

YEAR BOOK 2023

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



“Be a global citizen. Act with passion and compassion. Help us make this world safer and more sustainable today and for the generations that will follow us. That is our moral responsibility.”

Ban Ki-moon

Former Secretary-General
of the United Nations

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The year in review



As we look back on the year gone by, we would definitely not miss the ever-increasing impact of climate change all around us. In fact, 2023 was the first year on record that saw more than 50% of the days clocking 1.5 degrees centigrade above the average pre-industrial level temperatures of the period 1850-1890. This is significant since the Paris Climate Agreement pledged to limit the global temperatures to just this level. So, our planet was at the brink for most of the year. Added to this were extreme and irregular weather events. This is taking a toll not only on humanity but also on the natural ecosystem.

Tea cultivation too is showing clear signs of stress due to the climate change impact. Trustea takes the current scenario as a call to action to work together with the Indian tea industry to build a resilient and sustainable tea supply chain. The newly launched trustea Code Version 3 is an action-oriented mandate to transition to long term sustainable practices. The trustea team and our implementation partners are working actively on-ground across the country towards this goal.

In addition, we are continuously working on ways to deliver meaningful impact to the supply chain actors at the bottom of the pyramid, namely the workers and the Small Tea Growers. We will present a detailed report on the impact of the trustea program in the upcoming Impact Report to be released in June this year.

In terms of certification coverage, 2023 was another year which saw the expansion of our new volume coverage by more than 100 million kgs. With this, about 70% of the tea produced in India is certified to trustea today.

I am happy to announce that in 2023, the trustea code was accorded the Code Compliant Status by ISEAL, a very prestigious recognition. This corroborates that the trustea code is at par with the best-in-class global sustainability standards. You will now notice the ISEAL code compliant seal with our organisation logo.



Rajesh Bhuyan
Director

Trustea Sustainable
Tea Foundation

We look forward to an exciting year ahead by continuing to deliver deeper impact keeping with the expectations of all our stakeholders, whose continued support drives us to work with renewed energy and commitment year on year.

