industry should provide high-quality and safe tea for consumers, a good livelihood for producers, workers and their families, whilst caring for the natural environment at all times.



# Impact Theme

## Livelihoods

The *trustea* programme 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.

Since December 2020, *trustea* has supported 65,267 smallholder farmers from the Indian tea sector and facilitated improved working conditions, non-discriminatory treatment, health, hygiene (such as proper toilet facilities), safety, remunerations (provident fund, gratuity, etc.) for permanent, as well as temporary, workers in their workplace.

By end of 2020, the *trustea* programme outreach covered 606,781 tea workers, of which 56% i.e. over 3,37,559 were women. *trustea* endeavours to bring changes in the lives of the female workforce through training, advocacy and partnership. This should result in better working environment for women (such as maternity benefits, quality of crèche facility etc.) and fostering equal opportunities in a workplace that is free from gender-based discrimination. The *trustea* programme received a big fillip when UN Women, the United Nations organization championing gender equality and empowerment of women, came on board as a member of the *trustea* Foundation Council.





## Environment

When implementing the *trustea* programme, producers are encouraged to move towards judicious use of chemicals and fertilisers and to create a road map for increasing the use of organic products. Contaminations of natural water bodies or surrounding natural ecosystems are protected from adverse effects due to the introduction of buffer zones. Restoration and preservation of areas not used for cultivation, coupled with a zero-tolerance policy on deforestation, has helped reduce the adverse impact on forest cover due to deforestation.



## Safety

The *trustea* Code ensures workers' safety in the tea sector. Workers engaged in applying chemicals are trained on safe application methods and the use of appropriate Plant Protection Equipment. While handling chemicals organisations will ensure that appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is used. All regulatory requirements for the health and safety of the workplace will continue to be reinforced for the welfare of the workforce.

*trustea* provides a structured approach to address food-safety issues based on identifying food hazards and promoting Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and Good Hygiene Practices (GHPs) as prerequisites of food safety. With an increase in the availability of Plant Protection Code (PPC) and FSSAI compliant tea, elimination of the most dangerous agrochemicals from Indian tea production and a reduction in the overall volume of active ingredients, *trustea* endeavours to provide a safe cup of tea to all consumers.



# trustea's journey

## 2020

- *trustea* Impact Report developed and published
- 696 million KGs of tea verified (approximately 56% of India's tea production)



## 2019

- *trustea* Sustainable Tea Foundation incorporated in May
- Multi stakeholder *trustea* Sustainable Tea Council formed in September
- *tracetea* app for traceability piloted in November
- 48% of Indian tea is *trustea* verified in December 2019

## 2017

- 20,000 STGs engaged within two years of formal implementation
- System assurance audit process commenced in 2017 to ensure standardization and improved compliance of audit assessments

