

Research Article

THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF UTTARAKHAND TEA DEVELOPMENT BOARD TO DEVELOP, PROMOTE AND UPLIFT THE TEA INDUSTRY IN UTTARAKHAND

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Abstract

Tea cultivation started in Uttarakhand in early 1800 along with Assam and Darjeeling. Although Uttarakhand produces exotic orthodox tea with great flavour, aroma and colour, it is unable to compete with its competitors and leave a global mark. Thus, to ensure proper development and promotion of tea industry in the State, the Uttarakhand Tea Development Board was set-up. The establishment, objectives, vision, mission, organizational structure, sources of finance, schemes and importance of the Board have been explained in detail in this article.

Keywords: Tea, Tea Industry, Uttarakhand, Uttarakhand Tea Development Board, Tea Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand is the 27th state of India carved out of Uttar Pradesh on 9th November, 2000. The State has thirteen districts (Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, Pithoragarh and Udham Singh Nagar in Kumaon division and Chamoli, Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri, Rudraprayag, Tehri and Uttarkashi in Garhwal division). The credit of tea cultivation in the hilly districts of the State goes to the Britishers. However, post-independence Uttarakhand tea became non-existent. To revive the tea industry Uttar Pradesh government took various measures. However, the tea industry gained pace only after formation of Uttarakhand State in 2000 and establishment of Uttarakhand Tea Development Board in 2004.

History of Tea in Uttarakhand

The credit for creating the vast tea empire in India goes to the British empire. They commercialized tea production in India and initiated their tea production spree in Assam and Darjeeling in an attempt to break the Chinese monopoly of tea. The Britishers initially cultivated the Chinese variety (*Camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis*) as they believed the Assamese variety (*Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica*) was inferior in quality. But they eventually realized that the Chinese variety was unable to survive the hot weather conditions in Assam and thus went forward with the Assamese plant. Prior to the British rule, the plant was consumed by Indians as a vegetable as well as drunk majorly for medicinal purposes. The positive results from Assam and Darjeeling tea-cultivation endeavors stimulated the Britishers to undertake tea-plantation across the foothills of the Himalayas (including Uttarakhand) and other parts of India. In 1824, Bishop Haber in his book 'History of tea cultivation in Uttarakhand Vol-I' claimed that tea plants were found in the forest in the region but were not used as an agricultural product. (Tiwari & Kumar, 2020) In 1827 Mr. Ramley sent a report to East India Company regarding tea cultivation in Kumaon. Thereafter, a committee was set-up by Lord Venting in 1834. By 1835, around 2000 tea-plants were received from Kolkata and were planted in Laxmeshwar in

Almora and Bharatpur near Bhimtal. It slowly spread throughout Uttarakhand and eventually tea production started by 1837-38. Uttarakhand tea was back then highly appreciated for its flavour by the British Government. By 1880, a total of 63 tea-gardens spread over 10937 acres of land were established in Uttarakhand. (Sati *et al.*, 2008). Post-independence, tea cultivation and production flourished in most parts of the country. However, in Uttarakhand tea-plantation was considered "farming of foreigners" and thus the tea cultivation witnessed various set-backs. At that time, tea estates were considered the property of Britishers and were resisted. Thus, the tea estates of Uttarakhand gradually perished with time. Consequently, the then renowned "Uttarakhand tea" acclaimed for its distinguished flavor, aroma and colour now became a non-existent entity.

