



Tea Industry in West Bengal – Hopes and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The slow growth of tea industry of India, particularly West Bengal during last few years compels Govt. and tea producers to come forward for developing specific remedial measures. Annual production and consumption at international level shows rising trend whereas reveals situation prevails here. India is the largest producer of tea in the world. It is one of the largest employer employing approximately more than six crore of people (mostly women) in several ways of production, processing, packaging etc. West Bengal is the second largest producer of tea in India and contributes 24% of the total tea production. In West Bengal, the first commercial tea gardens were planted by British in the year 1852. The focus of this paper is to examine the causes of West Bengal and to suggest some proposals for its survival. Darjeeling tea has a reputation both in India and outside India. No doubt, in near future this industry will earn handsome revenue for the state.

KEYWORDS : tea, producers, remedial, consumption, processing, suggest, revenue.

Introduction :

According to traditional story tea was discovered in 2732 B.C. by a Chinese Emperor on the other hand, according to historical records, Marco polo had carried tea from china to the court of famous Emperor Harsha Vardhan.

India is the 2nd largest producer of tea in the world. It is one of the largest employer employing approximately six or seven crores of people (mostly women) in several ways as production, processing, distribution, packaging etc. But recently it is passing through a difficult period due to continuous fall in the prices of tea along with high cost of production, sluggish rate of growth in domestic demand as well as keen competition in the foreign market for export tea.

Table No – 1 : World production of tea :- (figure in metric tonnes)

Country	2010	%	2011	%	2012	%
China	1,467	32%	1,640	39%	1,714	39%
India	991	22%	966	23%	100	23%
Kenya	399	8%	377	9%	369	9%
Sri Lanka	282	6%	327	8%	330	7%
Turkey	235	5%	221	5%	225	5%
Vietnam	198	4%	206	5%	216	5%

Present scenario :-

West Bengal is the second largest producer of tea in India. The states accounts for 20% of the total area under tea plantation growing and contributes 24% of the tea production in India. In West Bengal, the first commercial tea garden were planted by the British in the year 1852. The first Indian tea garden Mugalkata tea garden was started in the year 1879 in Bengal.

At that time, there were 39 gardens producing 39,000 KGS. Of tea. However, at present there are 307 tea estates, 9990 small tea growers and 86 bought leaf factories (B.L.F.) in the state and producing 269.43 million KGS. Of tea in the year 2011-2012. During the year 2011-2012, West Bengal Tea Development Corporation LTD. (W.B.T.D.C.) sold 5.61 lakhs KGS. Of tea at a total cost RS. 7.84 crores. In West Bengal, most of the tea garden are located there tea growing zones in the states – (a) Darjeeling (b) Terai (including West Dinajpur) (c) Dooars (including Coochbehar district). Out of 307 tea estates in West Bengal, 10 are closed and several other gardens are on the verge of closure.

Table – 2 :- State wise production of tea (Quantity in million KGS.)

State	09-10	%	10-11	%	11-12	%
Assam	498	50%	487	50%	581	53%
West Bengal	223	23%	238	24%	269	24%
Tamil Nadu	179	18%	167	17%	163	15%
Kerala	72	7%	66	7%	62	6%
Karnataka	6	.63%	5	.56%	5	.5%
All India	991	100%	967	100%	1095	100%

Aims and Objectives :-

There is a huge scope of earning foreign exchange by exporting tea to the international market and also is a huge scope for employment specially is rural population specially is hill population in this sector. But our tea producers are unable to avail this benefit. The focus of this paper is to causes the poor performance of the tea industry in West Bengal and to suggest some proposal for its survival.

Insight into the problems :-

The tea garden of West Bengal is very old that leads to higher cost of production and poor Quality of output. Higher cost of production and poor quality placed the tea industries of West Bengal in disadvantageous position both in national level as well as international level.

The factors affecting the productivity, quality and higher cost of production in the estates are –

- Tea gardens in West Bengal specially in Darjeeling are very old in comparison to other states (like Assam and South Eastern) and other countries like Sri Lanka and Kenya are of younger origin
- We know that production of tea from tea leaf to tea is a labour intensive process and here huge number of worker (mostly are women labour) are engaged in this process. So, health factors of the workers, predominantly women workers affects productivity adversely.
- In tea industry, besides the payment of wages in cash, these industries has to bear some social cost for the workers like subsidised ration, tree housing, tree education, sanitation etc., these factors increases cost of production.
- The plucking productivity rate is also very low. It is only 24 KGS. Of green leaf per worker per day. Whereas it is 40-50 KGS. In Kenya and around 68 KGS. In Zimbabwe.
- The demand and supply trend of tea is the international market shows that, there is a surplus of tea production during last 5 years. So, the general perception is that when demand is lower than supply, business is banned to suffer.
- Again demand of tea in home market is very low than other countries. From per capital consumption of tea, it reveals that

in India per capita consumption of tea is only 0.75 KG whereas in U.K. it is 2.2 KGS., Turkey 2.1KGS., Ireland 2KGS.. Even per capital consumption of Pakistan is Greater than India. This situation shows that consumption of tea of our country is very poor. Thus it adversely affect the tea industry in India as well as in West Bengal.