## 2016

- Verification milestone of first 100 million KGs crossed

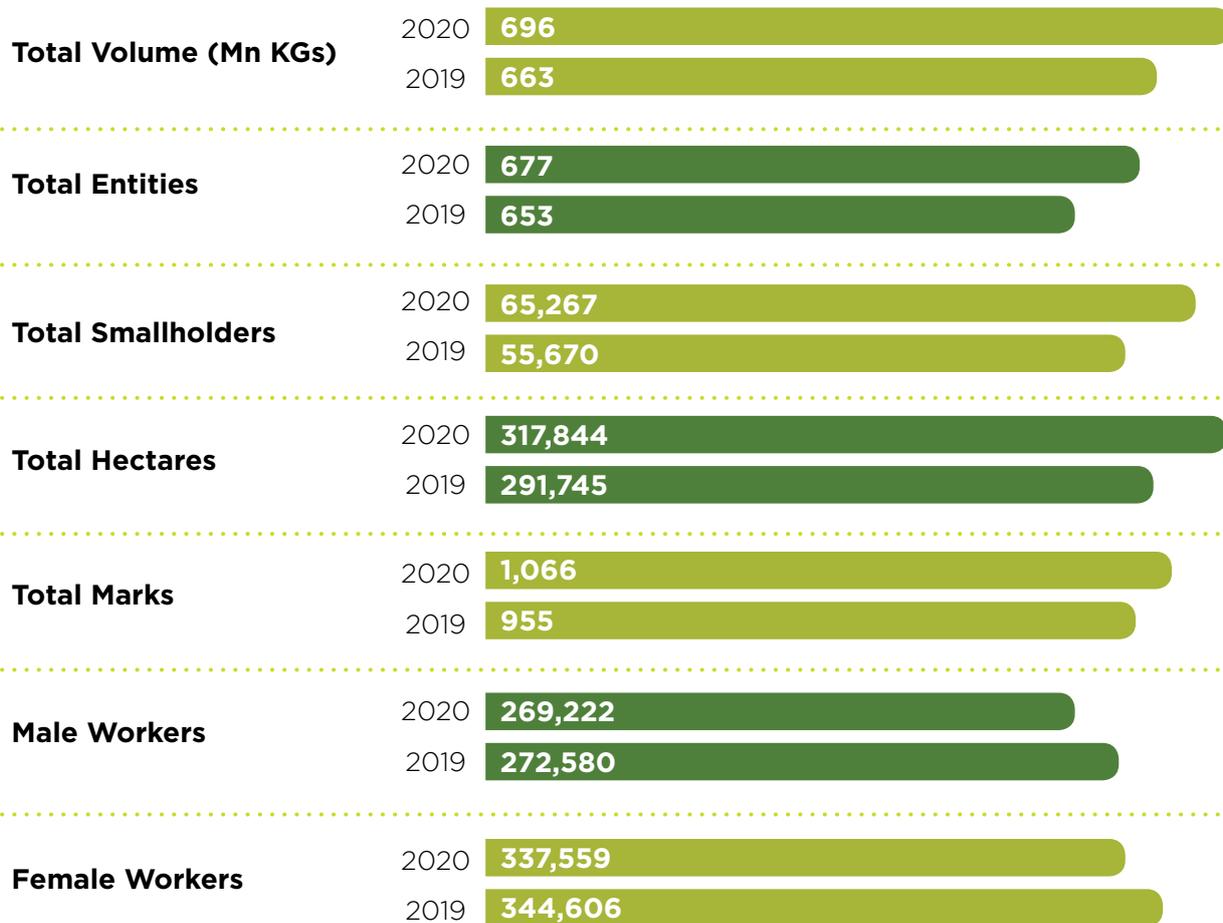
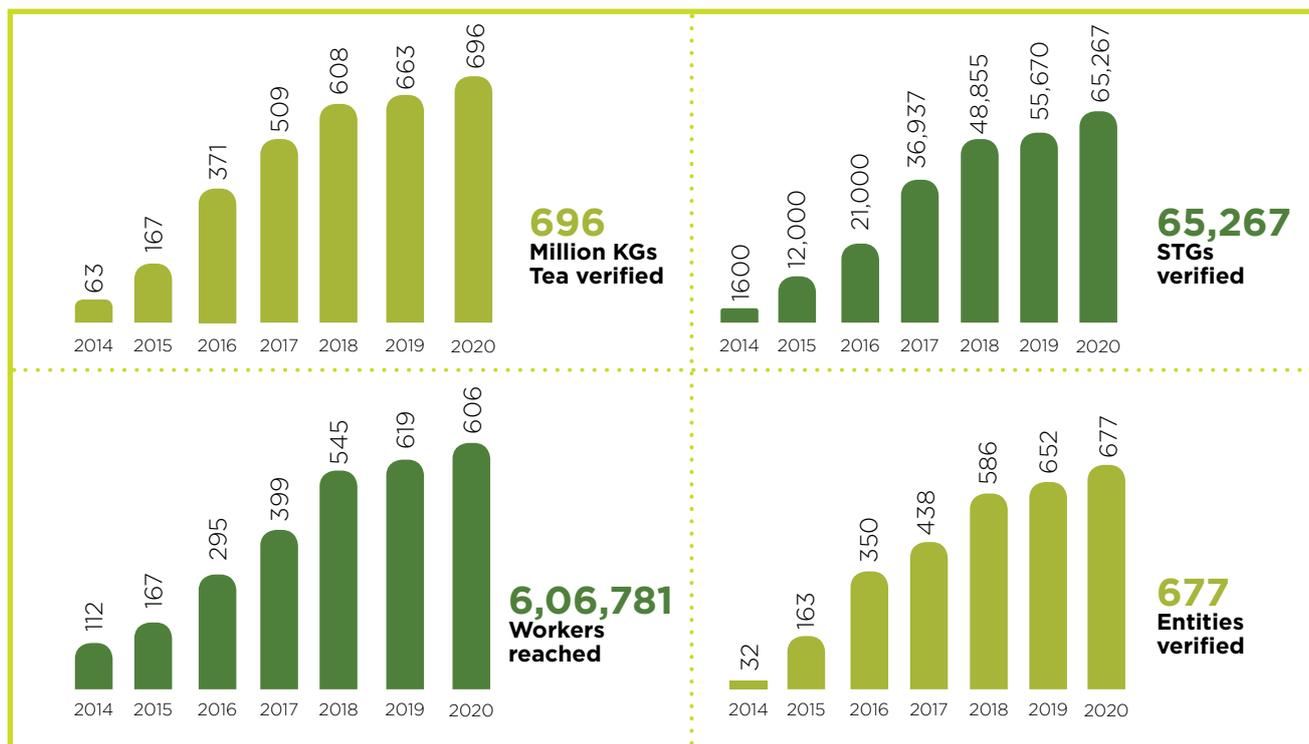
## 2014

