



Press Release: TEAM UP India Ensuring a Sustainable Future for the Indian Tea Industry

On 9th April, the Indian Tea Association (ITA), the Tea Research Association (TRA), the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP), and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) hosted the largest gathering of organisations interested in the future of the Indian tea sector. Indian tea producers and packers, international tea packing companies, and a number of development organisations were present to discuss the critical issues facing the Indian tea sector and ways to address them in order to create a thriving and sustainable tea industry.

The Indian tea sector is large, second only to China and over 80% of tea produced is for the local Indian market. Like many places around the world where tea is grown, India faces challenges of prices not keeping pace with increases in costs. There are long standing problems that require a huge amount of change. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that India's tea industry was largely established over one hundred years ago, leaving it with a set of circumstances and structures which are hard to adapt to twenty-first century requirements. These include changing labour patterns and the need to provide services such as housing and sanitation for continually increasing estate communities.

The industry also faces new challenges, particularly relating to climate change. At the meeting, TRA and ETP unveiled the results of climate change impact modelling for Assam which predicted that, over the next 50 years, many areas of current production will become less suitable for tea due to changes in temperature and precipitation patterns including increased rainfall during the monsoonal period, reduced rainfall early in the season and increasing temperatures. These changes are also likely to trigger increased or new incidents of pests and disease, an issue that is already very challenging for tea producers.

Everyone at TEAM UP India welcomed the opportunity to have an open discussion about the current state of the Indian tea sector and what needs to change for Indian tea to remain a viable and sustainable option for both the domestic and export markets.

A range of programmes were highlighted which could be expanded and built on, including:

- A range of approaches to improve plant protection and sustainable agriculture
- Programmes to develop the capabilities of smallholder farmers
- Partnerships to address health and social issues in estates, such as the UNICEF-ETP-ABITA partnership to improve the lives of young women in tea communities
- Verification and certification standards such as Trustea, Rainforest Alliance, Ethical Tea Partnership, Fairtrade and Utz
- Climate research and experience of successful adaptation programmes
- Discussions on processes to enhance consumption of tea and remunerative prices.

Producers from countries with similar challenges, such as Sri Lanka, shared successful approaches such as the Plantation Community Empowerment



Programme, which helped reform worker-management relationships, improve productivity and career opportunities for women and reduce social problems on estates. Overall participating estates saw a 25% improvement in productivity and \$26 return on every dollar invested.

TEAM UP India took the opportunity to bring together the expertise of the tea value chain and its partners and start developing a draft roadmap that integrates the different approaches needed to achieve a thriving and sustainable Indian tea industry with:

- Profitable businesses fit for a 21st century market
- A healthy, motivated, and productive workforce, with greater opportunities for women
- Improved lives and livelihoods for smallholder farmers and their workers
- More sustainable energy use and an improved environment in tea-growing areas

A number of speakers highlighted how this roadmap would fit with the UN Sustainable Development Goals which all governments are reporting on and enable the industry to demonstrate how it is contributing to their achievement in tea-growing regions.

The meeting organisers, Indian Tea Association, Ethical Tea Partnership, Tea Research Association and Sustainable Trade Initiative will develop the roadmap based on all discussions at TEAM-UP. An Indian Sustainable Tea Industry Working Group will be established to co-ordinate its further development and implementation and it will be shared at TEAM-UP London in June 2016, the largest conference on tea and sustainability in the world.