

TEA RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

MINUTES OF THE 198TH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT
HELD ON 11TH JANUARY 2023 AT 3PM AT KOLKATA

Present	Shri S Pahari, IAS	Chairman, Tea Board	
	Ms.N Palchoudhuri	Chairperson, TRA	
	Mr A Asthana	Vice Chairman, TRA	
	Shri A K Mukherjee		
	Mr S Soundararajan		
	Dr M Singh		
	Mr P K Bezboruah		Online
	Mr A Jalan		
	Mr V Kumar		
	Mr S K Saria		Online
	Mr P C Dhandhanian		
	Mr G Barooah		Online
	Mr J S Chahal		
	Mr P Melanta		
	Mr A K Jha		Online
	Mr R Singh		
	Mr J V Kejriwal		
	Mr B K Dalmia		
	Mr A Raha		
	Dr A Babu	Director, TRA	
	Mr J Phukan	Secretary, TRA	
	Mr A Mitra	Financial Controller, TRA	

The Chairperson TRA welcomed Shri Saurav Pahari, IAS, Chairman Tea Board of India and Shri Anup Kumar Mukherjee, FA & CAO, Tea Board.

The Chair informed the Council of the demise of Mr Saroj Mehra and Mr R K Krishna Kumar. She stated that Mr Saroj Mehra was the Chairman of TRA from 1972 to 1975 while he was associated with James Finlays and contributed greatly to TRA Mr R K Krishna Kumar while he was MD of Tata Tea Ltd played a major role in defusing the industrial relations situation at Tocklai in 1998 brought in stability at Tocklai.

The Council of Management expressed its deepest condolences at the passing of the Mr Saroj Mehra and Mr R K Krishna Kumar and observed two minutes silence in the memory of the departed.

Shri Saurav Pahari, Chairman, Tea Board released the TRA Planters Calendar 2023 which has been done on the theme "200 years of Assam Tea & Contribution of Tocklai " and the Tocklai Newsletter from July – December 2022.

1. Confirmation of Minutes:

The Council confirmed the Minutes of the 197th meeting of the Council of Management with the addition of the name of Mr M K Varma as a member of the Executive Committee which was left out earlier in advertantly.

2. Action Taken Report :

The Chairperson stated that the comments received from members on the TRA GAP GMP standards have been discussed at the meeting of the Advisory Officers for suitably addressing the issues. The Secretary stated that questionnaire made on the GAP GMP will be sent out to all member estates by March 2023 as the first step.

3. R & D Highlights:

The Chairperson stated that meetings of the Agriculture, Engineering & New Technology Committee was held on the 10th January 2023. She requested the Chairs of the Committee to brief the Council.

a) Overview by Chairman of Engineering & Mfg. Committee

Mr P C Dhandhanian, Chairman, Engineering & Manufacturing Committee gave an overview of the discussion held in the Engineering & Manufacturing Committee meeting held on 10th January 2023. The four projects on prolonged storage leaf storage systems, grade percentage through image processing, estimation of onsite quality of tea through spectroscopy and the new type of drier was informed. The CDAC TRA robotic harvester project was briefed to the Council.

b) Overview of Agriculture Committee :

Mr Rajvinder Singh, Chairman of the Agriculture Committee gave an overview of the Agriculture Committee meeting which is given below:

1. It was discussed that the PPC list of pesticides needs inclusion of some important molecules which are already been studied and principally approved by TRA but waiting for formal green signal from the authorizing bodies CIB –RC

2. Fusarium- is the new alarming disease. New ways and means to control it was discussed in detail. Secondary bacterial diseases which come after Fusarium attack needs to be controlled with new antibiotic chemicals (Veldamycin 25%). This also needs validation from CIB – RC
3. Members also discussed the introduction of bio fertilizers and they also shared their views on liquid fertilizers application. Doses of vermin compost required per hect were also discussed in detail.
4. Dr. R. K Ghosh of Effluent and water treatment Engineers Pvt Ltd was also present wherein requirement of irrigation and water management was also discussed.

Members were of the opinion that irrigation when done for survival gives better results.

5. Plant population per hect – members discussed that in the past couple of decades the policy of more plants per hect might be one of the reasons for stagnant yields and infestation of acute pest and fungal diseases. TRA is expected to take out a advisory of the same.
6. Some members mentioned about poor quality of pesticides in the market which can be checked by way of sending samples to TRA labs at Kolkata.
7. RA (Rainforest Alliance) - members have expressed their concern regarding RA. RA does not follow PPC norms, so it's very difficult for the gardens to decide what to follow and what not to.