Uttarakhand Tea Development Board

The Government of Uttar Pradesh realizing the immense possibilities of tea development in the hilly regions of the undivided state undertook the Tea Development Project through Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN) and Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN) in 1993-94. However, post establishment of the State of Uttarakhand in 2000, the State Government to focus on development of tea in the state and to speed up the process constituted Uttarakhand Tea Development Board on 11th February, 2004. Presently the Board is running the Tea Development Program in 9 hilly districts of the State namely, Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Chamoli, Nainital, Pauri, Pithoragarh, Rudraprayag and Tehri. (UTDB, 2022)

By March 2022, a total of 1423.00 hectares of total tea plantation has been undertaken:

- 853 hectares by the Board
- 231 hectares under Special Component Plan
- 339 hectares under MGNREGA

For successful implementation of the tea development program 3915 land-owners and 3246 labourers have been employed in the tea gardens and tea factories. 70 percent of the labourers

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employed are females. An estimate of 4.50 lakh man-days of employment is being created by the Board every year. (UTDB, 2022)

Uttarakhand Tea Development Board – Vision

“To establish labour intensive and eco-friendly tea plantation proposed in 9,000 hectares of land in Uttarakhand so as to utilize fallow and cultivable vacant land for the sustainable development of the rural areas and

- To provide employment to the illiterate/semiliterate rural folks.
- To ameliorate and strengthen the economic condition of the tea farmers through the sale of green leaf.
- To provide income generating opportunities to a large section of semi-urban and urban population through trade.
- To add revenue of the State Govt.” (UTTARAKHAND TEA DEVELOPMENT BOARD, 2022)

Uttarakhand Tea Development Board – Objectives

The main objective of the Board is to undertake scientific survey, conservation, cultivation, revival of old gardens and efficient production of tea in order to improve and boost the economic conditions of the local people / farmers / labors / landowners. (UTDB, 2022)

The Board undertakes the following activities in the State:

- To rejuvenate and revive old tea gardens and estates
- To establish new tea gardens and estates
- To survey the prospective areas for tea plantation
- To ensure availability of advanced and latest tools and techniques for tea plantation
- To educate and train the local people and landowners about tea-cultivation and its benefits
- To provide employment opportunities to the local people and landowners by planting tea in barren wastelands
- To increase the level of income and standard of living of local people and landowners by promoting tea cultivation
- To help and assist the land owner’s farmers and labors in tea plantation
- To determine the quality of Uttarakhand tea and establish quality control measures
- To establish coordination between research and development works in the field of tea
- To provide private / individual entrepreneurs land for tea plantation by taking land on lease from land owners /villagers
- To establish tea factories as well as to invite private / individual entrepreneurs to establish tea factories
- To survey and publicize organic farming of tea and to promote landowners / entrepreneurs to undertake and propagate organic tea plantation
- To promote the tea manufacturing through various marketing strategies and use export as a distribution channel
- To develop tea gardens on land taken on lease from land-owners
- To record, document and publish data, literature, information, public interaction, proceedings, etc., related to tea and tea industry

Organization Structure of Uttarakhand Tea Development Board

As per the Government Order numbered 246/XVI/05/01(36)/04 dated 15th October, 2005 and reorganization of structure as per the Government Order numbered 1424/XVI-2/17/01(36)/2004 dated 17th February, 2017 a total of 74 posts have been sanctioned including the posts of Director, Deputy Director, Finance Officer, Marketing Manager, Garden Manager, Soil Scientist, Factory Manager, Accountant, Personnel Assistant, Store Keeper, Senior Clerk, Assistant Manager, Garden Assistant Manager, Field Assistant, Assistant Accountant, Junior Account Clerk, Junior Clerk/Computer Assistant, Garden Supervisor, Laboratory Supervisor, Driver, Factory Operator, Garden Operator, Assistant Supervisor, Assistant Factory Operator, Laboratory Assistant, Orderly / Watchmen, etc.(UTDB, 2022)

Category	Sanctioned Posts	Filled Posts	Vacant Posts
Category-1	02	01	01
Category-2	08	05	03
Category-3	43	33	10
Category-4	21	21	*
Total	74	60	14

Source: Uttarakhand Tea Development Board

Sources of finance of Uttarakhand tea development board

The Board aims at development of tea-production in the State. Thus, Uttarakhand Government will provide the Board with financial assistance through grants and subsidies in order to operate efficiently (UTDB, 2022)

