



**EMBARGOED** to 0001 Hours, Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June

## **Tea industry takes action to improve smallholder livelihoods across Africa and Asia**

**Pioneering partnerships also aim to raise workers' wages and help farmers adapt to climate change**

A pioneering training programme which has helped smallholder tea farmers modernise production and improve their livelihoods is being rolled out to major African and Asian tea-growing countries, the Ethical Tea Partnership and IDH – the Sustainable Trade Initiative announced today.

The unique training approach has already helped 48,000 farmers in Kenya increase their yields by a third and find ways to generate more income from other sources. It has been piloted by the Kenya Tea Development Agency which has set up more than 1600 Farmer Field Schools to deliver the programme.

ETP and IDH now aim to reach 200,000 more smallholders with the programme within three years, extending it in Kenya and rolling it out to Malawi, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, India and Vietnam in partnership with major tea brands Tata Global Beverages (who produce Tetley), Taylors of Harrogate (Yorkshire Tea), and Unilever (PG Tips) and other partners including the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), Rainforest Alliance, the Wood Family Trust and Gatsby Charitable foundation.

This is one of a number of strategic initiatives led by ETP and IDH which aim to tackle key issues facing the tea industry such as improving livelihoods for farmers and workers, managing environmental problems like climate change, and building resilient and stable supply chains. They are setting up innovative, long-term programmes and building powerful partnerships between the tea industry, retailers, governments and NGOs to find solutions to these complex problems.

Sarah Roberts, Executive Director of the ETP, said: "Tea is the world's favourite beverage, after water, and it provides a livelihood for millions of people around the globe. These projects show that the industry is committed to helping smallholder farmers and workers earn a decent wage and farm better, and that it understands that this is fundamental to building secure supply chains and future success."

The tea industry's annual Team Up conference in London yesterday identified key social and environmental issues affecting the sector and explored how action to tackle them can secure supply chains and build brands' reputation. ETP and IDH, joint hosts of the event, updated producers, packers and retailers on the progress of their pioneering projects.

Joost Oorthuizen, Chief Executive of IDH, said: “It is amazing to see how the tea industry is making serious efforts and investments to address difficult issues such as wages and smallholder inclusion. These and other deeply rooted problems, that only a few years ago were ‘owned’ by civil society groups, are now high on the agenda of the international tea industry. We can use this positive energy by working together, and collaborating with retailers, government agencies and NGOs, who all have a part to play.”

It is estimated that 8 million smallholder farmers in Africa and Asia are responsible for around 70% of global tea production. However, many use outdated production methods, often in poor working conditions, which result in poor returns.

Kenya is the world’s third largest tea producer and over 60% is produced by smallholders. Its largest smallholder cooperative, the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), with support from IDH and Unilever, introduced Farmer Field Schools in 2008 to improve the livelihoods and working conditions of its 560,000 smallholder tea farmers and their workers, and the programme was later combined with Rainforest Alliance certification.

The programme takes a unique approach designed to train large numbers of farmers at relatively low-cost. Groups of farmers are trained in “schools without walls” over 12 months, trialling different farming approaches and learning from experiments in their own fields and from each other. They are consulted about key issues affecting both their tea crop and their farm, so the training can be designed around their needs. Three quarters of the curriculum is focused on tea farming, they can also choose modules such as using kitchen gardens and livestock farming to diversify their income. At the end of the training they share their experience with their neighbours so that improved practices are spread across the locality.

Some 48,000 farmers have already been through the programme and, according to KTDA data, they are achieving yields 36% higher than those who have not, and are also generating more income from other sources.

Farmers who have been through the programme have benefited in a number of ways, according to an independent impact assessment *For all the tea in Kenya* (2014) by LEI – Wageningen University. They have:

- Improved production and yield
- Increased gross margins
- Improved farm management
- Achieved greater diversification of income
- Achieved better living standards
- Improved health and safety



## **RAISING WAGES FOR TEA INDUSTRY WORKERS**

ETP, IDH, Oxfam and the German Development Agency GIZ have also assembled a coalition to tackle the issue of low pay on tea estates, and plan action to move workers towards a living wage which will cover a basic nutritious diet, decent housing and other needs.

Many tea producing countries are poor and minimum wages may be set at a low level, so although tea estates pay their workers the legally agreed wage this may not be enough to give them a living wage that covers a household's basic needs.

Work is focussing initially on Malawi, Africa's second biggest tea producer, where pickers earn two thirds of the World Bank poverty line income of around \$2 per person per day, but are still better off than 62% of the population, who exist on less than the World Bank's extreme poverty line of \$1.25 a day.

The coalition aims to help tea estates improve their productivity and profits and make more finance available to invest in improvements in return for a commitment to raise wages. They will also work with employers, unions and governments to agree phased improvements to wages – which are set at national or regional level – and increase worker representation in negotiations. The programme will run for several years and inform similar work to raise wages in other countries.

## **HELPING TEA FARMERS ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

Another project run by the ETP and GIZ, has helped more than 100,000 smallholder farmers to increase their resilience to climate change and secure their future livelihoods in Kenya.

Farmers were taught about the impacts of climate change and how to adapt to them, trained in good practice, low-cost farming techniques, and given access to affordable finance to help them make improvements.

More than 3.5 million trees have been planted on farms or are growing in nurseries to provide shade for tea bushes and help fix soil nitrogen. More than 600,000 drought and frost resistant tea clones have been planted or are being grown in nurseries to improve smallholders' resistance to extreme weather. More than 2,500 farmers have installed rainwater harvesting and drip irrigation systems.

The training will now be extended to all 560,000 farmers working for the Kenya Tea Development Agency, the country's largest smallholder cooperative, and it is being adapted for use in Malawi and Uganda.

**ENDS**



## Notes for Editors

Full case studies are available on the programmes to raise tea industry wages and help farmers adapt to climate change.

For further information or interviews, please contact:

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**The Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP)** is a not-for-profit membership organisation of tea companies that share a vision of a thriving tea industry that is socially just and environmentally sustainable. The ETP has local staff in Kenya, Malawi, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and China, and a London-based team. Together with a set of partner organisations, the ETP runs a range of assurance, producer support, and strategic programmes to improve the sustainability of the tea sector, the lives of tea workers, and the environment in which tea is produced. [www.ethicalteapartnership.org](http://www.ethicalteapartnership.org)

**IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative**, is a non-profit organisation bringing together front-running companies, civil society organizations and governments in public private partnerships to transform markets towards sustainable production and consumption. Founded in 2008 with a match-funding grant from the Dutch government and recently the Swiss and Danish government, IDH operates in 18 commodity sectors ranging from coffee to aquaculture. With its partners, IDH develops, implements, co-funds and monitors up-scaling and mainstreaming innovative business models to make sustainability the norm. [www.idhsustainabletrade.com](http://www.idhsustainabletrade.com)