TRA will be discussing the matter with RA. Many gardens have already started opting out of RA.
8. Members discussed that we need to have more interactions with crop life body and towards the end the concept of natural farming was also discussed.
9. It was also expected that we will be having regular meeting to have a follow up on the discussed points. Mr. Joydeep Phukan, Secretary TRA was requested to prepare follow up letter to expedite the process of inducting new chemicals.

c) Overview of New Technologies Committee :

The Chairperson stated that there was a very good meeting held of the TRA New Technologies Committee on the 10th January 2023. It was attended by representative of the IIM Calcutta Innovation Hub, IIT Kharagpur incubation Centre besides many young people associated with the industry. She stated that looking at the response, TRA can act an incubation for new technology startups on tea.

Mr Pahari, Chairman Tea Board stated that a visit to the Coffee Board's incubation centre is being planned. He requested TRA to depute their personal along with Tea Board. Post the visit, incubation centre similar to that of Coffee Board can be replicated. He also mentioned about the micro bio markers project for Darjeeling tea with Bose Institute wherein TRA can come as a partner. The Chairman wanted some work on the shelf life of tea which needs to be backed up by scientific data and codified. He informed the Council about the NIC platform on pest and disease predication.

d) Report by the Director TRA

The Director TRA appraised the Council of Management on the salient features of the R&D work with his presentation. The Director also presented the placement of manpower from February 2023. Mr Saria stated that proper attention should be given to Nagrakata. Chairperson asked the Director to review the manpower deployment.

The proposal for Solar installations at Tocklai was approved.

4. Finance &Accounts:

a) Membership Subscription

The membership subscription details upto 31st December 2022 is given below was discussed.

Financial Status of the Association:2022-2023								
							2021-22	2022-23
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Till 31.12.2021	Till 31.12.2022
Membership Subscription							last year	Current Year
A. Ordinary								
Billing	1330.36	1574.4	1822.03	1842.89	1881.8	1898.48	1424.32	1294.71
Collection	1124.92	1300.68	1362.08	1376.21	1486.17	1404.16	1048.42	988.72
Rebate/Discount	57.93	56.51	60.84	55.53	36.69	41.03	31.18	34.93
Net Recovery Total	1182.85	1357.19	1422.92	1431.74	1522.86	1445.19	1079.6	1023.65
Arrear/Outstanding Recovery	98.08	100.28	116.97	220.31	237.7	122.44	114.02	159.23
Gross Total Collection:	1280.93	1457.47	1539.89	1652.05	1760.56	1567.63	1193.62	1182.88
RECOVERY % WISE(CURRENT Yr.)	89%	86%	78%	78%	81%	76%	76%	79%
OV ALL RECOVERY % WISE	96%	93%	85%	90%	94%	83%	84%	91%
B. Associate								
Current	14.37	20.8	20.8	21.55	7.79	12.98	8.76	15.5
Arrear	1.61	5.63	9.78	10.25	9.16	9.82	6.42	6.65
Total:	15.98	26.43	30.58	31.8	16.95	22.8	15.18	22.15
GROSS TOTAL COLLECTION:(A+B)	1296.91	1483.9	1570.47	1683.85	1777.51	1590.43	1208.8	1205.03
LESS: REBATE/DISCOUNT	57.93	56.51	60.84	55.53	36.69	41.03	31.18	34.93
NET TOTAL COLLECTION(A+B)	1238.98	1427.39	1509.63	1628.32	1740.82	1549.4	1177.62	1170.1

The Secretary stated that overall percentage of collection has improved but number of long time defaulters have increased who have not been billed. There are large dues from companies who have divested their plantation business. The Secretary stated since non paying members have been made defaulters, billing to these members have not been made. He also stated the lower crop in the years 2020 and 2021 has affected total billing of the Association. Mr Dhandhania stated that some new thoughts have to given to enhance subscription collection.

b) Financial Position

The Secretary stated that the financial position of the Association continues to be difficult. Tea Board of India have cleared Rs7.86 crores upto the third quarter. Rs 2.62 crores will be paid by the March 2023 end. An additional amount of Rs 76 lacs is due from the financial year 2021-22. The total liability of the Association is as under:

	(Rs. in Lacs)
Gratuity	377
Leave Encashment	601
Party Liability	150

The Secretary stated that some urgent steps need to be adopted for clearing above dues. The issue of representing to the Ministry of Commerce to remove capping on 2016 was discussed and it was decided to be taken up with the DoC.

5. Hosting of 25th FAO IGG Session & International Conference :

The Chairman Tea Board stated that India will host the next 25th session of the FAO Intergovernmental group on tea meeting alongwith a pre event is tentatively scheduled from 25-28th April 2023 at Guwahati. Since the 19th session of the FAO Intergovernmental group on tea was organized by TRA at New Delhi in 2010, the Tea Board of India proposed the same to the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India who have approved the proposal. Tea Board of India have written to the Association on the same. He stated that he proposed to form a steering Committee / Core group to deal with the requirements for the event. The Council thanked Chairman Tea Board for giving the responsibility to TRA to organize the event. The Secretary TRA stated that all arrangements for the event will be done in a transparent manner similar to that of 2010.

