



Income of a Small Tea Grower of Assam – An Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

The climate of Assam is suitable for tea cultivation, which needs sufficient rainfall and moderate temperature throughout the year. But it needs Scientific method to develop the tea cultivation.

The Britishers establish the Tea Research Station at Tocklai (near Jorhat) Assam and developed the Tea cultivation to such a modern stage that today the general public can also establish the tea cultivation in their own field. It is proved that Tea Cultivation is a very profitable business and one can start this cultivation with his preliminary knowledge, though it needs some practical education. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the profitability of tea cultivation of a small tea grower who can earn some money by selling his/her green leaf.

Keywords :Tea growers, Soil, Climate, Pruning, Green leaf.

Introduction:

Amongst the most oldest and organized industry of our country tea industry of Assam is one of the most important industry. The Assam tea has occupied a special position in the international market since the establishment of Assam Company by the British in 1839. It has contributed a huge amount of fund to our national economy. For about more than 150 years the tea companies of Assam have cultivating the tea in Assam by giving employment opportunities to lacs and lacs of people. But since the decade of '80 a silent revolution began in Assam without the knowledge of general public. Many unemployed youth have engaged in tea cultivation which is popularly known as small tea growers. As per the information published by Directorate of Tea Industry and Commerce Department, Government of Assam there are about 70,000 small tea growers in Assam as on 2009. Assam has produced solely about 55% of total Indian tea. Out of these the small tea growers has produced 29% of Assam tea in total.

It is because of the fact that the climate of Assam is suitable for tea cultivation, which needs sufficient rainfall and moderate temperature throughout the year. But it needs Scientific method to develop the tea cultivation.

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Objective of the study:

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- Ø To know the meaning of small tea growers;
- Ø To make a detailed study on the various steps in tea plantation;
- Ø To analyze the yield pattern of green leaf of a small tea grower;
- Ø To evaluate the income and expenditure of a small tea grower.

Methodology:

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were mostly collected through field survey from

some selected small tea growers, managers of tea estates and some experts of tea plantations with the help of structured schedules. Further, face to face interview were also conducted amongst them. The secondary data were collected from different secondary sources.

Meaning of small tea growers:

Regarding the meaning of small tea Growers there exist some different views:

- Ø According to Government of Assam a person planting tea up to 10 acres of land is called a small Tea Grower.
- Ø According to Tea Board of India a person cultivating tea plants up to 25 acres of land is called a small Tea Grower.
- Ø However, All Assam small Tea Growers Association demands that a person has 33.33 acre of land tea plantation should be recognized as small tea grower. In simple, small tea growers are those individuals who are engaged in Tea cultivation with the following activities:-
 - A) Planted Tea plants
 - B) Maintains the garden with or without employing labour.
 - C) Earning money by selling green leaf in the factory of a company having big tea estate.

Selection of Site and Soil:

Before establishing a small tea garden a small grower has to examine the following points for selection of a site for tea cultivation:

The type of soil should be analyzed first, whether it is rocky or sandy. If the soil is too sandy or rocky type without having virgin soil it should not be considered for tea cultivation. Because the soil is the medium in which tea plants are growing and producing crops i.e. green leaf. Therefore a small grower must do the soil test in advance for the site which is growing to be planted by an experts and asked for advice whether the soil is suitable for tea plantation or not.

Survey of roads and drains:

If the soil is suitable for tea plantation then a small tea grower has to survey the land by an expert to make a suitable road which will be required in due course to carry the green leaf by transportation and for other purpose like carrying fertilizer etc. in the garden.

After these there should be a survey for drainage preparation. In general there are three types of drains viz. field drains, col-

lector drains and main drains. Fields drains collect the surface and root zone water and passed to collector drains. Collector drains collect the water from the field drains and passed it to main drains. The main drains are the largest drains which should have the capacity to collect all the water from the planted area and passed it to natural outlet drains.

Soil preparation:

Soil preparation is a most important factor of tea cultivation. As per the information received from the expert there should be minimum two rounds of deep ploughing four rounds of harrowing and two rounds of sub-soiling. Then there should adequate measure to level up the plan table area by filling up the up down pockets.

Planting and Manuring:

At the time of planting the manure is applied as follows for each plant:

- Dry cow dung 2 to 3 kgs
- 30 grams single super phosphate
- 30 grams rock phosphate
- 5 grams Thimet

After these there should be a schedule for manuring tea plants. Experts agreed that the manuring should be start after having sufficient rainfall and moisture in the soil. The tea plants needs nitrogen (N), phosphate (P) and potash (K) for its life.

Pest, Disease, Insect and Weed control:

For controlling the pest, disease, insect and weed a small grower has to apply different types of medicines as recommended by the tea experts. For all these he has to spend a huge amount in each year for yielding green leaf from his garden.