- Detailed implementation guides, audit protocols and farm diaries developed

## 2013

- *trustea* programme launched in July – concurrent to this launch, *trustea* Secretariat established
- First entity verified in November as a pilot project

# Programme updates as of Dec 2020



## Cumulative Volumes (By Region)

Region	Entity	Regional - <i>trustea</i>			Region total			Overall Production in India	
		Vol (Mn KGs)	Marks	% total verified	Vol (Mn KGs)	Marks	% of Total Verified	Vol (Mn KGs)	% of total
Assam (incl Tripura & AP)	Estate	199	245	29%	411	544	59%	747	54%
	Estate + BLF	123	163	18%					
	BLF	88	136	13%					
Bengal & Bihar	Estate	67	87	10%	125	210	18%	424	31%
	Estate + BLF	28	20	4%					
	BLF	31	103	5%					
South India	Estate	39	56	6%	159	311	23%	219	16%
	Estate + BLF	19	34	3%					
	BLF	101	221	15%					
<b>Total</b>		<b>695</b>	<b>1065</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>1065</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1390</b>	<b>100%</b>

## *trustea's* codes cater to various Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs)

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Chapter 10: Biodiversity and Environment Management

Chapter 11: Waste and Pollution Management

Chapter 3: Soil Conservation and Management

Chapter 4: Water Management



Chapter 2: Product Traceability

Chapter 5: Fertiliser

Chapter 6: Plant Protection Formulations (PPF)

Chapter 7: Food Safety



Chapter 8: Safety, Health & Welfare of Workforce

Chapter 9: Working Conditions and Workers Rights



Chapter 1: Management System and Continual Improvement



# trustea's Transformation Across Dimensions



## Operations

- Proactive and in-depth engagement with implementation partners as well as widened and diversified the pool of implementation personnel at the field level.
- Increased the availability of sustainably produced tea.
- Improved standard of governance, including data governance and policy, to ensure integrity of business operations.



## Assurances

- To help its verified entities during the pandemic, *trustea* performed audits using remote techniques, based on the successful pilot on 'Remote Audit'. *trustea* acknowledges the support of its certification bodies viz. SGS, TUV India, DNVGL, CUC, Cotecna and Indocert in this initiative.
- *trustea* successfully implemented the Quality Management System (QMS). Based on the outcomes of this external assessment by The British Standards Institution (BSI), *trustea* is now ISO 9001:2015 certified.
- *trustea* applied for the membership of the ISEAL community to enhance code credibility with globally recognised sustainability principles.
- *trustea* introduced a 'zero tolerance criteria' in its code, with respect to wages, employee benefits and the 'Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act 2013'.



