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Small tea growers want minimum support price

BY [DEBASIS SARKAR](#), ET BUREAU | FEB 08, 2018, 04.50 PM IST

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Small Tea Growers (STG) in India have started raising their voice demanding minimum [support price](#) for green leaf. The sector that contributes over 35% in national tea yield always remains dependent on others in tea processing chain to maintain own existence.

"The greatest challenge of STGs today is the price realization for green leaf. Against our production cost of Rs 15 - 18 a kg, average return we enjoy is Rs 7 - 14 per kg. The situation has pushed STGs to the brink. It's a major threat to national tea arena too as STGs contribute near half of the national yield," said Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, President, Confederation of Indian Small tea Growers Association. CISTA is the national conglomeration of over 2.5 lakh STGs, each one with less than acre of plantation area.

Though the official contribution of STGs to the national yield is around 35%, CISTA prefers putting it in different way.

Without own processing facilities, STGs always depend on standalone factories, not owned by any garden, to process their green leaf. Output of these factories is considered as STGs contribution to national yield. But, "Beside these factories, established gardens also buy good volume of green leaf from us to increase their factory capacity utilization level. Including that, our contribution to total national yield is much more than 50%. Despite that, there is gross lack of attention towards our crisis," claimed Chakraborty.

"Following long standing tussle between the STGs and factories over price of green leaf, Government has implemented many policies including price sharing formula to ensure rational sharing of the final return between these two first tire stakeholders," said a senior ITB official.

But, "That could not bring us return adequate enough to maintain our operation. At this juncture, we want Gol to declare [Minimum Support price](#) for Green leaf produced by STGs under the provisions made in Section 30(a) of Indian Tea Act 1953," said Chakraborty.

However, while talking on the matter, veteran planter and Chairman of Terai Indian Planters Association K. K. Mintri said, "Government must chalk out proper measure to ensure adequate return for all sectors. But that should be done after assessing the situation in holistic manner from all possible angles."



The greatest challenge of STGs today is the price realization for green leaf.

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