

Wrath of Heat Hits Small Tea Growers

Kaustav Roy, Priyanka Bharadwaj



March and April depending on the region and the age of the tea bush. Initial feedback of the growers suggests that the loss may amount to over 40 per cent of the output. In Golaghat and Jorhat, tea farmers have experienced output as low as 5 kg to 6 kg from a bigha as compared to over 300 kg per month during these months in the previous years. In Uttar Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri, almost 60 per cent loss in production was reported in the months of March and April 2014

when compared to the same period in 2013.

"My production in March-April was only 650 kg, a loss of about 50 per cent," informed P Rongpi from Karbi Anglong District of Assam. Raheshwar Baruah from Tinsukia District said, "I have four bighas of land but production was only 1,000 kg. The loss is to the tune of Rs 13,200."

STGs also reported that attack of pests like looper caterpillar and red spider had intensified. In 2002-03, the budget announced crop insurance and subsequently some steps were taken by the Agriculture Insurance Company (Ltd) (AICL) towards this. "However, despite repeated assurances by the Tea Board of India and the AICL, it has not moved forward," informed Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, president, CISTA.

Against this background, CISTA has raised the demand that STGs be given financial compensation for crop loss, while additional expenditure and income loss be taken care of by the Tea Board from its own resources (or the board may convince the state government to provide the same). CISTA also wants steps to be taken to cover small tea growers under comprehensive crop insurance and has asked the Tea Board to take steps to ensure a long-term solution to the problem. Subsidy for irrigation facilities should be extended as part of the Tea Plantation Development Scheme (TPDS) for all small tea growers through primary producer societies/SHGs on a priority basis.

Millions of small tea growers across the country have been affected by a severe draught since the beginning of the plucking season this year. Throughout the month of April, lower rains have hit the output and quality of the crop. The absence of crop insurance has worsened the situation.

From 1 March to 23 April, Assam received 69 per cent less rainfall than normal, while rainfall in West Bengal was 63 per cent below average. The Indian Tea Association (ITA) (quoted in a news report) has noted that the total rainfall from January till 20 April this year has been 71 mm, against the water requirement of 310 mm. In Upper Assam (Margherita, Doom Dooma, Naharkatia, Tingri, Panitola, Dibrugarh, Moran) the rainfall was (-) 49 per cent; in Lower Assam (Sonari, Jorhat, Golaghat) it was (-) 25 per cent; in Dooars (Dam Dim, Nagrakata, Chala), West Bengal, it was (-) 35 per cent; in Terai (Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling District), West Bengal, it was (-) 40 per cent; and in Darjeeling it was (-) 37 per cent. Given the absence of irrigation facilities and the total dependence on rainfall, the continuing dry spell will have extreme repercussions.

As a result of the abnormally low rainfall since the beginning of the plucking season this year, the output of green leaf has reduced drastically. The primary producer societies formed by EqualiTea reported huge losses. In a year of normal rainfall, the production can be between 500 kg and 1,500 kg per acre per month during

Collective Leaf Trade Gives Windfall Gains to STGs

Leaf trade is the stage when small tea growers directly (avoiding leaf agents) sell their leaf to processing factories.

In 2013, members of 69 PPS (about 4500 STGs) who have been engaged in regular supply of tea leaves collectively to BLFs/ Estate Factories earned as high as Rs 72.19 million more than they were earning prior to project intervention.

The 69 PPS together handled leaf trade of Rs 180.79 million during 2013.

No	Month	Green TEA (kg)	Value (Rs)
1	Augst 2011. Starting	2,648	217
2	September "	7,274	386
3	October "	11,825	169
4	November "	7,614	527
5	December "	6,680	1,064
6	January 2012	6,706	790
7	February "	7,930	1,129
8	March "	9,490	1,296
9	April "	7,925	1,483
10	May "	15,229	1,531
11	June "	8,363	900
12	July "	11,558	3,196
13	August "	11,983	1,193
14	September "	7,970	1,295
15	October "	21,354	1,665
16	November "	9,849	966
17	December "	9,070	1,325
18	January 2013	9,512	1,374
19	February "	8,410	903
20	March "	11,130	957
21	April "	10,650	639
22	May "	7,222	400
23	June "	6,585	698
24	July "	15,403	723
25	August "	4,274	1,142
26	September "	13,269	1,312
27	October "	8,364	1,155
28	November "	15,530	701
29			
30			
Totals.		2,73,847	29,142

