

## Small tea growers write to Minister; seek fair price, crop insurance

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New Delhi, December 18:

Seeking a fair price for their produce and crop insurance, scores of registered small tea grower societies in Assam and other tea-growing States have written to Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Highlighting their contribution to employment generation and exports on the occasion of the 12th International Tea Day on December 15, the letter written by these societies, located in Tinsukhia, Nagaon, Karbi Anglong, Golaghat, Sonitpur, Udalguri, and other States, also demanded “participatory enforcement of price sharing formula, better price for quality of leaf supplied, and making certified organic manure and pesticides available”.

Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, President, Confederation of Indian Small Tea Grower Associations (CISTA), said in a release that the “government must extend crop insurance scheme to all small growers without any delay and extend universal social security and health coverage for the workers in their gardens”.

CISTA cited the Tea Board’s data in 2015-16 wherein small farmers contributed 33.85 per cent or 417.42 million kg of the 1,233.14-million-kg tea produced in India. In 1999, small growers’ contribution was only 1.16 per cent of the total production, it added.

Bijit Basumatari of the All Bodoland Small Tea Growers Association said: “The financial allocation of the Tea Board of India is not in proportion to small tea growers’ contribution,” adding that “a greater share even now goes to the estate segment”.

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