- Grants received from Tea Board India
- Income received for transfer of developed and functioning tea gardens to private entrepreneurs
- Income from sale of green tea leaves
- Revenue from the sale of tea manufactured
- Income from sale of tea-seedlings / tea-plants to the land owners / farmers at prescribed rates for tea cultivation
- Consultancy fees received by the Board for services rendered related to tea-cultivation, tea-production, tea-garden maintenance or any other matter regarding tea / tea industry

Uttarakhand Tea Development Board – Schemes

The Board undertakes tea cultivation programmes under Special Component Plan, MGNREGA and self-operated schemes. Presently, various tea plantation activities are being undertaken in various development blocks by MGNREGA in collaboration with the Board. The beneficiaries are paid for 100 days as per MGNREGA and the remaining days by the Board. (UTDB, 2022)

The status of various Sub-projects undertaken by the Board till March, 2022:

S.No.	Sub-Project	Sanctioned (in Hectares)	Completed (in Hectares)
1	Kausani (Bageshwar) Tea Garden	211	206
2	Nauti (Chamoli) Tea Garden	200	189
3	Champawat (Champawat) Tea Garden	200	236
4	Ghorakhaal (Nainital) Tea Garden	200	152
5	Jakholi (Rudraprayag) Tea Garden	100	38
6	Jairasi (Almora) Tea Garden	100	16
7	Khirsu (Pauri Garhwal) Tea Garden	100	16
8	Total	1111	853

Source: Uttarakhand Tea Development Board

The status of Plantation undertaken by the Board under Special Component Plan till March, 2022:

S.No.	Project	Sanctioned (in Hectares)	Completed (in Hectares)
1	Block Garud (Bageshwar)	150	150
2	Block Berinaag (Pithoragarh)	50	50
3	Block Munshiyaari (Pithoragarh)	100	18
4	Block Dhauladevi (Almora)	100	12
	Total	400	230

Source: Uttarakhand Tea Development Board

The status of Plantation undertaken by the Board under MGNREGA till March, 2022:

S.No.	Sub-Project	Sanctioned (in Hectares)	Completed (in Hectares)
1	Block Dhauladevi (Almora)	60	60
2	Block Takula (Almora)	60	28
3	Block Garud (Bageshwar)	100	38
4	Block Didihaat (Pithoragarh)	60	53
5	Block Pokhari (Chamoli)	60	27
6	Block Tharali (Chamoli)	60	37
7	Block Betaalghat (Nainital)	100	47
8	Block Agustmuni (Rudraprayag)	60	7
9	Block Ukhimath (Rudraprayag)	60	5
10	Block Kapkot (Bageshwar)	60	17
11	Block Bageshwar (Bageshwar)	60	18
12	Block Hawalbagh (Almora)	60	2
	Total	800	339

Source: Uttarakhand Tea Development Board

Land Selection Process for Tea Plantation

The Board identifies areas suitable for tea plantation and invites applications from land-owners to submit details about the measured land under their name. The Board on receiving the application, tests the suitability of land for tea-cultivation in its Soil Laboratory. The soil pH of the available land should lie between 4.5 to 6. After the land is found suitable for tea cultivation, an action plan is prepared for all the applications received from that development block and sent to district administration for approval. The Board commences the tea plantation work as per the action plan on receiving the approval from the district administration. Tea plantation can be done in barren and fallow land as well. (UTDB, 2022)

Tea Factories

For the processing of organic green tea-leaves the Board has established tea-factories at Ghorakhaal (Nainital), Champawat (Champawat), and Nauti (Chamoli). In the financial year 2021-22 by the month of March a total of 89710 kilograms of manufactured tea was produced by the Board. Thus, the manufactured tea is sold locally as well as through Kolkata Auction Market (UTDB, 2022). For the processing of inorganic green tea-leaves the Board has established tea-factory at Hari-nagari (near Kausani, Block Garud in Bageshwar) with a production capacity of 65000 kilograms of manufactured tea (UTDB, 2022). For analyzing the manufactured orthodox tea and for sample testing the Board sends the sample to Tea Board India's Quality Control Laboratory. (UTDB, 2022)

