STUDY TOUR OF THE TEA INDUSTRY IN KENYA

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The above study tour was undertaken during the period June 19 to June 30th, 1983 by a group comprising of six persons including the two of us from the Sri Lanka Tea Board, the Chairman, Tea Small-Holdings Development Authority and his Assistant General Manager and a representative each from the JEDB and SLSPC.

GENERAL

Kenya is a relatively fertile country located on the equator with a total land area of 582,646 sq km (224,960 sq miles) and with a population of only about 14 million. Thus it has a population similar to that in Sri Lanka on a land area that is almost ten times bigger than ours.

There are five distinct geographic regions that include: the Lake Victoria Basin; the Rift Valley and the Associated Highlands; the Eastern Plateau; the Coastal Region and the Semi-arid and arid areas of the North. The largest concentration of the population is in the more fertile Lake Victoria Basin, the Rift-Valley Highland and in the Coastal Region. The capital is Nairobi, which is located at an elevation of 1,650 m.

Agriculture plays a dominant role in the economy of Kenya and accounts for 60% of the country's export earnings. The major export commodities include coffee, tea, sisal, pyrethrum, wattle, meat products and hides.

The rainy season is from late March to May and again from October to December and ranges from as low as 500 mm to 1,800 mm, whilst the arid regions receive less than 500 mm. The Highlands have a well distributed rainfall pattern with a total precipitation ranging from 900 mm to 1,600 mm, with air temperatures ranging from $12^{o}C$ to $16^{o}C$.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEA INDUSTRY IN KENYA

Commercial tea production commenced in Kenya in the mid-1920s. Tea was first introduced in Kenya in Limuru (near Nairobi) in 1903. Thus, the first introduction was at an elevation of 2,500 m above sea level. However, the real expansion of tea planting took effect after the First World War, in 1920s.

Today tea is the second largest single revenue earner after coffee. In the early days, tea cultivation was confined to large plantations owned by colonial settlers and the native Africans were debarred from cultivating tea. With independence in 1963, small-scale cultivation of tea on native African Land Units was encouraged and this led to the evolvement of the Tea Smallholder Sector. With a greater number of local farmers taking up to small-scale tea cultivation, the Ministry of Agriculture set-up an Authority to oversee the development of tea and other cash crop cultivation and this Authority came to be referred to as the "Special Crops Development Authority".

As more and more successful small-scale tea farming units began to emerge, the Kenyan Government encouraged the planting of tea by the villagers and set-up the special Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA) in 1964, to take over the functions of the Special Crops Development Authority. Since then the production of tea by the Smallholder Sector has increased significantly.

Today the Company-owned Plantation Sector produces around 58-60% of the total production of tea on about 26,450 ha of land whilst the Smallholder Sector accounts for the balance 40% of production on about 54,700 ha of land.

Tea is grown in 12 Administrative Districts in Kenya and these include Embu, Kericho, Kakamega, Kiambu, Kirinyaga, Kisii, Kitale, Meru, Muranga, Nandi, Nyeri and West Sotik. Tea cultivation is confined to the elevation range of 1,500 m in Kisii to as high as on 2,500 m.

The Tea Board of Kenya was set-up in 1950, since which time the tea industry was brought under its statutory control. The T.B.K. controls licensing of planting of tea,

manufacturing factories and has regulatory powers over methods of planting, cultivation and processing.

Taxes are collected from a Cess on tea production and planted acreage to generate funds for research, promotion and other related activities which benefit the industry.

Besides the Tea Board of Kenya (TBK) and the Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA), the other organized bodies that are directly connected with the tea industry in Kenya include: The East African Tea Traders' Association (EATTA), which is an independent body that controls Tea Auctions; The Kenya Tea Growers' Association (KTGA) which is an Association of Private Sector Growers (other than smallholders) in the Kericho region formed to further their interests; and, The Kenya Tea Packers' Company which is responsible for the distribution of all tea within the country for local consumption. All manufacturers of tea in Kenya are required to send a certain fixed percentage of their output to be blended and packed in this Company.

THE PLANTATION SECTOR

This Sector is operated by foreign Companies whose Head Offices are located in Nairobi and each have their own Regional Offices in the different tea growing districts. The plantation sector manages a total of about 24,700 ha of tea, growing on land held in lease from the government. This sector is dominated by two foreign-based Companies *viz.* Brooke Bond Leibeg Kenya Limited and James Finlay Company Limited.