Rajesh Bhuyan

Kolkata, May 2024



2023 in numbers

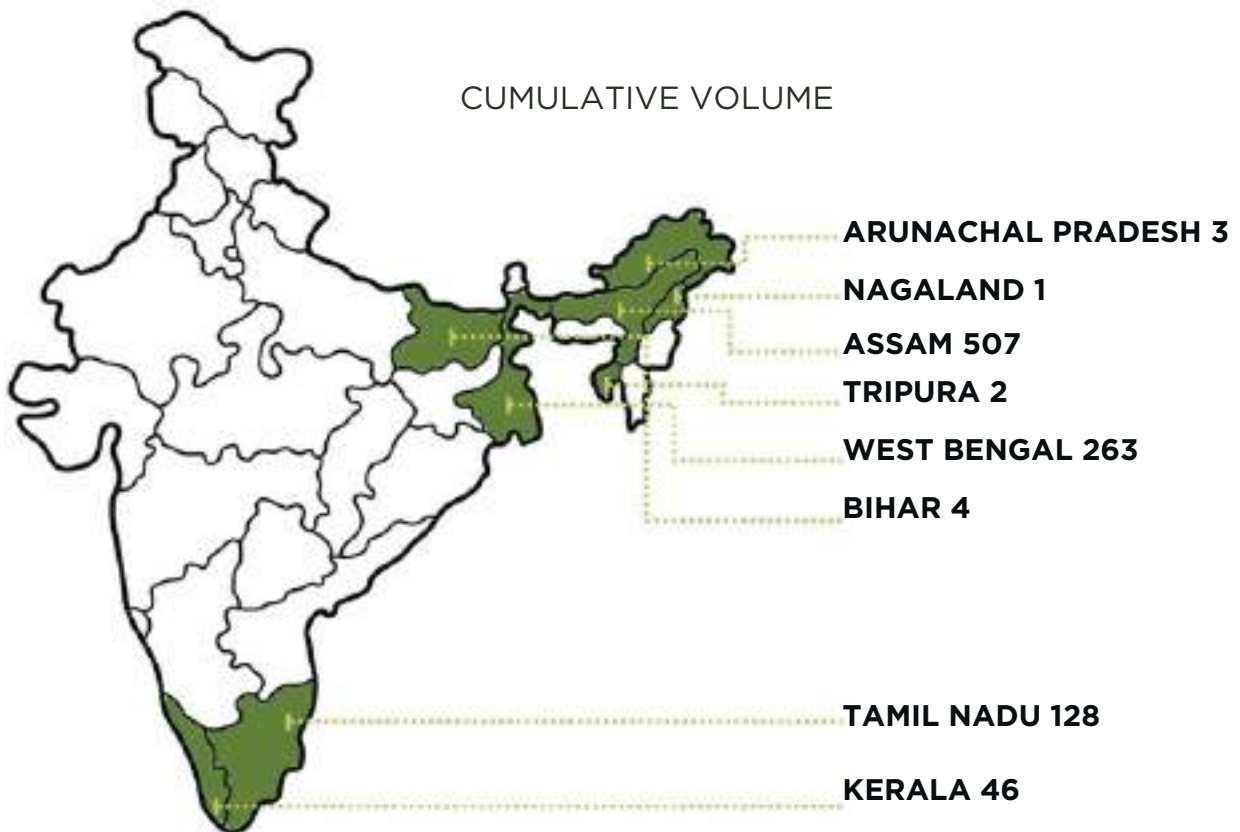


TEA VERIFIED - exit 2023

(in Mn KGs)

ESTATES	449
BLFs	505
TOTAL	954

CUMULATIVE VOLUME



TOTAL - 954 Mn KGs

*Note: The depiction of the boundaries in the map is for general illustration purpose only



FEMALE WORKERS REACHED **383,131**

MALE WORKERS REACHED **301,001**

STGs SUPPORTED **135,250**

TOTAL ENTITIES VERIFIED
(BLF, Estates)

704

BLFs **341**

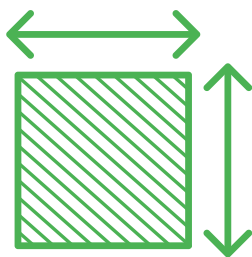
ESTATES **255**

ESTATES + BOUGHT LEAF **108**

STGs (New STGs added in 2023) **24,524**



AREA COVERED (IN HECTARES)



GARDEN (Grant Area) **354,601**

CROP (Estate Tea Area) **222,460**

BLF **178,488**

ADOPTION OF TRACETEA

FARMERS **61,922**

AGGREGATORS **601**

BLFs **104**





AUDITS CONDUCTED

RECERTIFICATION AUDITS **265**

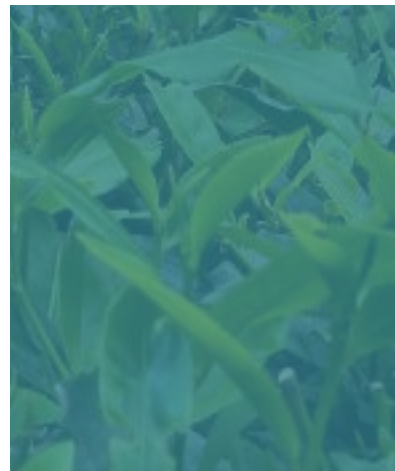
CERTIFICATION AUDITS **89**

SYSTEM ASSURANCE AUDITS **56**

AUDITS DONE **DIGITALLY** **385**

REGISTERED E-LEARNING
USERS FOR 2023

1,418



About trustea



trustea is an Indian sustainability code and verification system for the tea sector that endeavours bringing sustainability to environment, welfare to communities, quality and health safety to consumers.

The code enables producers, buyers and others involved in Indian tea businesses to obtain tea that has been produced according to agreed, credible, transparent and measurable criteria. trustea is working with smallholder tea growers, bought leaf factories, estates and packers to address some of the key challenges in the industry including working conditions, health & safety of tea workers, water pollution, food safety, soil erosion & contamination, gender issues and adverse effects of climate change.

Towards strengthening trustea's mandate on sustainability, 'trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation' has been incorporated. The Foundation has been registered under 'Section 8' of the Company's Act. The Foundation will be managing the trustea Program independently.

Our mission

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 & disease control, living wages, worker welfare & equality, preservation of biodiversity, and improvement of livelihood of smallholders.

Our vision

An Indian tea industry providing high quality and safe tea for consumers, good livelihoods for producers, workers and their families, whilst at all times caring for the natural environment.



Seal on pack



The goal of trustea is to support change for better at the grassroots so that consumers can buy ethically and safely produced tea. Towards this, we launched the trustea seal that can be used by members for retail distribution and consumption of tea that is trustea verified. This includes tracing the tea back to gardens and factories that are compliant with our code. In 2023, three of Indian's largest retailers - **Hindustan Unilever Ltd.**, **Tata Consumer Products**, **Gujarat Tea Processors and Packers Ltd.** - launched the trustea seal on some of their tea brands. We are now promoting the trustea seal via consumer ads on social media as part of our outreach.



