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TEA INDUSTRY OF ASSAM. IT'S PRESENT AND FUTURE



Gautam Sarma



ABSTRACT

It is needless to say that tea is one of the most important industry of Assam . Assam produces almost 51% of the total tea of India and 1/6th of the total produced in the world. But Govt of Assam has not been able to monitor the tea industry of Assam as properly as it deserve. Tea garden workers are not getting their wages on proper time and neither the industry is making adequate profits. Our study is mainly based on the present condition of tea industry in Assam (under Govt) and what steps should be taken to improve the scenario of Assam tea industry.

KEYWORDS : *Tea industry, research methodology, limitation, Assam Tea Corporation.*

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.To study the present condition of Assam tea industry mainly under the government
- 2.To analyse the problems faced by the Assam tea industry
- 3.To know about the problems faced by the tea workers of Assam tea industry mainly under the state government.
- 4.To suggest some measures to improve the current scenario of Assam tea industry so that it can compete with the global market.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

The research is a descriptive research and is based on primary as well as secondary data. There are 14 gardens under this corporation and researcher have visited five of them namely.

1. Sycotta T.E
2. Deepling T.E
3. Negheritting T.E
4. Amluckie T.E
5. Longai T.E

There are near about 15000 workers in total working in 14 tea gardens of Assam Government and we conducted a survey among them . We took 87 workers as a sample unit using judgment sampling method. We met the workers personally and also visited the head office to know the financing pattern of the gardens.

Data here collected are of primary nature and are collected from direct personal interview. However data collected from head office regarding the amount remitted to the gardens are of secondary nature.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of the study are highlighted under the following points

- 1.The study is limited to the tea estate under government of Assam only . It revolves around the functioning of Assam tea Corporation limited.
- 2.Most of the workers of the gardens are illiterate and they find it difficult to co operate with the researchers
- 3.Reviews and opinions provided by the tea workers or the garden staff are of descriptive nature. It is quite difficult make a statistical analysis on the basis of that.

Assam tea corporation : a Govt of Assam undertaking

Assam tea corporation is located in the city of Guwahati near dispur. It is the head office of Assam tea industry run by the govt. It was incorporated in the year 1973 and there are 14 gardens under this corporation . the condition of the corporation is not good as it has been incurring losses. Accounts of the corporation is not updated over the years and works are kept pending. Govt of Assam is not being able to properly monitor the activities of the organisation and funds are not being utilised properly.

It produces CTC and orthodox tea in its own premises. Made tea are sold in Assam tea Auction centre. It is the largest tea auction centre of Asia. Buying and selling of tea mainly take place through brokers.

Green leaf are sold to private houses on the basis of tender. As the production of tea is seasonal in nature corporation takes advance money from private houses on the basis of tender given by them.

Corporation sends finance to every garden at a monthly basis and monthly expenditure statements are sent by gardens to the Head Office, on the basis of that Head office prepares the final balance sheet .

Cash is remitted by the Head Office to each gardens and garden managers have to cover their expenditures within that remitted amount. The only income of the gardens are sale proceeds of green leaf. They sale the produced tea in the auction centre of Guwahati. Their main expenditure is salary and wages of workers. There are other expenditure also such as, electricity charge, repairs and maintenance of vehicle etc.

Due to poor financial health of the corporation, the management of gardens are vested to the local committees up to the year 2002. After that, the management of the gardens are again taken back by the government of Assam through Head Office.

Following are the details of the gardens of Assam Tea corporation.