## Communications



- *trustea* is geared for the launch of the 'seal on pack' programme. The system is in place to establish *trustea* as a mark of credibility, safety and sustainability, in the mind of the end consumer.
- *trustea's* Impact Report was developed and published, to capture and document impact made by the *trustea* programme on the ground.
- Digital platforms (including social media channels, websites, webinars and e-mail campaigns) were leveraged to create awareness and disseminate information on the program.
- To create awareness with respect to safety measures in the wake of the ongoing pandemic, several awareness materials, in line with the government guidelines (such as posters, and leaflets in various vernacular languages), were developed and distributed.

With the support of *trustea's* implementation partners, Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers' Association and Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Association (CISTA), over 500 posters were installed at labour colonies, STG gardens, factories and over 1,000 leaflets were distributed among tea workers and pluckers. These materials along with videos were uploaded on *trustea's* website and were in turn, posted on *trustea's* social media platforms. Further, these materials were also shared through WhatsApp (as well as through the messaging feature of the *tracetea* App) to reach a wider audience.

- *trustea* along with its IPs, supported IDH in facilitating the funding for COVID-19 insurance, towards income security to the associated STGs; the insurance cover provides a one-time lump sum pay-out to the insured in case they are infected with the Novel Coronavirus.

## Information Technology (IT) Systems



- Complied with globally benchmarked Data Governance protocols by incorporating the web based *trustea* Code management system. All certification and handhold support activities are being facilitated by this system, supported through the field level mobile applications towards capturing evidence for auditing.
- To facilitate effective learning for small tea growers, we created animated videos in 5 vernacular languages (Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Tamil and Malayalam) on the following topics:
  - a) Waste and Pollution Management
  - b) Product Traceability
  - c) Workers' Health, Safety and 'Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act 2013'
  - d) Plant Protection Formulation
  - e) Biodiversity
- Implemented pilot of "tracetea" (a digital tea traceability system) in a large tea factory in Tamil Nadu.

# Implementation Partners

The implementation partners (IPs) of *trustea* include Tea Research Association (TRA), Action for Food Production (AFPRO) and Reviving Green Revolution (RGR) – an initiative of Tata Trust. Over 25 experts from these IPs were instrumental in providing the on ground support in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal. The IPs catered to over 670 entities (i.e. tea estates, BLFs etc.) and trained over 9,000 STGs on the *trustea* programme.

## Key functions of the IPs:

- Train and handhold the tea estates, STGs and tea workers through the methodologies for sustainable tea cultivation and production, in line with the *trustea* programme.
- Facilitate learning and execution of best practices.
- Facilitate implementation of environment protection, women empowerment, prevention of child labour, safety of tea workers, livelihood enhancement etc.

“*trustea* has brought awareness to sustainability across the tea-producing community. Apart from the certification itself, it has created an impact by hand-holding and providing implementation support to different segments of the tea supply chain.”

### Mr Arun Kumar Ray

Former Deputy Chairman, Tea Board India  
(extracted from *trustea*'s Impact Report published in September 2020)



# Feeling the change: Farmers' stories

These stories highlight the progress and the positive impact *trustea* has created in the entire tea industry. The stories of beneficiaries make it evident that the adoption of the *trustea* Code has brought economic and health benefits to an enormous amount of people in the supply chain.

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



**Gogon Gogoi**, STG associated with Lekhapani Tea Company, a unit of DPG Group, explains, “We have been associated with *trustea* for the last 4 years. With its intervention, we were exposed to various types of training on the recommended agricultural practices for tea cultivation and knowledge on banned and prohibited agrochemicals. We are now following the recommended

practice for storing and segregating fertilisers. *trustea* has helped us in buffer-zone identification and we have strictly maintained it. Fertilisers are stored in a dry and ventilated place. The list of banned chemicals has been affixed on the walls of the chemical storage godown to create awareness among the workers. We have also been maintaining the ‘Farm Diary’ introduced by the *trustea* programme to record farm-related details such as green leaf production, chemicals, fertilisers used etc.”

“ With the continuous support and training given by the *trustea* IPs, we have successfully been implementing sustainability practices on our farm.”