Soil Testing Laboratory

The Board has established a modern Soil Testing Laboratory at Bhowali (Nainital). Till date 9000 hectares of land has been

tested out of which 2500 hectares has been selected for plantation of tea. 60 percent of this land is owned by private individuals or farmers and the remaining 40 percent by Van Panchayat and Gram Sabha. The Laboratory also tests the soil for various departments and organizations as well as for individual land-owners and farmers. The Board has registered the Laboratory under the Tea Board India.

Employment Opportunities

The Board generates employment of approximately 9 lakh man-days in a year in various districts of the State under its various sub-projects, Special Component Plan and MGNREGA. The women participation is almost 70 to 80 percent in tea-gardens and tea-factories. The tea-development programs have ensured that the idle/barren land of the farmers is used for tea-plantation. This has led to increase in income of farmers and land-owners. It has also led to women empowerment and decrease in migration due to employment opportunities. (UTDB, 2022)

Benefits to Land-Owners on Giving Land to Uttarakhand Tea Development Board for Tea Cultivation

- As tea can grow in barren and infertile land, the income of land-owners will increase by cultivating tea in such unproductive land.
- The land-owner will receive lease-rent for the land from the Board for a period of 7 to 14 years. Also, plantation and maintenance of the tea garden will be undertaken by the Board.
- In lieu of the land given for tea cultivation, the Board will provide employment to the family members of the land-owner. One family member will be employed per hectare of land leased out for cultivation.
- The employment so given to the family members of the land-owners is a part of tea training programme in a way so that they can independently operate tea-gardens post the lease period. They are trained and given all the information regarding various stages of tea-production i.e., nursery, plantation, infilling, pruning, skiffing, plucking, etc. Addition to this from time to time the land-owners are made to visit other tea gardens within the State and in other states.
- As tea gardens are in the near-by areas, it is a good opportunity for the employment of women.
- Once a tea garden is established, a tea plant is productive for almost hundred years. Plucking in tea gardens is done every week from March to November. The land-owner can have a regular source of income every week by selling these plucked green-leaves.
- If the land-owner undertakes tea-plantation himself without leasing out to the Uttarakhand Tea Development Board, he will receive financial assistance from the Tea Board India.

Benefits of Tea Gardens in the State of Uttarakhand

- Reduces migration
- Barren / idle land is cultivated by the Board.
- It is an employment-oriented scheme. The Board employs the land-owners, farmers and labourers especially women throughout the year on fields and factories.
- Once the tea-bushes are successfully planted, they produce green tea-leaves for a period of 100 years.

- Deforestation, natural disasters and heavy rainfall severe land-slides occur in the State. Tea cultivation prevents land-erosion, soil-erosion and land-slides.
- Source of revenue for the state
- Propagates allied industries and supplements forward and backward linkages.

Tea Tourism

Uttarakhand Tea Development Board has started focusing on Tea-tourism. "Tea tourism in Uttarakhand will not only proliferate the existing tourism of the State but will add to the marketing, advertising and promotion of the Uttarakhand Tea and the Uttarakhand tea industry. Tea tourism will open various prospects for the villagers, locals, tea-cultivators and entrepreneurs. It will help the allied industries as well as the forward and backward linkages of the tea and tourism industries. It will lead to development of infrastructure and transport facilities of the State." (Verma and Kavidayal, 2022).

Conclusion

Post establishment of the Uttarakhand Tea Development Board the pace of development of tea industry has increased immensely. The Board does not aim at profit-maximization but only concentrates on development and promotion of tea industry in the State. The tea industry in the state is at the planning and development stage and therefore the Board now needs to focus on marketing and promotion of the manufactured tea.

In future the Board wishes to step into the field of Research and Development. The Board has played a vital role to develop, promote and support the tea industry in Uttarakhand.

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