Brooke Bond 3 Roses
(Hindustan Unilever)



Chakra Gold
(Tata Tea)



Brooke Bond Taj Mahal
(Hindustan Unilever)



Mili Premium
Wagh Bakri

Brands currently with the trustea seal



trustea code Version 3.0



A revised version of the trustea Code was published in 2023. This came as a response to the current needs of the industry, and in consultation with our stakeholders.

Highlights of the trustea Code Verson 3.0 are:

Regenerative agriculture

Regenerative agriculture is a key focus area. It allows us to tap into indigenous knowledge and practices, reduce dependence on chemicals, and improve soil, plant and people health. We believe it's the only way to ensure our industry remains sustainable. Our team has been working with all our members towards the steps involved in transitioning to the new code and planning the necessary training. to implement regen practices and to support them with a roadmap for regenerative agriculture.

The new Code includes several aspects of regenerative agriculture as seen in chapters

E-1 Soil Health Management

E-2 Water Conservation

E-3 Agrochemical

E-4 Biodiversity

Our tea estates are home to several species of flora and fauna. They are more than just tea gardens, they are entire worlds whose vibrant biodiversity is our responsibility.



Chapter E1 - Soil Health Management

Healthy soil is tea's greatest ally. The soil ecosystem is driven by the millions and billions of microscopic biota that thrive in healthy soil. However, decades of conventional farming coupled with climate-induced soil erosion have been detrimental to soil health, affecting yield and quality. Soil health is in focus in the new trustea Code with several interventions planned towards curbing further damage while reviving existing soil. One requirement with the new code is the Soil Test Report (before and after certification) that includes soil organic matter, total soil microbial mass diversity and earthworm count.



Chapter S2 - Food Safety

On the field, we are working with all our members to improve awareness of chemical usage and compliance with chemical usage as approved by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Tea Board of India. Further, our tracetea app allows our members to identify the source of green leaf (and whether or not it's compliant) so that factories can segregate tea by source and compliance. Food safety protocols in the factory extend to hygiene and sanitation for the factory as well as all personnel.

Chapter G1 - General Management System

We are insisting on greater buy-in from the management to ensure greater accountability and compliance with the trustea Code. Mandatory requirements include the need for top management accountability towards programme compliance. They are expected to provide the necessary resources and personnel, facilitate the training needed to run interventions, and review the programme's audits and progress.

Women's safety

Chapter L1 - Fair Wages and Decent Work and L2 - Workers' Rights

Women's safety continues to be a priority area in the trustee Code given that over half the people employed in the Indian tea industry are women. In addition to gender parity in work and wages, we are working closely with our members to raise awareness about women's rights, the PoSH Act, and the grievance mechanisms available to women. All members have instituted an internal committee which is the access point for women in distress. The Committee members are trained and tasked with the outreach programmes on various safety aspects including sexual harassment.

Every member is required to

- Institute a policy to prevent and address sexual harassment and other forms of violence
- Establish an Internal Committee to ensure lawful functioning
- Ensure that all complaints of sexual harassment or violence are given due consideration.



Regenerative agriculture



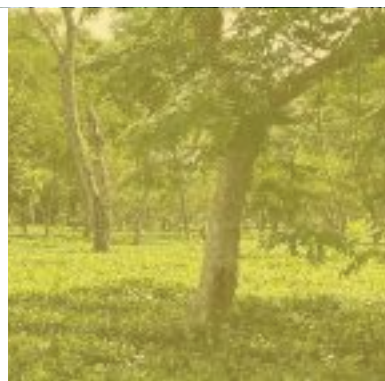
The trustea Code version 3.0, launched in July 2023, has been structured to provide a toolkit for transition to a low carbon tea production regime. The focus on regenerative agriculture will lead to healthier soils, improved yields and resilient tea bushes, thereby optimising the use of agrochemicals. trustea version 3.0 also provides an action-oriented roadmap for sustainable energy management. In partnership with the Indian tea supply chain, we look forward to an exciting new era of tea production in India that contributes proactively to India's net zero emission goals.