**Gautam Debnath, Supervisor, Lekhapani Tea Company declared** “We have been associated with *trustea* for the last 4 years. *trustea* provided us a framework of good agricultural practices and we have been imbibing them.

We have been trained on pre-harvest activities (such as soil, water, nutrient and pest management), along with matters on harvest and post-harvest. Only after joining the *trustea* programme, did we start using organic pesticides and PPC-approved chemicals. We have earmarked separate chemical mixing areas and are storing chemicals and fertilisers in separate rooms which have access control. Workers engaged in chemical spraying are using proper techniques and safety measures. We have also been trained on flora and fauna conservation and the ways to protect our environment.”



**Himangshu Roy, Manager, Bought Leaf Factory, Lekhapani Tea Company, shares** “We have been associated with *trustea* for the last 4 years. We have 400 STGs supplying green leaves to our factory. The *trustea* programme is improving the lives of tea workers as well as focusing on the environment. The *trustea* programme has helped us implement good

manufacturing practices in our BLF, by facilitating a healthy and safe workplace to our workers. Regular training has been provided to all the workers on health and safety measures, personal hygiene, waste management etc. Training has also been provided on food safety, besides MRL testing of the tea manufactured. Several checkpoints to ensure food safety in tea production such as presence of pesticide residues, heavy metals, iron filings, toxic substances etc have been established. Training has been provided on differentiating hazardous, non-hazardous and biomedical wastes. Protocols are followed for their segregation, storage, handling and disposal. Colour-coded bins are used for waste segregation and they are disposed of through vendors approved by the Pollution Control Board. We have also implemented effective wastewater treatment and sewage-management systems.”



**Jyotsna Garg, Tea Plucker, Amraboti Tea Garden, Assam, shares,** “We have been associated with the *trustea* programme for the last 5 years. Prior to that, we were not receiving fair wages but the *trustea* Code ensured fair wages, in line with the legal mandate. We are now paid equal to men for similar types of work. There have been no incidences of child labour after the *trustea* programme was implemented. The medical facilities provided have helped improve the health of our family members.”



**Alias Raito, Sprayer, in a *trustea* certified garden, mentions** “After *trustea*’s intervention, we used PPC and FSSAI-approved chemicals within the allowed Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). We are only using the recommended chemicals and are increasingly replacing them with organic chemicals. We have designated areas for mixing, storage, segregation and the disposal of chemicals. We use PPE kits like aprons, gloves, masks, slippers, goggles, etc. while handling chemicals. We clean ourselves before going home and this has helped reduce health risks associated with chemical exposure.”

**Neeta Tiwari, *trustea* Coordinator, ML Dalmia Group, describes the interventions made by the *trustea* programme:**

“We follow the *trustea* guidelines and are using only Plant Protection Code (PPC) approved molecules and maintaining buffer zones, mixing zones and practicing Integrated Pest Management (IPM). As a result of these practices, we could remarkably minimize soil and water pollution. We have observed and recorded that the volume of our chemical consumption has come down drastically with the introduction of biochemical agents and Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK) in the field. MLD Group is putting a sincere effort to prevent depletion of the water table by adopting suitable measures in the field, factories and households. We are using tensiometers (a measuring instrument) to optimize water usage for irrigation. To check the loss of water in evapotranspiration, we irrigate the plants during night hours. A regular maintenance of irrigation equipment has minimised water wastage. We got these results by imparting training to our workers regarding the efficient use of water and thus were able to minimize wastage. Moreover, participation in various awareness programmes has helped develop a sense of responsibility in our workers.

We observed that practices such as maintaining buffer zones near natural water bodies in line with the *trustea*



guidelines have prevented chemical contamination in water bodies. The trained sprayers can easily identify the buffer zone boundaries, as the black and yellow bands are clearly visible, even from a distance. Further, regular training is imparted to workers to encourage them to use toilets, which helps to prevent microbiological contamination, a natural benefit brought by the *trustea* programme to ML Dalmia Group. (In Neeta's words) The *trustea* verification has added value to our product as it ensures product quality as well as safety of our customers. The demonstrations from the *trustea* programme have helped us establish sustainable relationships with various tea procurers. Compliance to the *trustea* Code enables us to comply with national and international sustainability standards due to its structured approach. The impact is clearly visible as we can notice healthy flora and fauna in and around our estates. Also, efficient waste management practices such as using dustbins for segregated waste, selling hazardous waste to authorized vendors only (and not burning any waste) are helping us to prevent contamination of water bodies.”