Shade tree:

For the maintenance of tea bushes shade on tea plants is a most essential system. Therefore, the small tea grower has to plant shade trees along with the tea plants. There are three types of shade trees which is required on tea cultivation viz. temporary shade (Crotalaria Anagyroides, Dhansia etc.), semi permanent shade (Indigofera Tesmani and SU-BABUL etc.)and permanent shade trees (Albizia Odorotissima, Albizzia Lebbbee, Albizzia Procera, Albizzia Chinensis, Derris Robusta etc.)

Pruning of tea branches:

Pruning means cutting of the tea branches at regular intervals according to the needs of the tea plants. As per experts views all young tea pruning should be completed between 15th January to 15th February and matured tea pruning should be completed within 15th January to 30th January.

Production of Green leaf:

The production is the main factor of small Tea Grower. If a small tea grower fails to harvest the requisite quality of Crop (i.e., green leaf) from the garden spending so much money and he/she will not be able to maintain the plantation efficiently then ultimately they have to surrender their plantation to somebody.

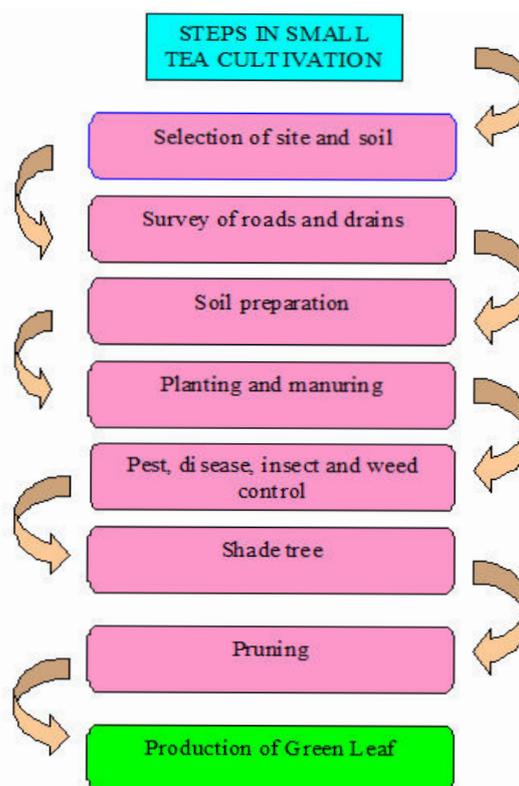
The planters who are maintaining their plantation efficiently can harvest maximum green leaf up to 6000 kgs to 8000 kgs per acre during the season. The yield per acre is highest in the Doom Dooma area of upper Assam. The yield in Tinsukia and Dibrugarh area is medium. The Sonari, Nazira and Jorhat area is at par. The Yield in Golaghat, Nagaon and North Bank area is approximately the same.

The following table shows different yield pattern of made tea and green leaf per acre at different places of Assam according to the yielding capacity of soil.

Made tea Per Acre(in kgs)	Green leaf per acre(in kgs)
1600	8000
1400	7000
1200	6000
1000	5000
800	4000
600	3000

Source: Gist of Lecture delivered by the Manager of Nirmala Tea Estate at the small tea growers training programe on 7th December, 1999.

Therefore, a small grower must have the target to harvest maximum crop between 6000 kgs to 8000 kgs per acre and he/she should maintain the garden accordingly to harvest maximum green leaf. The following chart shows the various steps in small tea cultivation:



Income:

In Tea cultivation in the first 2/3 years there is no income according to expenditure. But, after 3 years a small tea grower will be able to harvest and realize his/her previous 3 years expenditures spent for planting and maintaining young tea plantation.

Here is a calculation of 4 acres plantation and income per year.

If a small tea grower maintain the plantation efficiently and harvest 7000 kgs green leaf per acre and if the same is sale @ Rs. 20/- per kg it comes to Rs.1,40,000 x 4 acres = Rs. 5,60,000/- for full season and exclude 50% expenditure on 4 acres plantation including his/her own salary, which comes to Rs.2,80,000/-.

Conclusion:

The above calculation proves that the person who is doing 4 acres plantation and maintaining it efficiently gains Rs. 2, 80,000/- net profit in a year excluding all expenditures which

includes his/her own salary also. In other words the person is earning Rs: 23,333.33/- per month on 4 acres plantation and can earn more if he/she can afford to extent more plantations. In conclusion it can be said that enhancement of Small Tea plantation will not only uplift the Growers and employed personnel of this sector but also to the State Government as it

has imposed a tax of 25 paisa per Kg. of green leaf as Agricultural Tax. It is the green Gold of Assam. It is expected that the State Government as well as the Central Government should come forward to develop the small tea cultivation of Assam in a scientific way in the near future.

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