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Plant Protection Code for Tea

Tea Board of India (TBI) released Plant Protection Code Ver.01 in March 2014. Releasing the PPC, Siddarth, Chairman of TBI said, ""Tea Board is of the view that effective adoption for the Plant Protection Code will enable the tea industry to safeguard the plantation environment, ensure welfare of the workers and small farmers and long-term security of supply. Consumers are increasingly demanding sustainably produced higher quality products with reduced environmental impact. Given this objective and in order to sustain the ever increasing appetite for Indian tea amongst the consumers, the need for adopting correct plant protection practices has become imperative,"

Given below is the text of the Circular Ref.No.12(18)/LC/2010/5315 issued by TBI on March 21, 2014.

Ref. No. 12(18)/LC/2010/5315

Dated: 21st March 2014

All Producers Associations

Given the growing awareness amongst consumers on the need for using safer, healthier and more environmentally friendly products, it has become necessary for adherence to safety standards to improve quality compliance in production of Tea. Hence, effective adoption of the food safety standards will enable tea industry in facing the sustainability challenges; safeguard the plantation environment, welfare of the workers and long term security of supply. These challenges are to be addressed with a sense of urgency. The need for judicious usage of plant protection formulation (PPFs) has become more imperative. Accordingly, a Plant Protection Code (PPC) has been developed by the Board with the following objectives.

- The PPC aims to achieve sustainability through good agricultural practises (GAP) including integrated pest management, promotion of alternative control strategies (Biological control etc.) to gradually reduce the dependence on chemicals.
- The focus of the code is on the responsible chemical management that includes proper selection, judicious usage, safe storage and proper disposal, occupational health and safety and green

chemistry.

- The ultimate objective of the PPC is toward minimising the possible negative impact of pesticides on humans, wildlife and the environment. It will be achieved through effective governance, review and monitoring.

Now, in exercise of the power vested under paragraph 13 of the Tea Marketing (Control) Order, 2003, the following directives are issued to all Producers Associations to advise all their constituent member tea gardens for compliance with immediate effect:

1. All the tea plantations in India use only such Plant Protection Formulations (PPFs) - as per the recommendations of the Tea Research Institutes and theta have been cleared and registered by the Central Insecticides Board and Registration Committee, Government of India, - with label claim on tea and re. The approved list of pesticides for use of gardens is given in Annex-I.
2. All tea Plantations shall allow the Advisory officers of TRA & UPASI TRF during their visit to the tea gardens to take the inventory of PPFs used in each garden for compliance with the approved list mentioned in Annex-I. For non- members gardens of TRIs and ADTDs of Tea Board

will carry out similar exercise.

Tea gardens as and when they purchase the PPFs may send a sample for testing to the Tea Research Institutes to check its purity.

1. All the tea Plantations shall keep the records of usage of PPFs.
2. All tea Plantations should follow IPM as per recommendations of Tea Research Institutes.
3. The PPFs should not be used near the water bodies, wildlife habitats and human dwelling to ensure that there is no contamination beyond the application area.
4. There should be designated areas for preparation of spray fluids with clear signage for the workers. These areas must be away from any natural water bodies, drinking water sources, children's play areas, food stores, clinics and fish ponds.
5. The PPFs must be store safely and correctly in facilities which are dry, well ventilated and should not be accessible to children and unauthorized people. The storage facility should be away from food and feed.
6. Storage areas should display information on hazardous chemicals in a way which is

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Stepping in: NABARD Visits PPSs in North Bengal

Kaustav Roy

The month of May was marked by significant developments for the small tea growers of Jalpaigudi and Uttar Dinajpur. Following a meeting with J John, executive director, CEC, a delegation from NABARD visited the small tea growers in this area on 23-24 May 2014. Their main objective was to identify the scope for potential engagement in the sector. On the first day the delegation interacted with the stakeholders in Uttar Dinajpur. A meeting was organised at the municipality hall. Ms Gail, chairman, Eastern Zone, attended the meeting. Small growers interacted with the officials through questions put forward to them based on the ground realities. Two most important issues that emerged were: a) need for credit to get small growers out of the traps of middlemen and b) climbing up the value chain and the possibility of having a producers company of small tea growers.

NABARD officials also visited tea estates and bought leaf factories and met Tea Board officials. The EqualTea societies visited by the officials included Baba Loknath Small Tea Growers Society and Amguri Small Tea Growers Society. They also had a meeting with the Jalpaiguri District Small Tea Growers Society.