| ame of Estate/ Premises | Location (Assam) | Total Land Area (in Hect) | Effective Area under Tea (in Hect) | Area under Nursery, Seed-bari etc (in Hect) | Area other than under Tea (in Hect) | Built up area of various building Factory, Hospital (in Sq Mtr) |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Cinnamara TE | Jorhat | 1591.64 | 646.67 | 134.1 | 810.87 | 28580.00 |
| Sycotta TE | Jorhat | 1570.67 | 692.28 | 326.51 | 551.88 | 27510.00 |
| Naganijan TE | Jorhat | 1014.86 | 309.87 | 113.55 | 591.44 | 12231.82 |
| Deepling TE | Sibsagar | 582.03 | 271.3 | 62.59 | 248.14 | 8714.10 |
| Rajabarie TE | Sibsagar | 503.09 | 91.28 | 252.13 | 159.68 | 2530.60 |
| Negheriting TE | Golaghat | 1163.34 | 347.74 | 308.69 | 506.91 | 8676.00 |
| Messamara TE | Golaghat | 705.00 | 316.98 | 196.15 | 191.87 | 4437.10 |
| Rungamatty TE | Golaghat | 637.77 | 347.68 | 84.73 | 205.36 | 3031.60 |
| Amluckie TE | Nagaon | 1515.07 | 511.79 | 285.37 | 717.91 | 17378.00 |
| Dejoovalley TE | Nagaon | 549.21 | 273.2 | 62.62 | 213.39 | 9943.00 |
| Loongsoong TE | Nagaon | 820.11 | 411.22 | 118.18 | 290.71 | 13794.14 |
| Bholaguri TE | Sonitpur | 240.46 | 96.69 | 48.04 | 95.73 | 2386.58 |
| Longai TE | Karimganj | 1709.35 | 572.52 | 335.66 | 801.17 | 9468.16 |
| Isabheel TE | Karimganj | 1019.30 | 446.25 | 155.46 | 417.59 | 9291.00 |
| Jorhat Office | Jorhat | 44.40 | - | - | 44.40 | 6798.00 |
| Central Hospital | Jorhat | 6.50 | - | - | 6.50 | 3046.20 |

This statement does not include 147.62 hectare of land under Sycotta is the largest garden under the Assam tea Corporation while Bholaguri is the smallest of them undertaking production process. From the above chart we can see that Longai TE estate has 801 hectre land from other activities except production of tea, which is the highest among them.

ABOUT THE WORKERS

In assam , a majority of the workers in small tea gardens are experienced tea workers who have worked already in some other gardens or relatives of such workers . During peak season most of these workers are engaged in estate gardens and the small tea growers in Assam also were confirmed by limited knowledge about cultivation, as they are not trained growers. They have started the cultivation when started fetching high prices. Some of them managed to bring tea roots from Darjeeling. Now a days, green leaves are fetching high prices but that is purely seasonal and high price is possible only if it is backed by good quality.

RESEARCH PROCESS AND FINDINGS

We visited the above mentioned gardens and undertook a survey among the tea workers. We took 87workers as a sample and after conducting the survey we came to know that 91% of workers are not satisfied with the irregular wage payment system. They often have to undertake strikes for their monthly wage payment and other dues.

The second important thing that can be pointed out after survey is that the production of the

gardens are not satisfactory. The amount of green leaf produced by the gardens is not up to the potential of these tea estate. There has been a downfall in the production of tea over the last three years. Our respondents were of the view that there has been a downfall of 15-20% in the total production of tea by the gardens.

Again it is noticed there are lots of unutilised land in the gardens. 24% of the total land area are kept unutilised till today . These Lands are either kept completely unused or used for activities other than plantation.

It has been noticed after the survey that techniques of production used by the gardens are out dated and unscientific. New scientific techniques are still not adopted by the gardens.

There is lack of proper monitoring on the part of the government. Government should take steps to look after the activities of the garden as well as the functioning of the head office . Govt should send its officials from time to time , to monitor the activities of the garden

SUGGESTIONS

Assam it has been our pride. It is not only a source revenue for us but also this is our identity. So it our responsibility to take good care of the industry. Firstly it is the duty of the government to monitor the activities of the gardens. Funds provided by the government to run its gardens should be utilized in the proper direction to make the gardens work better.

Assam tea expects better price than it is earning till today. Keeping in mind the quality of Assam tea, there should be a hike in the price level of tea. In 2010 the average prices of Assam tea has been 130.39 and 112.90 in Kolkata and Guwahati auction centres. Similarly the average price of CTC leaf is 131.33 and CTC dust is 128.12 in Kolkata auction centre while in Guwahati auction centre the price of CTC leaf is 117.96 and 117. 63 for CTC dust.

It is noticed that workers of the gardens are paid lesser in comparison to the payment made by the other business houses . Wage is the main motivating factor for the workers to work in the garden. Lesser amount of wage always discourage the tea workers.

New scientific technologies should be used for the purpose of increase in the amount of production and marketing of tea should also be done by the government. A plantation project should be undertaken by the government of Assam in each of the gardens where land are lying unused. This will be very helpful in providing employment to the workers also.

CONCLUSION

Thus, from the above analysis we can come to know that the present condition of Assam tea industry under the Government is not satisfactory. There is a continuous downfall in the production of tea due to which government is incurring losses. The study also helps us to know that the workers of the gardens are also not satisfied with the wages payment system and the facilities provided to them. So proper allocation of funds with proper planning is of utmost important on the part of the government to bring back the past glory of Assam tea. Regular visit to the gardens and strategic discussions with the garden managers should be undertaken.

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