“ Introduction and adoption of the *trustea* programme has enabled us to address environmental, social, economical and legal concerns across our supply chain. Taking a holistic approach, we are able to reduce the waste and environmental footprint at every step while improving the health and safety of our employees. The *trustea* Code has made us understand that we can conserve resources, optimise processes, increase productivity, while promoting organisational values.”



**Nakul Sawachi, STG Supplier, Surya Tea Factory in Tinsukia Assam, says,** “I have been associated with the *trustea* programme since 2015, through Surya Tea Factory. Since then, we have been receiving training on garden management and on how to use chemicals. We have learned to use chemicals that are on the PPC approved list of chemicals and we apply fertilisers in the recommended quantities, thereby we’re able to save on chemicals and fertilisers. It has enabled us to supply good quality tea leaves to the factory.”

*trustea* thanks its partners HUL and AFPRO for their valued support towards capturing this success story!



**Nirmola Moran,** another STG Supplier to Surya Tea Factory in Tinsukia Assam, mentions, “Before *trustea*’s interventions, we were not aware of good agricultural practices. Due to *trustea*, we have now adopted good agricultural practices such as soil testing, green-leaf plucking, trapping etc.. This has also helped us to fetch good prices for green leaves. We are also trained on how to segregate chemicals, store and dispose of empty containers. We have also been trained on flora and fauna conservation.”

*trustea* thanks its partners HUL and AFPRO for their valued support towards capturing this success story!



At 79, **Ann Poyser** is the first lady tea planter of Assam, with over 30 years of tea plantation experience. She has Anglo-Indian parentage; her father was British and mother an Adivasi. In 1990, Ann started planting tea in the Poyserbari Tea Estate, 20 kms from Digboi, in Upper Assam’s Tinsukia district. Poyserbari Tea Estate is one of the cleanest and most well-maintained tea gardens in Pengree. It produces 1.2 lakh KGs of green leaves annually.

“I first started planting tea on the 50 bigha of land gifted to me by my mother. Earlier, I did not know much about tea plantations, but I learnt how to plant tea bushes from the tea labourers. The work helped me learn a lot about tea,” she said.

“*trustea* is an organisation that will improve social, economic, agronomic and environmental performance of Indian tea estates, smallholders and bought-leaf factories” Ann said.

The Manager of Poyserbari Tea Estate, Hesam Ansari, said: “Ann Poyser is an inspiration for women who want to start a tea business. She has worked hard to build the tea estate. We are a *trustea*-certified tea garden. We got associated with *trustea* 3 years back and learnt many things.”

*trustea* thanks its partner HUL for its valued support towards capturing this success story!

# Driving innovations

To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme, *trustea* has implemented the following IT initiatives:

## 1. E-Learning Application

A comprehensive video-based online-training program that helps *trustea* officers, verified entities and auditors to access learning materials on the *trustea* Code. This will serve as a guide towards effective implementation of the Code. *trustea* has imparted training to over 1,000 beneficiaries and has certified them; over 500 trainees are in the pipeline for certification.

