

A PPS Assembly in New Delhi: TBI Chairman's Positive Assurance to STGs



More funds, additional subsidies, and immediate guidelines for setting up mini and micro factories for STGs, announced Santosh Kumar Sarangi, chairman, Tea Board of India (TBI), while addressing small tea growers in a novel event – ‘PPS Assembly: A Celebration of Innovations’ – organised by Centre for Education and Communication (CEC), New Delhi, to hail the initiatives of primary producer societies (PPS) and encourage them to achieve sustainable growth. Emphasising their rights within the tea industry and demanding better transparency in Tea Board's price-sharing formula, more than 200 STGs from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram and West Bengal participated in the assembly. One of their major demands was to secure concrete supportive measures from the government to set up their own manufacturing units.

“Within a month, Tea Board of India, through the ministry of commerce, will come up with a notification on guidelines for setting up mini and micro factories for small tea growers,” Sarangi announced while addressing the PPS Assembly. “Tea Board will allocate more funds for small tea

growers. More subsidies will be given for maintaining their watersheds and transportation,” he informed. According to him, small tea growers will have to go up the value chain, become producers, and participate in auctions on their own. Tea Board will give them training in quality control and make sure the tea produced is of good quality. “Considering the phenomena of global warming and erratic rains, more and more tea growers will have to encourage organic farming,” he emphasised.

“A win-win situation will be when the tea industry recognises small growers and forges sustainable business partnerships with them. More and more BLFs and estate factories must come forward to purchase leaf from the primary producer societies, giving them a fair price,” J John, executive director, CEC, said to the gathering. He said CEC was determined to help those PPSs who were empowered and wanted to move up the tea value chain, and would take definite steps to manufacture and market the tea of small tea growers.

Sharing his happiness at being a part of the
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Confederation of International Tea Smallholders (CITS)

Small tea growers (STGs) from the tea-growing countries of the world are planning to form a common platform, to be called Confederation of International Tea Smallholders (CITS).

The idea of a common global platform was first discussed in the intersessional meeting of the Intergovernmental Group on Tea of Food and Agriculture Organization (IGG/Tea of FAO) of United Nations in 2014.

Work on the formation of the confederation began in the 2015 IGG/Tea of FAO meeting in Italy.

The IGG/Tea of FAO held in Kenya on 25-27 May 2016 further discussed the structure of CITS, its functions and responsibilities.

B G Chakroborty, president of Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Association (CISTA) who represented Indian small tea growers in all the three meetings, said, “Irrespective of differences in language, geography, or socioeconomic status,

STGs from all over the world face the same kind of problems, including price realisation that is lower than a rational level, trouble in market-potential utilisation, dependency on third-party processing, etc.”

As per FAO reports, small tea growers contribute over 65 per cent of total production at the global level.

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Computers and Printers Distributed to Award-Winning STGs

Nine small tea growers' societies from Assam and one from West Bengal received desktop computers and printers along with soil-analysis kits, being the recipients of the 'best performing society' award presented by Centre for Education and Communication.

As part of CEC's project 'Sustainable Livelihoods for Small Tea Growers', supported by the European Union, the awards were decided based on the STG societies' operational management including growth in membership, decision-taking process, maintenance of books of accounts, financial services offered to members, growth in production, trading in leaves, linkage with banks, and relationship with other stakeholders like the Tea Board.

The awards for 'best performing societies' were announced on 7 June 2016 in the National Assembly – PPS Assembly: A Celebration of Innovations of Small Tea Grower Societies – attended by representatives from West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Mizoram. The event was organised in New Delhi by CEC and had Santosh Kumar Sarangi, chairman, Tea Board of India, as the chief guest.