- (g) Recent trend of export table indicates that the export position of India is not much better. In the year of 2011, it occupies third position and export amount in 867,143 US dollars. We know that Darjeeling tea are produced mainly for export purpose. Declining export of tea in the foreign market directly effect the tea production of West Bengal.

Table – 3 :- World export (1000 US \$)

Country	2011
Sri Lanka	1,476,881
China	965,080
India	867,143
Kenya	858,250
U.K.	262,959
Germany	229,383

- (h) We know that Darjeeling tea is considered to be the finest in the world for its flavoured. Now, some of the tea producing and exporting countries like Sri Lanka and others exports their own tea to foreign market in the brand name of Darjeeling tea which is very unethical.
- (i) Some people say, green tea helps intreating several deadly diseases like blood pressure, sugar, heart problems etc. So, modern people prefers green tea main producer of this green tea is China. Our Darjeeling tea mainly black for this reason, change is habit of this people also affected the business of black tea.
- (j) Last of all the political situation in those districts in West Bengal specially in Darjeeling is very bad. Bandh, Hartal etc. Are regularly seen here. This political scenario is also effect the production of tea very much.

Steps taken for development of tea industry in West Bengal :-

For the development of tea industry in West Bengal, the Tea Board of India has been implementing various development schemes. These are –

1. Enhancement of production through various development measures such as uprooting aged section and replanting, replacement planting rejuvenation pruning and infilling of vacancies with improved planting materials.
2. Enhancement of productivity of small tea growers for taking various measures.
3. Special emphasis of irrigation for combating the drought conditions.
4. Augmentation of tea processing facilities for manufacturing and modernisation of existing tea factories to ensure production of quality tea suitable for domestic and foreign market.
5. Market promotional activities are taken both at domestic and export front.
6. Setting up of I.T. portal for supply of information about tea industry and trade.
7. H.R.D. programme for the people associated with tea cultivation and processing.
8. Tea Board of India and Govt. Of West Bengal are going to sign a M.O.U. for setting up an agricultural export zone for tea garden of Darjeeling.
9. To increase the domestic consumption and to increase the export, Tea Board has launched advertisement campaign in different media.
10. Recently, the state Govt. Has set up a committee which is working in co-ordination with Tea Board, Tea Garden Management, workers/employers union and Tea Planters Association. Amongst

other initiatives the state Govt. Has also taken up with the Govt. Of India a proposal to set up Agri Export Zone for marketing Darjeeling tea in the global market in partnership with the Tea Board and stake holder.

11. Special Purpose Tea Fund (S.P.T.F.) created by the Govt. Of India is expected to contribute significantly to the rival of tea industry.

Proposal for improvement of tea industry in West Bengal :-

1. Mechanical harvesting can be used to reduce cost production. A wheel number of tea machine was developed by Mutsumo Kiko of Japan with collaboration of Tea Research Association for plucking of tea leaves. Use of such device may reduce the wastage and increase the productivity.
2. Most of the gardens of the area are over staffed, steps should be taken for optimum utilisation of existing staff.
3. Cash compensation may be provide for in lieu of existing food grain supply.
4. Easy provision of loan for working capital from various commercial bank at subsidised rate.
5. Govt. Of West Bengal should provide electricity at concessional rate.
6. Govt. Of India should asked the international trade bodies to take necessary steps to compel the Sri Lanka and other competitiveness nations to restrain them of practicing from unethical producer.
7. Tea Board of India and other bodies should chalk out the programme to make such environment for producing green tea in large scale and efforts should be also made to popularised the consumption of black tea as well.

Conclusion :-

Among the tea cultivated in India, Darjeeling tea has a reputation both in India and outside India. Tea Board of India, Govt. Of West Bengal and Tea Planters Association have taken various plans and programmes in different levels for protecting this industry. No doubt, in near future this industry will earn handsome revenue for the state.

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