Audio-Visual Training



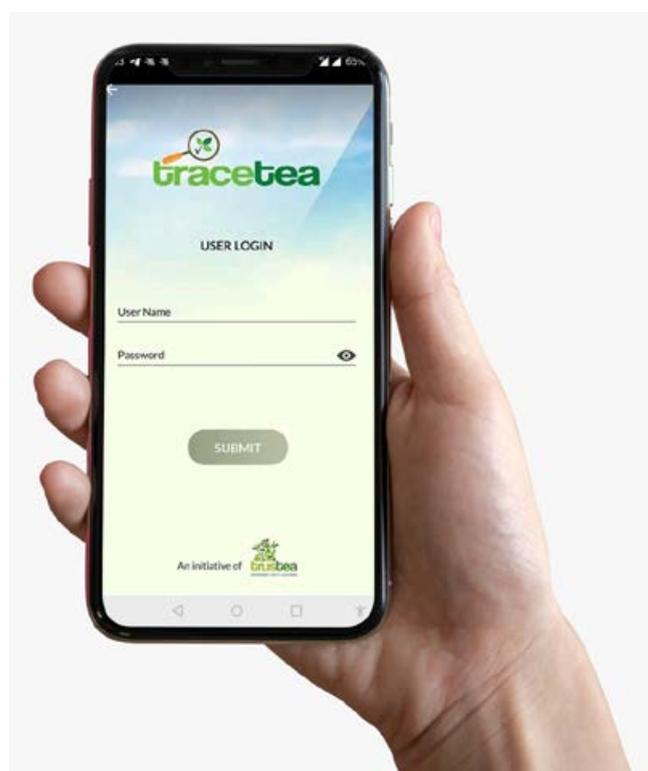
## 2. Animated Tutorials for STGs

A character based animated video learning module facilitating ease of learning for STGs, is available in 5 vernacular languages viz. Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Tamil and Malayalam. The first learning series has been released on 5 important topics namely, 'Waste and Pollution Management', 'Product Traceability', 'Workers' Health, Safety and Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act 2013', 'PPF' and 'Biodiversity'. This series is expected to help around 70,000 STGs understand the *trustea* Code, its implication and impact on the environment, safety and livelihood.



## 3. *tracetea* Application

Despite the pandemic situation, *trustea* conducted pilot for "tracetea" in the state of Tamil Nadu, in a tea company. Over 3,000 growers have been registered in the "tracetea" App; 0.67 Mn KGs of tea have been captured with over 1900 transactions and 53 invoices generated. "tracetea" has proved itself as the only end-to-end traceability and supply chain management system in the tea industry. Further, "tracetea" is compliant with the block chain technology specifications.



# Key events during 2020

21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> January

*trustea* auditors' training program (participation from 38 representatives across 11 organisations).



30<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> January

Multi-thematic interactive sessions conducted around Assurance System Improvement with participation from 3 Ips, 8 CBs and the CPs.



2<sup>nd</sup> February

Second council meeting of *trustea* Sustainable Tea Foundation



April-July

Awareness campaign executed by *trustea* in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.



26<sup>th</sup> August

Third council meeting of *trustea* Sustainable Tea Foundation.



21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> September

*trustea* Program Partner Conference (2-days long virtual conference with 68 diverse participants).



19<sup>th</sup> October

*trustea* Secretariat moved to a new office.



# Glimpses of events during 2020

## Discussion Sessions on Assurance System Improvement (30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020)



## trustea auditors' training program (21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020)



## trustea Program Partner Conference



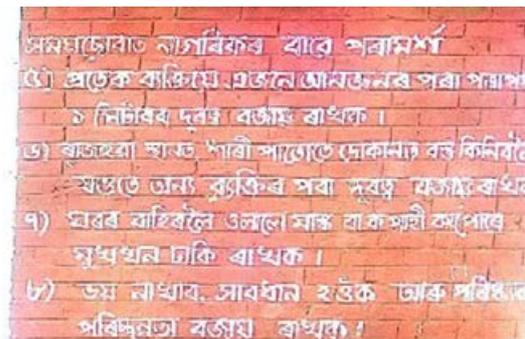
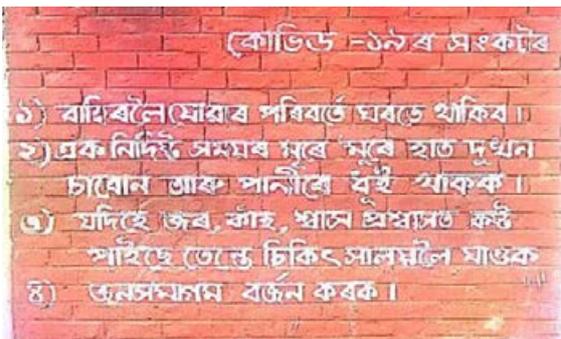
3<sup>rd</sup> Council Meeting



trustea's 'Impact Report'



Awareness campaign - covid 19





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