

Small tea growers to get benefits under govt. scheme

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Small tea growers in Kotagiri in the Nilgiris district will soon benefit under the Special Area Development Programme of the State government. On Thursday, Minister K. Ramachandran disbursed subsidies to the beneficiaries.

A release from Tea Board India said small growers contributed to nearly 50 % of the total tea production in the Nilgiris. Though many of them produced speciality teas, they faced challenges in marketing the products. In an effort to boost speciality tea production in the Nilgiris and to bring more small tea growers under the purview of the board, the Board had introduced a special package to extend financial assistance to small growers under the Special Area Development Programme of the State government. A total amount of ₹1.21 crore would be disbursed to 275 growers who had less than one hectare under tea, six people to set up speciality tea boutiques in the Nilgiris, and to two tribal self-help groups (SHGs) to set up mini tea factories.

M. Balaji, Executive Director of the Tea Board, said the beneficiaries were all from Kotagiri as Kotagiri and Kundah were two places where there was labour shortage and the quality needed to be improved. As many as 275 small tea farmers were identified and given total subsidy of ₹30 lakh to get battery operated harvesters and pruning machines. The subsidy amount had been remitted to their bank accounts.

The Board had also given no objection certificates to six beneficiaries to set up 400 sq.ft tea boutiques each. They would sell speciality teas produced by the small growers and tea factories. Two of these boutiques would be set up by two unemployed small tea growers. They would each get 50 % subsidy to set up the boutique in phases and the Board had also arranged bank loans for them. The boutiques would be under the larger banner of Tea Board.

Two tribal SHGs, each with 30 to 40 members, would establish mini tea factories and get 50 % subsidy (₹10 lakh). The tea factories and boutiques would start operations in a couple of months, he said. The tea factories would also have tie ups with small growers, he added.

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