The visit enabled the delegation to understand the views and concerns of STGs and also ascertain how NABARD could play an enabling role.

Potential STG Collectives in Arunachal Pradesh

Ashish Goyary

Miao is a small town in Changlang District of Arunachal Pradesh. The sprawling evergreen forests and beautiful hills of the Patkai Range mark this town. Tea has been grown here for a long time. There are about three tea gardens that have been in existence for over 30 years. In recent times, small tea growers have also started to dot the landscape. Beginning 2005, small farmers who were earlier into jhum cultivation took to tea. At present there are over 1,800 growers in Miao and Bordumsa subdivisions.

A critical gap at the moment is the absence of processing facilities. There are only two bought leaf factories in Miao and this is not sufficient. Growers give the leaf to agents to be taken to factories in Assam. On their part, the agents keep a huge margin. The situation is exacerbated by the growers' lack of technical knowledge about tea.

Centre for Education and Communication initiated its work in Arunachal Pradesh on 26 April 2014. An initial survey of the area revealed that the STGs were not aware of the existence of the Tea Board or of the financial and technical benefits offered by the Tea Board. They were fully dependent on the leaf agents. CEC has been networking with the growers and is exploring the possibility of forming PPSs and getting them registered.

Small Tea Grower Collectives in Tinsukia

The project 'Sustainable Livelihoods for Small Tea Growers' envisages formation of primary producers' societies (PPSs) of growers who engage in collective leaf trade directly with bought leaf or estate factories. Some among them might graduate to the production of processed green or black tea. This column tracks the progress of these growers in Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

The list given below pertains to the societies formed in Tinsukia district of Assam in May - June 2014.

Primary Producer Societies (PPSs) formed in Tinsukia, Assam (May - June 2014)

Name of the Society	Location	No. of Members	President	Secretary	Date of Formation
Lakhimi STG Society	Lahual	45	Prabin Das	Tulshi Das	26 May 2014
Agroni STG Society	Matiakhana	40	Gajen Gogoi	Ranjit Dihingia	20 May 2014
Uttar Axom Tea Society	Barekuri	65	Gajen Gohain	Keshab Gohain	27 May 2014
Tagera STG Society	Itakhuli	45	Kumar Limbu	Kajalia Limbu	27 May 2014
Purbanchal STG Society	Dumsi Hatigarh	65	Dilip Moran	Balen Moran	29 May 2014
Kailashpur Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samiti	Kailaspur	45	P. Gogoi	P. Dutta	30 June 2014
Sorojmukhi STG Society	Baghjan, Doomdooma	35	Manoj Hazarika	Hemanta Maran	27 June 2014
Sonali Khudra Chah Khetiyok Sewa Samiti	Guijan	38	Bhgawat Kurmi	Tutu Paul	21 May 2014



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Small Tea Growers Agitate Outside Jalpaiguri Tea Board Office

The Jalpaiguri District Small Tea Growers' Association (JDSTGA) dumped about 50 kg of fresh tea leaves outside the regional office of Tea Board of India. The agitators said tea factories in the region were not willing to pay more than Rs 12 to Rs 13 for a kg of fresh tea leaves, while they had to spend about Rs 15 on average for producing the same quantity. The small tea growers of the district claimed they had intimated the TBI several times about this but all pleas fell on deaf ears. JDSTGA secretary Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty said tea factories were deliberately denying the small tea growers their just dues by paying meagre sums for unprocessed tea leaves. The association had urged the TBI to take necessary action on the matter but nothing was done yet, he said. Chakraborty informed that there were about 20,000 small tea growers in the six blocks of the district and nearly five lakh people were totally or partially dependent on these small growers.

Meanwhile, Tea Board regional officer Amrita Chakrabarty said the selling price of unprocessed fresh tea leaves had been fixed at Rs 15 per kg, but the growers were demanding for more. The board was looking into the matter, she added.

Source: Extracted from <http://echoofindia.com/> dated June 25, 2014; accessed on June 30, 2014

Weather-hit Small Tea Growers Ask for Insurance Coverage

Badly hit with lack of rainfall, Indian small tea growers reiterated their old demand for coverage under agriculture crop insurance schemes.

STGs contribute over 30 per cent to the total national tea yield.