On the field, this translates to:

- Reduced tillage to build soil biology
- Cover cropping to suppress weeds and prevent nutrient leaching
- Composting to improve crop and soil productivity
- Mulching to aid water conservation
- Livestock integration to reduce dependence on chemical fertiliser



We are working towards the goal of **net zero carbon emissions** for the Indian tea industry. The solution lies in regenerative agriculture.



“Our estate has taken a dedicated approach to regeneration and some positive changes across various aspects of the estate can be seen now. For instance, we have planted Guatemala grass and vetiver which are excellent at stabilising soil and reducing erosion on slopes and protecting against runoff. We have also adopted extensive intercropping, planting lime, coffee, pepper, clove, avocado, and areca.

In adopting regenerative agri practices, there is a transition period before we can see the benefits. Some farmers are resistant to change. But it’s not a new practice. In fact, organic farming shares some principles with regenerative agriculture while practices like agroforestry and cover cropping have been around for a long time.

Overall, trustea’s interventions can significantly benefit our estate by promoting sustainable practices, improving efficiency, ensuring better product quality, and supporting the welfare of workers and the environment. These interventions help create a more ethical, sustainable, and successful tea production system that benefits both producers and consumers.”

Rousdonmoullai in Gudalur in the Nilgiris is spread across 900 acres and owned by Cadila Pharmaceuticals Ltd. Ahmedabad.



Manoj D. Archibald

General Manager
Rousdonmullai Estate



Technology tools



Made in **India**
Made for **Indian tea**

2023 saw a successful rollout of our tracetea app. It is the first mobile app to support tea producers in India, irrespective of their size or scale of production. Tracetea has been designed to suit the needs of everyone in the tea value chain, ensuring ease-of-use. Tracetea streamlines the supply chain with:

- Collection supply (farmer to factory)
- Online leaf purchase and sale register
- Supply chain authentication through QR
- Offline operation
- Digital farm diary management
- A web-based dashboard for factories
- Backward and forward traceability

Adoption of tech tools by trustea members

Our implementation partners understand that not all our members are technologically savvy. During on-the-ground training, they reported that members were willing to learn about the technology tools available to them. They adopted the tracetea app quickly once they experienced its ease of use and benefits.



Making the journey from leaf to cup **transparent** and **traceable**

Farmers

South India	29,142
Assam	26,624
West Bengal	13,805
NE India	919

Aggregators

West Bengal	467
Assam	227
South India	83

Bought Leaf Factories

Assam	37
West Bengal	34
South India	27

*As of exit 2023

TraceteaMap

Checking deforestation is high on our focus areas, as a step towards protecting the environment. Towards this, we have added **traceteaMAP** as part of the trustea GIS system, to study the land patterns of tea farms. Its advantages are that it:

- Allows for better record-keeping of location, especially of small holders and tea estates
- Includes both demographic and generation information
- Identifies forest land and land use patterns of tea farms since 2013 which allows for a better understanding of the impact of tea cultivation on the environment
- Is available to trustea members and non-members



Testimonials



Pinku Hensua

Traceability Officer
Hunjyoti Tea Factory
Dibrugarh, Assam

“This app is helping us in various ways specially accessing challans from agents and lead farmers. Previously agents and lead farmers used to give us manual challans but this app helped us in receiving digital challan wherein leaf quantity supplied by individual growers is also mentioned. This app also helping us in maintaining backward and forward Traceability records.”

“I am a green leaf supplying agent. I collect green leaves from the growers and supply them to the factory. I downloaded the tracetea app and have benefited in several ways. For instance, while going for leaf collection I can keep all records through this app and also vehicle movement records to the factory. I can keep a track of all necessary data with this app.”



Pran Jyoti Gogoi

Aggregator

Digital audits

Three years ago, we replaced our older DBMS application with the trustea Code Management System or the TCMS. This was designed to ensure efficiency in terms of audit protocol, evidence collection & compliance as per code requirements. TCMS forms the backbone of the trustea programme and is used by auditors, implementation partners, and the trustea team. It has helped in transitioning from previous manual audits.





Arul Durai S

Program Manager
RGR Cell, South India

“The Trustea Code Management System (TCMS), which serves as the backbone of the trustea’s implementation program, has proven invaluable for us in executing the program at the grassroots level. We are consistently able to update and upload the necessary documents within the system, ensuring our reporting mechanisms are meticulously reviewed and monitored by the trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation (tSTF). Notably, we have encountered no gaps in document uploads, and the platform’s user-friendliness and supportive features have significantly expedited our field implementation efforts. We unequivocally regard TCMS as an indispensable tool that greatly facilitates the successful execution of our program.”



