

Assam: Small tea growers to supply 40% fine quality tea leaves

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GUWAHATI: Small tea growers in Assam must supply 40% fine quality tea leaves to bought-leaf factories. Such an arrangement will be in force till the Tea Board of India comes up with a new minimum benchmark price and price-sharing formula. The following decision was taken after a stakeholder meeting on Thursday, chaired by the Tea Board of India chairman and attended by its executive director, representatives of the producer associations and small growers association director Tocklai on the issues of quality and pricing of green leaf supplied by small tea growers to manufacturers.

“Tea Board will review the minimum benchmark price (MBP) and a third party will be engaged to carry out a proper study. A video showing the correct way to calculate the “ballometric count” (to count fine leaf percentage of green leaf) has been made by Tocklai and the same will be shared by the Board to educate small growers and factories. The minimum acceptable fine leaf count (as per ballometric count) should be 40% and strictly enforced. All factories are to strictly turn away any leaf less than 40% fine leaf count,” Bidyananda Barkakoty, adviser of North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) and former vice chairman of Tea Board of India, said on Friday.

He added these arrangements will be in force till the Board comes up with the new MBP and price sharing formula. On Wednesday NETA in a letter to Arunita Phukan Yadav, executive director of Tea Board of India’s NE zonal office, stated that the circular from the Board on tea leaf was not acceptable because there was no concept of three leaves and a bud in Assam Tea.

“We have written to the Tea Board several times in the past to carry out a study through a reputed third party and accordingly rectify the PSF, MBP and minimum acceptable quality (MAQ) of green leaf. Unless we rectify the above, the misunderstanding between tea growers and tea manufacturers will crop up from time to time. According to the Board, there is PSF (which fixes the price of green leaf on annual basis and based on price realisation of individual factory as per Tea Board form-E monthly return) and there is MBP (which fixes the price of green leaf on monthly basis district-wise and based on previous months sale of GTAC). Green leaf price cannot be fixed if we have both PSF and MBP as per prevailing formula,” the letter stated.

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