

Small Tea Growers Demand For Their Rights On International Tea Day 2016

[Image](#) | Posted on [December 15, 2016](#) by [Ruhani Sandhu](#)





While 5000 tea workers assemble at Raja Bhat Tea Estate in Kalchini district of West Bengal today 15.12.2016 to observe the 11th **International Tea Day**, we at Rangsa stand with all the Small Tea Growers (STG) in India and **Center for Education and Communication** (CEC) to bring forward the problems and demands of small tea growers across India. This is our attempt to contribute to the well-being of the people behind our cups of tea and highlight their issues to all our readers and the world. Next cup of tea you take, think of tea plantation workers, their condition and their

rights. Together we can make a difference.

The petition, which highlights the demands of small tea growers of Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, is signed today and submitted to the [Ministry of Commerce and Industries](#). Following is the memorandum submitted.

Small Grower Statement

We, the representatives of following Primary Producer Societies or collectives of small tea growers in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are celebrating December 15, the international tea day with increased sense of self worth.

We are proud to be the producers of Tea, a health drink. India is the second largest producer of this health drink in the world. We, the small farmers, though having on an average less than 2 acres of land, are proud to contribute 33.85% in 2015-16 of tea produced in India. That this is a recent phenomenon could be gauged from the fact that in 1999 small growers' contribution was only 1.16% of the total production. In 2015-16, of the total production of 1233.14 million kgs of tea, small sector contributed 417.42 million kgs based on an aggregation of tea manufactured by 568 bought leaf factories. Our contribution to the total tea production in India must be higher if our supply to estate factories are also considered.

Small farmer's production is almost twice the quantity of tea exported by India. During the financial year 2015-16 India exported 232.92 million kgs valued at Rs. 4493.10 crore. We are feeling proud of the fact that we contribute not only to meet the growing domestic demand for tea in India but also to obtain valuable foreign exchange.

Small sector contributes to employment generation in the rural areas, uplifting hundreds of thousands of people from poverty and it prevents distress migration. Tea cultivation is respectful self-employment for

thousands of young people, and in all tea growing areas; and it also absorbs as workers a large number of unemployed from the large tea estates.

For small growers, land is not a commodity, but a source of life and livelihood, integral to our existence. Overcoming compulsions from chemical and fertiliser companies, increasing number of farmers are following responsible agricultural practices, moving towards chemical free and organic agriculture.

We want Central and State governments to recognise our contribution to the nation, its economy, ecology and to the people of India and of the World.

1. We strongly urge the Government of India to ensure that we get a **fair price** for our produce by
 - a. strong and participatory enforcement of Price Sharing formula
 - b. ensuring better price for better quality of leaf supplied
 - c. making available certified organic manure and pesticides
2. We urge the Government of India not to delay the **declared subsidies** to small growers including leaf collection shed, leaf weighing machine, leaf carrying bag, pruning machine, plucking machine, irrigation equipments and computer.
3. We urge the Government of India to extend **crop insurance scheme** to all small growers without any delay.
4. We urge the Government of India to implement **universal social security** and **health coverage** for the workers working in our gardens.
5. We urge the Government of India to encourage collectives of small growers having 100 acres of land, **quality leaves**, and compliance to Plant Protection Code to set up factories to manufacture chemical free

- / organic green specialty tea and facilitate their marketing ventures by
- a. easing steps to set up such units, especially, approvals for land, building and machinery
 - b. easing steps to obtain other necessary permits and licences including electricity, pollution, sales tax etc
 - c. ensuring easy access to credit from NABARD, SFAC and other public as well as private financial institutions
 - d. extending financial assistance as is available for big factories

On the occasion of 11th International Tea Day, we stand united with self-respect for responsible, sustainable and remunerative tea cultivation and assure everyone quality tea.

Name of the Person Signing, Name of the PPS, Name of the District

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Assam is the world's largest tea-growing region and the second most commercial tea producing region in the world after southern China. To understand it's history, culture and trade, right from it's roots, we decided to travel to Assam. For me, an ardent tea addict, the journey here was a very willing...

In "Tea Travel"