“I would like to congratulate all those who have given their continuous effort and made innovative ideas for the development of the TCMS portal. The tool is very useful and easy to operate for the auditors in the field and Factory. TCMS is a customized operation management system. It conducts good practices of regular functionalities and runs based on standard. TCMS app is for capturing evidence during trustea audit and implementation by auditors. By using this app, implementation auditors can take evidence during assessment. Auditors and trustea officials can also take evidence during certification, recertification, and system assurance audit. Through this app auditors put their attendance during audit duration.



Paran Kumar Choudhury

Lead Auditor - trustea
IMS, Food Safety & Sustainability
COTECNA

This app was last updated on May 3, 2024. Continuous updating of the TCMS app is a great effort to fulfill an auditor’s requirement. I have observed persons behind TCMS accepting the auditor’s problem while working in the app in a highly positive way and giving solutions forthwith irrespective any time of the day or the night. In my opinion development of such an app encompassing all aspects of tea manufacturing and supporting sustainability across the chain by improving productivity, quality and maintaining safety standards is unparalleled as compared to any other sustainability code existing globally. In future I would like to see AI technology adopted in TCMS portal for further making it different than any other sustainability code globally.”



Shakeel Jahan

Lead Auditor - trustea
TÜV NORD

“tCMS has revolutionized our certification process, offering seamless integration and transparency at every stage. Its real-time updates ensure swift progress tracking, eliminating delays. The robust data management tools empower us to make informed decisions, enhancing certification integrity. Backed by an exceptional support team, tCMS is not just a software but a catalyst for positive change in the auditing field for the tea industry. We proudly endorse tCMS and commend trustea for their visionary leadership.”



“The replacement for the older DBMS system,

Trustea’s TCMS system, has been in use by us for more than 3 years. The new avatar of the TCMS system envisages a faster and more reliable reporting and compliance management system, which has now been available in Android as well as as a web portal and is currently well received by our field personnel. It helps in reducing time spent writing lengthy reports, uploading evidence, and one-button generation of a “Completion of Training and Capacity Building (CTCB)” certificate. Though all was not smooth sailing and TCMS had its own hiccups on many occasions, I would like to appreciate the efforts of trustea and its officials in problem solving and their quick response in bringing solutions to tackle those challenges. For our units, this has helped to verify their compliance level in reports, as well as provide a single-window approach to viewing, requesting an audit or implementation partner for handholding, and providing ways to learn more about trustea and reference guides for the same.



Minakshi Sharma

Assistant Regional Manager
AFPRO-NE

We are thankful to the entire trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation team for their continued support and timely redressal of our issues and problems faced during our trustea implementation process.”