More than 598 societies from the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and West Bengal had sent in their applications. The three-member award committee – comprising PV Ramachandran, retired general manager, NABARD, Dr Soumen Palit, Director, ECO-YES Technologies under STEP IIT, Kharagpur, and Arati Pandya, independent development sector consultant – described the procedure for scrutinising the applications as quite a tedious and rigorous one, since the performance of most of the societies was excellent. Altogether, the committee declared 10 best-performing societies, of which nine were from Assam and one, Jaigir Fakir Para Khudra Cha Ghosi HSG, was from Jalpaiguri, West Bengal.

The awards were distributed in Tinsukia, Golaghat, Sivasagar and Udalguri districts of Assam. In Tinsukia, Jagriti Small Tea Growers Society, Chaoloong Sukhapha Small Tea Growers' Samittee, Tagera Small Tea

Growers Society, Kailashpur Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samiti, Ragagora Small Tea Growers' Dev. Society and Himalay Small Tea Growers' Society collected their awards. NA-Seujee STG Society collected their award in Golaghat and Nava Aalok Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samabay Samity received it at Sivasagar. Fakir Para Khudra Cha Ghosi HSG collected its computer in Jalpaiguri.



According to the award committee, the computer and printer will help in digitalisation of the society's operations, while the soil-analysis kit will boost productivity.

The societies who have received computers are those who have shown a positive frame of mind and capability in setting up their producer companies as well as setting up and running of a micro/mini manufacturing unit for tea processing, financial management and marketing. These societies were selected based on the recommendation of Niiti Consulting Pvt. Ltd, a sustainable development solutions agency in Delhi who had organised six business planning workshops for the societies. "They reflected a positive frame of mind and capability in setting up their producer companies and moving up the tea value chain," J John, executive director, CEC, reiterated.

The STGs mostly remain at the lower end of the tea value chain; they supply green leaf to processing factories (bought leaf factories), are unorganised, and are without any capacity to influence the value chain. STGs are acutely dependent on middlemen (leaf agents) to sell their product and for credit requirements; they are unable to negotiate price for the green leaf when dealing with the leaf agent and the factory management. STGs do not have access to information on the stages of manufacturing and marketing of made tea. "CEC is determined to help those PPSs who are empowered and want to move up the tea value chain, taking definite steps to manufacture and market the tea of small growers," said Minto Goswami, senior project officer, CEC.

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movement for uplifting the condition of small tea growers, Johan Hesse, head of cooperation, European Union, said that "better trade and better bargaining process should be assured for the tea growers in India." He expressed his hope that the journey towards growth has begun and would gain momentum with the support of the Tea Board and other stakeholders.

"Small tea growers contribute 35 to 40 per cent of the tea production in India and yet we still address them as STGs," Dr Khan, NABARD, Mumbai, wondered aloud. According to him, farmers must be at the centre and not be treated as some commodity. He emphasised that awareness creation and capacity building would help them go up the value chain.

India is the second largest producer of tea in the world. The small tea growers segment has emerged over the last two to three decades following serious structural shifts in the Indian tea industry, otherwise dominated by large tea estates. With less than 0.5 to 5 acres of land, approximately 450,000 STGs contribute 36 per cent of India's annual tea production. Yet, despite their high share, STGs remain at the bottom of the tea value chain as they remain isolated in the remotest and most backward regions like Assam, Tripura, North Bengal, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Nagaland and the hills of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.



Being Trained for Business: STGs to Set up Quality Production Units

"Our society members are confident enough to set up an independent tea-processing unit on our own," says a small tea grower of Fatikcherra STGS, Unnakoti, who attended the business training workshop organised by Centre for Education and Communication in coordination with Niiti Consulting, New Delhi. "With the knowledge we accrued from this training, we are sure that we can run the unit with a proper business plan," the small tea grower added. Representatives from all the 36 societies - including Rangagora STGS, Tinsukia; Agwma STGS, Udalguri; Panjan Women STGS, Karbi Anglong; Pragati STGS, Sivasagar; and Jaigir Fakir Para STGS, Jalpaiguri - who participated in six different training workshops reinstated the same opinion. CEC had organised these training workshops as part of its project 'Sustainable Livelihoods for Small Tea Growers', a European Union-supported project.