"Entire eastern India tea belt is experiencing unprecedented heat wave and shortage of rainfall. Total rainfall from January till April 20 this year has been 71 mm against requirement of 310 mm," said Bijoy Chakraborty, president, Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers' Association (CISTA).

According to meteorological record, mercury has already touched 37.9 degree Celsius in West Bengal tea belt at Dooars, against long-term average maximum temperature of around 32 degree Celsius there in April.

"This has already drastically hampered output pulling it down to over 40 per cent to 60 per cent," said Chakraborty.

Understandably, this downfall is a significant loss for total national output.

Source: Extracted from 'Weather-hit tea sector asks for insurance coverage', *The Economic Times*, May 3, 2014

Approved Plant-Protection Formulations for Use in Tea Plantations

(Excerpts from Plant Protection Code, March 2014 Ver. 1.0 Annex 1)

Type of PPF	Name of PPF	Remarks
Acaricides	Dicofol 18.5 EC	
	Ethion 50 EC	
	Fenazaquin 10 EC	
	Fenproximoate 5 EC/SC	
	Hexythiazox 5.45 EC	
	Proparqite 57 EC	
	Sulphur 80 WG	
	Wettable Sulphur 40 WP	
	Micronised liquid sulphur 52%	South India only
	Lime sulphur - Polysulphide- S	South India only
	Spiromesifen 22.9	
	Bifenthrin 8 SC	
Insecticides	Azadirachtin 5 EC	
	Bifenthrin 8 SC	
	Deltamethrin 2.8 EC	
	Fenpropathrin 30 EC	
	Flufenoxuron 10 EC	
	Fenvalerate 25 EC	
	Phosalone 35 EC	
	Profenofos 50 EC	
	Quinalphos 25 EC	
	Quinalphos 20 AF	
	Thiacloprid 21.7 SC	
	Thiamethoxam 25 WG	
	Fungicides	Copper hydroxide 77% WP
Copper oxychloride 50 WP		
Hexaconazole 5 EC		
Propriconazole 25 EC		
Bitertanol 25 WP		South India only
Herbicides	Glyphosate 41% SL	
	Glyphosate 71% SG	
	Glufosinate amonium 13.5 SL	
	Oxyfluorfen 23.5 EC	
	Paraquat dichloride 24% WSC	

Plant Protection Code for Tea

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easily understandable for the workers (in a language they can understand or in pictorial formats) , including information regarding their classification, the hazards they present and the safety precautions to be observed.

- There should be provisions for training for workers on safe and appropriate usage of PPFs.
- The tea plantation unit must regularly maintain and calibrate agrochemical application equipment and keep records of such equipment maintenance and calibration.
- The plantation unit must have emergency facilities and procedures available in the vicinity of PPFs storage to deal with spillage of PPFs (i.e. sand and sawdust) and with operator contamination (i.e. clean water). The procedure must indicate basic accident care instructions as well as contain the contact details of the ambulance, the nearest hospital and the person trained in first aid.
- During transportation of crop protection products, the plantation unit should ensure prevention of spilling and other accidents.
- Safe interval of application of PPFs should be ensured as per recommendations of the Tea research institutes.
- Spraying and maintenance of spraying equipment should be done as per the advice of TRIs for the same.
- The plantation unit should use the water for spraying as per the advice of TRIs for the same.
- The tea plantations shall get the PPFs tested only from accredited labs that offer testing facilities exclusively for tea products and such labs been recommended by the Tea board after due verification from time to time to ensure compliance of all safety and quality measures.
- Each and every consignment of tea leaving the factory gate shall accompany with a declaration of the factory manager to the effect that the plantations (from which the green leaf has been sourced) have used only such PPFs as cleared and recommended by the TRA (for North and NE states) and UPASI TRF (for south Indian gardens).
- Such declaration shall further state that the plantations have not used any chemicals or pesticides banned in India.
- Such declaration shall further state that in the event of detection of any banned pesticides or chemicals and their residues are beyond prescribed limit, Tea Board is free to take appropriate action as per the provisions of Tea Marketing (Control) Order, 2003.

A comprehensive guideline on the above is furnished in the attached Plant Protection Code.

(Siddarth)
Chairman Tea Board
Licensing & Registering Authority

Note:

- No other PPFs beyond this list shall be used in tea.
- This list does not contain extremely and highly hazardous chemicals classified under World Health Organization (WHO) 1a & 1b, and is fully aligned with the Rotterdam



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