Training



200+
hours were spent in
training in **2023**

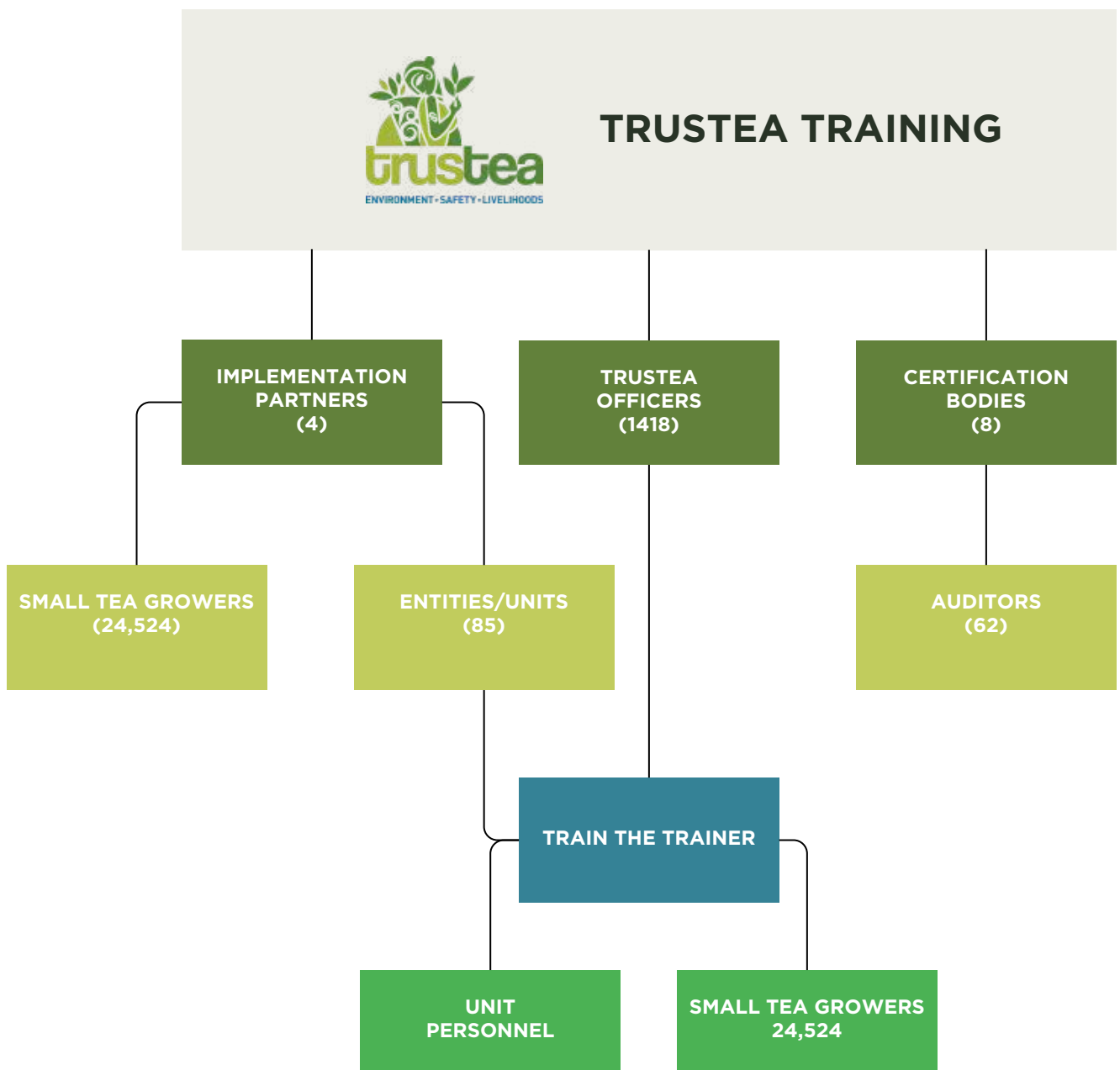
Training is key to our mission to empower our stakeholders to implement sustainable practices effectively. Continuous training ensures that everyone involved - from certification body auditors to implementing partners - speaks the same language when it comes to trustea standards. This not only ensures consistency and understanding of the requirements of the code but also builds trust in our certification process. As sustainability standards evolve, ongoing training ensures we are up to date with the latest best practices and trends in the tea industry.

Our training is tailored to identify gaps through a Training Needs Analysis matrix and includes updates on recent changes, refresher sessions, and overarching concerns that our auditors may have. Additionally, we host an annual system assurance review where we engage with all our certification and implementation partners to understand any on-ground concerns and review the programme progress.



Our training calendar includes sessions every six months for certification body (CB) auditors. This is done in-person to facilitate comprehensive learning and interaction. For implementing personnel (IP), there are field trainings to provide practical insights and hands-on experience in the application of trustea standards. Further, online training modules are available, tailored to individual needs based on evaluation. These modules offer flexibility and accessibility, allowing stakeholders to engage with the material at their own pace.

In 2023, there were notable enhancements to the training program. Alongside the regular sessions, special attention was given to the introduction of the new standard V3, ensuring that stakeholders were well-prepared for its implementation. Furthermore, a consolidated training and interactive session brought together all CB auditors and IP personnel annually. This gathering fostered collaboration, shared learning, and alignment, contributing to the overall effectiveness of trustea's certification process.



Training Impact

The impact of our training on STGs is seen in the greater awareness about the usage of safe chemicals (PPC list). Many of them are now familiar with what is allowed and what is banned. Some of the more progressive growers are increasingly relying on self-made biopesticides with others eager to learn how to make it themselves. There is a greater awareness on the need for a protective kit for the sprayers and segregation of these material to ensure that the personnel are safe and there is no contamination from the chemicals. STGs are also growing more aware of the importance of soil tests. They ask about the correct dosage of fertilisers and chemical applications to see better results and recognise the impact of indiscriminate usage on soil and environment.

The impact on BLFs has been that many of them have realised that statutory compliances like equal wages and PF benefits are to be extended to both their permanent and temporary workers. This has paved the way for a significant number of temporary workers being enrolled for PF benefits. Employers and employees are more aware of overtime laws with overtime wages paid where applicable. Factory cleanliness and food safety have been an area where the impact of trustea training is very visible. Safety measures, which were absent before, are being seen by way of protective gears and proper storage.