The green leaf produced by small tea growers are normally supplied to bought leaf factories. Acutely dependent on middlemen for selling their products and their credit requirements, STGs have not been able to negotiate a fair price for the green leaf with either the leaf agent or the factory management. To redress the vulnerability of STGs, one among the many major initiatives of CEC, under its project 'Sustainable Livelihoods for Small Tea Growers', was to provide training on critical areas. The training, executed with the support of Niiti Consulting, intended to familiarise representatives of small tea grower societies (STGS) with producer companies, provide inputs on setting up and running of a manufacturing unit for tea processing, help them manage finance, and educate them on the basics of marketing and human resource management.

The sessions, spread over a period of 2.5 days, looked at the following modules: business planning (steps in setting up a producer company); financial planning (including familiarisation with potential sources of capital); operations management (including setting up of manufacturing plants); marketing strategies (including the process of setting up a tea marketing company and its benefits); and sustainability management (including fair trade).

The concluding remarks of the trainers indicated that almost all participants were ready to launch their own producer company, having gathered enough knowledge on the procedure to register one. According to them, the quality of the business plan that the STGs developed as part of the training was a perfect reflection of their understanding of the complexity of establishing and running a business and the ability to generate capital. The participants had clarity in terms of business execution; they had developed the ability to articulate the execution steps in the short and long term of the business set-up and operation.



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New Insurance Scheme for Small Tea Garden Workers, Backed by Indian Tea Board

Each one of around 1.5 lakh workers of all the small tea gardens (STG) in India are going to get an insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh against own payment of Rs 3.5 only per annum. Under direct support of Indian Tea Board (ITB), the accidental insurance scheme is likely to get introduced pan country from 1 April 2016.

According to ITB officials, the group personal accident insurance scheme will provide compensation to STG workers within the age group of 18 to 70 years in the event of bodily injuries or death caused by accident. Premium per worker per annum has been worked out as Rs 14. Out of it, the board will bear 75 per cent, while the workers need to pay the rest 25 per cent, amounting to Rs 3.5.

The master policy will be issued by the insurance company in the name of Tea Board India on receipt of premium along with the list of beneficiaries for whom premium has been paid. According to the officials, it is difficult to assess the exact number of beneficiaries of the scheme at this moment as the national survey on workers' profile of STGs is yet to be finished. The number is expected to be approximately around 1.5 lakh throughout the whole country.

Source: https://www.insuringindia.com/UIMaster/images/articles/newsletters/InsuringIndia_WeeklyNewsletter_March07-13-2016.pdf

Small Tea Growers to Soon Get Help from Application

GUWAHATI: A mobile application is being developed to provide small tea growers with advice on good agricultural practices.

Bidyananda Barkakoty, vice-chairman of the Tea Board, said the app would link small tea growers with an expert on good practices through an online platform.

The app, being developed by Tata Global Beverages Ltd (TGBL) with help from Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), will also help ensure compliance with plant protection code (PPC) for pest and disease management. It will also warn tea growers about pest attacks and plant diseases. According to Barkakoty, the app will help in digitisation of farm diaries and offer a method for self-certification and traceability of the use of safe chemicals.

There are over 80,000 small tea growers in Assam. In 2014, India produced 1,207.31 million kg (mkg) of tea, out of which Assam's production was 610.97 million kg. In 2015, India accounted for 1,191 mkg of tea production, of which Assam produced about 614.57 mkg. Small tea growers account for about 30 per cent of Assam's total tea production.

Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/software/small-growers-to-soon-get-help-fromapp/articleshow/52226073.cms?prtpage=1>

STG Primary Producer Societies who Received Awards

List of Awardees who received Desktop Computer and Soil Kit

1. Jagriti Small Tea Growers Society, Tinsukia, Assam
2. Chaoloong Sukhapha Small Tea Growers' Samittee, Tinsukia, Assam
3. Tagera Small Tea Growers Society, Tinsukia, Assam
4. Kailashpur Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samiti, Tinsukia, Assam
5. "NA-Seujee STG Soceity", Golaghat, Assam
6. Evergreen Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samabay Samity, Sivasagar, Assam
7. Nava Aalok Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samabay Samity, Sivasagar, Assam
8. Ragagora Small Tea Grower's Dev. Society, Tinsukia, Assam
9. Jaigir Fakir Para Khudra Cha Ghosi H.S.G, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal
10. Himalay Small Tea Grower's Society, Tinsukia, Assam

List of Awardees who received Soil Kit

1. Loknath Khudra Cha Chasi Swambhar Gosthi, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal
2. Ratanpur Khudra Chah Khetiyok Unnayan Samity, Golaghat, Assam
3. Prerona STG Society, Tinsukia, Assam
4. Daogafu STG Society, Udalguri, Assam
5. Rwdwmkhang STG Society, Udalguri, Assam
6. Gatwn Small Tea Growers Society, Udalguri, Assam
7. Pragati Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samity, Sivasagar, Assam
8. NA-KUHIPAT STG Society, Golaghat, Assam
9. Dhoroni Small Tea Growers Samittee Samiti, Golaghat, Assam
10. Seuji Shah Khudra Khetek Somitte, Dibrugarh, Assam
11. Pub Chaiduar STG Society, Sonitpur, Assam
12. Sanjivani Small Tea Growers Society, Tinsukia, Assam
13. Jirsong Small Tea Growers Society, KarbiAnglong, Assam
14. Agragami Small Tea Grower Society, Jorhat, Assam
15. Fatikchera Hamari STG Society, Unakoti, Tripura
16. Agwma Small Tea Grower's Society, Udalguri, Assam
17. Greater Bokajan Small Tea Growers Society, KarbiAnglong, Assam
18. Panchamnagar STG Cooperative Society, Unakoti, Tripura
19. Rwdwmsha Society, Udalguri, Assam
20. Kapuha Khudra Chah Khetiyak Samity, Tinsukia, Assam
21. Champawati Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samity, Nagaon, Assam
22. Chatrang Ballijan STG Society, Sonitpur, Assam
23. Deep Sikha Small Tea Growers Society, Tinsukia, Assam
24. Medini Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samity, Golaghat, Assam
25. Seuji Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samittee, Tinsukia, Assam
26. Sonabilai STG Society, Udalguri, Assam
27. Milanjyoti STG Society, Udalguri, Assam
28. Mekhliganj Apanjan PTP Welfare Society, Cooch Behar, West Bengal
29. Gurash STG Society, Udalguri, Assam
30. Camperhat Janjagaran Khudra Cha Chasi Swanirbhar Gosthi, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal
31. Chaulhati Netaji Small Tea Grower's SHG, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal
32. Kunhi Small Tea Grower's Samittee, Tinsukia, Assam
33. Purbo Harmoti Sabuj Small Tea Growers' Society, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal
34. Adarsh Khudra Chah Khetiyok Samiti, Tinsukia, Assam
35. Gwrlwi Bilai STG Society, Udalguri, Assam
36. Heouj Amtola Samity, Sonitpur, Assam
37. Luitparia Small Tea Growers Samittee, Tinsukia, Assam
38. Treenayan Small Tea Growers Society, Jorhat, Assam
39. Jagaran Small Tea Growers Society, Tinsukia, Assam
40. Garudharia STG Samitee, Dibrugarh, Assam



List of Awardees based on excellence in their performance during the business planning workshops

1. Panchamnagar STG Cooperative Society, Unakoti, Tripura
2. Fatikchera Hamari STG Society, Unakoti, Tripura
3. Rwdwmkhang STG Society, Udalguri, Assam
4. Rwdwmsha Society, Udalguri, Assam
5. Panjan Women STG Society, KarbiAnglong, Assam



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