6. Proposal for code share between Trustea and TRA GAP GMP

The Chairperson stated that the Trustea Secretariat approached the Association to discuss on the TRA GAP and GMP standards on the 10th November, 2022 which was attended by representatives from HUL, TCPL and GTPPL (Wagh Bakri). It was proposed that Trustea and TRA could collaborate on a few common chapters of the standards. The Council discussed the matter and in principle approved the same and stated that both agreement should be reciprocal in manner.

7. Tocklai Division Handover to ATCL :

The Director TRA informed the Council that as per the MOU signed between TRA and ATCL and letter from ATCL dated 27th September 2022, the Tocklai Division was supposed to have been handed over to ATCL. However he stated that the ground situation became volatile as a section of the workers approached the Labour office and demanded that unless the worker strength is restored to 1977 levels and all dues cleared, the handover cannot take place. He stated that the matter has been taken up with the Principal Secretary Industries and MD ATCL for an amicable solution. Tocklai has stopped taking workers from the garden for it's campus maintenance.

8. Formation of New Technology Committee& Tripura Cachar NE Committee :

The Chairperson stated that the members of the Association in Cachar and Tripura have stated that the requirements of the region is specific to the region and a separate Committee needs to look after the interests of the members. Accordingly a Committee has been proposed in the last Council meeting which needs to be ratified. The proposed Chairman is Mr I B Ubadhia of Rosekandy TE.

It is also proposed that to explore and experiment on new emerging technologies, a Committee has been proposed with the following terms of reference:

- a. Explore and identify new technology / innovation which might be of use to the industry.
- b. Customisation of existing technologies for use in the tea industry.
- c. Working with startup companies on development of new innovation.
- d. Exploration of funding for joint collaborative research work.

The Council ratified the formation of the above two sub Committee's

9. Proposal from AEGF to work on STG in Assam and West Bengal :

The Secretary stated that AEGF is an NGO co-founded by Syngenta Foundation India and TATA Trusts, supported by IDH The Sustainable Trade Initiative. The organization aims to create 100,000 AEs in next 5 years to reach 20 million smallholders in India. IDH-SFI co-funded a project to develop and anchor agri-entrepreneurs to provide agriculture services to small tea growers and increase their income. An AE brings together services such as credit and market linkage, access to high-quality input and crop advisory for a cluster of about 100-120 farmers.

AEGF has proposed to work on the following areas:

- Extension services to AEGF through the mandates of Tea Board of India and Assam Government Schemes. This will include training to Small Tea Growers (STGs), Agri-Entrepreneurs (AEs) and Agri-Entrepreneurs Mentors (AEMs) on tea value chain.
- AEGF to link with TRA Scientist visit to STGs field locations.
- Residential trainings, exposure visits and courses to AEs and AEMs.
- TRA to invite IDH on FAO-led knowledge sharing platform.
- TRA to Partner IDH STGSP-Platform as Knowledge Partner.

Cooperation agreement between TRA and IDH on above mentioned points is sought. The Council approved the signing of the MOU.


10. Proposal for MOU for raising commercial seed bari :

The Chairperson stated that the CAO WB has proposed on the 26th September 2022 to jointly develop seed bari between Sona Tea Company and TRA Nagrakata at a 60:40 profit sharing ratio. The land and manpower for setting up the same will be of STC and scientific expertise and advise will be of TRA. The Council approved the same.

11. Any Other Business:

- a) Re-tender of the commercialization of the bio formulation of Tocklai floated in 2021 has been discussed and approved.
- b) Proposal of Tea Vision to jointly run a tea management course in collaboration with iLead at TRA Nagrakata was discussed and approved.
- c) Request of IIPM Bangalore for extension of MOU for the premises at Tocklai for the existing space was approved at a monthly rent of Rs 10,000/- Other terms in the MOU to be followed strictly.

- d) Proposal for Car hire at Assam and Nagrakata was approved for Mr D Dutta and Mr S Kujur at the lowest quoted rates (circulated to members)
- e) Transfer of Advisory Officers was discussed and approved. Consideration for TRA Nagrakata as requested by Mr S K Saria will be looked into.
- f) Mr BK Dalmia requested the Council if a scientist can be appointed as the Deputy Director Nagrakata to which the Chairperson stated that she will discuss the matter.
- g) The Chairperson proposed to open a new WhatsApp group of the Council of the newly elected members which was approved.
- h) Dr Mahipal Singh enquired about the IJTS which was replied by the Secretary TRA.
- i) Mr P C Dhandania briefed the online meeting with Crop in to all members.
- j) Mr S K Saria requested the balance fund for the Nagrakata factory of Rs 4 lacs. He also stated that NTRF should allot funds for North Bengal tea production. He asked to upgrade two more TRA centres like NBRDC.


N Palchoudhuri
Chairperson


J Phukan
Secretary

3rd February 2023