“Our observations on role of training can be narrated as below:

- Training has been the driving force for making the Management/staff & workers to become aware of what the standard is all about, the ethical practices & how one can work on its policies to bring about the required changes in the organisation.
- People are made aware of biodiversity, environment pollution, wastage of energy & other natural resources & how they can contribute in saving them in small ways in their daily activities.
- Workers are made aware of the existing risks in their daily jobs & the safety measures that can be taken up to minimise the same.
- Workers become aware of their rights, available laws, and whom they can reach for different problems.
- Training is not a one time activity, it has to be delivered frequently initially & once people become fully aware, it needs to be still there as a reminder from time to time so that the process continues to boost the morale of the trainees, help them remain updated & perform better.”



Tasneem S Ali

Consultant Sustainability,
TRA Tocklai

Agroforestry and utilising fallow land to plant trees are two interventions visible in most estates.

The trustea training has helped build business reputation by demonstrating a commitment to ethical practices.



Training related to women's safety comes with more challenges as it calls for a greater amount of time to build trust and encourage women to open up. However, many women have expressed a reluctance in reporting on harassment and non-awareness of laws to protect them from it. With the training, this awareness comes into focus along with access to an Internal Committee to support women at the workplace.



The success of our training initiatives relies on collective effort to ensure they are effective, engaging, and tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders.



Food safety



There are several areas where food safety interventions are done. With personnel hygiene and sanitation, we ask members to ensure that all personnel follow the protocols for cleanliness, besides having access to clean water, washing area and toilets. The factory is expected to meet the required cleanliness and quality checks, with prevention measures for contamination and pest control. Processing and storage areas are required to be maintained in a clean and hygienic way.

The onus of residue testing also rests with the factory. Residue testing is to be done twice a year in compliance with requirements stipulated by the Plant Protection Code (PPC) and FSSAI for tea.



Our members are expected to collect data and maintain documentation on:

- MRL Test reports through an approved/NABL-accredited lab (twice a year)
- Standard Operating Protocols (SOP) for food safety
- Training register on food safety SOP confirming effective communication (in the local language)
- Risk Assessment related to food safety and food contamination
- Health and hygiene register
- Pest control measures records
- Food grade certificate from the manufacturer



Dindoyal Verma
Surya Tea Industries

In Talap, Assam, Dindoyal Verma of Surya Tea Industries, (trustee member since 2015) has encouraged small tea growers to come together as self-help groups. This resulted in the Udayachal Chah Khetiyak Samabai Samity (formed in 2001) with 131 members, mainly working in tea cultivation. Working with the collective has helped him engage with them to improve cultivation processes, which has impacted both tea quality and price realisation.

“After trustee implementation, we have deputed a dedicated person for the SHG to look after their field operations like plucking good quality leaf, application of only PPC-approved pesticides, maintaining spraying, plucking, gap etc. This has made an excellent impact on leaf quality which has improved exponentially and also helped us in receiving pesticide risk free raw material.”

“I had no knowledge about food safety. After the trustee training programme, I gained knowledge about banned and approved chemicals. I look forward to more training, especially on chemicals to use during monsoons.”



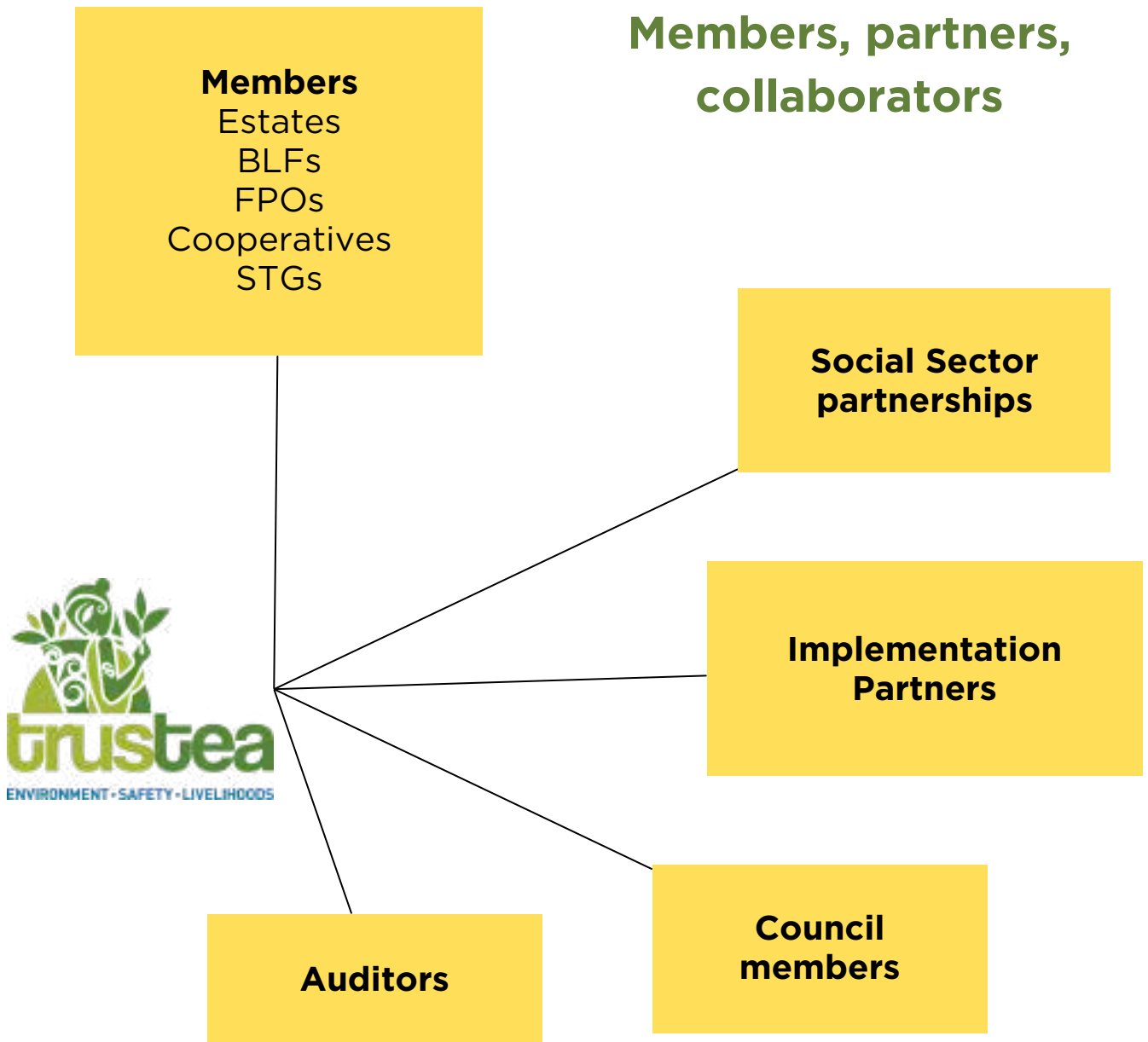
Tonkeswari Konwar
Dongarpathar Village,
Lahoal, Dibrugarh



Karuna Ray
Kheyerkhal,
Bhotepatty, Jalpaiguri

“Chemicals in tea means tea contains pesticides or harmful toxic elements. To ensure food safety in tea, our green leaf should not contain banned pesticides or any other toxic elements. With trustee training I could learn about the banned chemicals in tea of which I am now aware and do not wish to apply. I look for more support or training on sustainable agriculture practices from trustee.”

The trustea network



2023 in events



February

Rajesh Bhuyan was invited as panelist on a seminar on “Manufacturing Environment” organised by COTECNA

July

- **Launch of trustea Code Ver 3.0** as part of our 10 year celebrations
- **Revamped our website**
- **Ran a campaign #10Years10Stories** on our social media channels
- Launch of the **trustea brand film**
- Launch of a consumer campaign to promote our **Seal on Pack**

September

Hosted a **webinar on Workplace Safety** in the Indian Tea Industry

May

- **System Assurance Review**
- **Spill the Tea: How sustainable are the practices in our tea industry?** organised by Academy of Sciences, Malaysia. Rajesh Bhuyan and Anandita Ray Mukherjee from trustea were guest speakers

August

- Rajesh Bhuyan **interviewed by Tea Biz**
- Attended a **seminar on achieving living income** for small tea growers, hosted by IDH
- Began the training for **transition to the trustea Code Ver. 3**

December

- Hosted the **10th Council Meeting** of trustea
- We were independently evaluated against ISEAL’s Code of Good Practice, a globally recognised framework for effective, credible sustainability systems and **confirmed to be ISEAL Code Compliant.**

2023





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Tea Foundation**

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