Each estate is looked after by a Manager in-charge of all agricultural aspects and another in-charge of the factory and manufacture. The work of these Managers of Estates in the respective region is supervised and co-ordinated at a regional level by the Regional Field Co-ordinator and a Regional Factory Co-ordinator. The work of the Regional Field Co-ordinators and the Regional Factory Co-ordinators are under the charge of a very experienced planter designated as the Superintendent who operates from the Nairobi Head Office along with their Deputy and Assistant Superintendents. The grouping of estates into larger units thus come under the supervision of specialist personnel.

Agricultural Aspects:

The tea lands of Kenya are very fertile with a very good depth of topsoil ranging from 3 to 6 m. The soils are of red-earth type composed of a mixture of decomposed rock and volcanic deposits which is very rich in minerals and ideal for tea growing. With a well-distributed rainfall pattern, nature has provided all that is needed for good tea growth. The terrain of the land is virtually flat or very gently undulating with minimal possibilities for erosion. Despite such safe lands, proper soil conservation measures are adopted by having drains, stone terraces and the banks covered with the African Love Grass, *Eragrostis curvula*.

The tea in general has a good cover with minimal vacancies, with an average planting spacing of 1.2 m x 0.8 m (4 ft x 2½ ft). As a result of such an excellent cover there is very little weed growth. Weeds are controlled by hand as well as with chemicals. Gramoxone and Roundup are in use as the standard herbicides.

In general, there is no shade on many of the estates. *Grevilleas* are planted in rows as wind belts. With the appearance of increasing incidence of Thrips in tea fields devoid of shade in Malawi, attempts are now being made to plant shade in that country. This is being adopted in a small way in Kenya as well.

The average production of Company-owned estates is around 2,100 kg/ha. Despite a very good cover, with hardly any vacancies, infilling operations are carried out very diligently. Special plants grown in the nursery for one year or more are used as infills. Singletons and double planting involves the use of tall plants which are not disbudded, so as to readily locate such infills in the mature tea fields. Block infilling is carried out by such hardy robust plants that has been disbudded and encouraged to put out side-branches. Pruning is timed to coincide with infilling operations at the correct time.

Under Kericho conditions (1,500 m to 2,300 m amsl) pruning is done once every four years. Pruning heights range from as low as 40 cm to as high as 65 cm. The heights are raised 5 cm at each cycle. Tipping is done usually at 10 cm above pruning level. The prunings are

chopped and used to cover the pruned frames soon after pruning. Certain company-owned estates adopt the policy of retaining rim lungs, whilst others do not retain lungs. Pruning time ranges from February to August of each year.

Fertilizer is applied either once or twice a year (April/May and September/October) and given in the form of NPK mixtures in the ratio of 20:10:10 or 25:5:5 of NPK respectively. Sulphur is also incorporated and given in the form of a 25:5:5:5 mixture including NPKS respectively. Seedling fields receive approximately 125 kg of N per ha per annum, whilst clonal fields receive as much as 240 kg of N/ha/annum. The fertility of Kenyan tea soils are so good that for every kilogram of applied nitrogen there is a yield response of 16 to 18 kg of made tea.

Zinc is given in the form of dust applications by air at the rate of 1.5 kg of Zinc oxide per ha or is sprayed by air using a solution of zinc sulphate at 3 kg/ha.

The high cropping period is from September to January. Thus the highest yield is obtained in the fourth quarter of the year, whilst the first quarter yield determines the annual yield.

Plucking is done almost entirely by men and is aimed to harvest around 70% of the shoots as three leaf and a bud. Plucking rounds range from 7-14 days. The average daily intake per plucker is around 30 kg of green leaf with an average of about 11 pluckers per ha. On account of a shortage of pluckers, this operation is sometimes given on contract or to what is referred to as (scheme plucking). On this basis the average intake per plucker is around 45 kg of green leaf and the rounds are kept closer. The harvested leaf is transported with great care and minimal damage. At each weighing the leaf brought by two pluckers are weighed and filled into special leaf bags to a capacity of 12 kg per bag and the filled bags are individually placed or hung on hooks in specially partitioned open leaf lorries. These lorries are designed to transport only 180 bags whilst those with trailers can carry as much as 240 bags. By this manner of handling the leaf is not crushed nor does it suffer a heat build up. Each estate has an adequate fleet of lorries to transport as much as 20,000 kg of green leaf

per day. An average estate with an extent of 280 ha in tea, transports around 20,000 kg of green leaf in three leaf lorries. All factories are equipped with weigh-bridges for quick weighing and monorail conveyors are used for transport of leaf to the lofts and troughs.

Pests and diseases do not pose any serious problems to the tea in Kenya. *Hypoxylon* is being detected in several estates now and special attention is paid to clean out at pruning. *Armillaria* root disease is also being encountered in several Kenyan tea estates. Insect damage is very minimal with some of the commoner pests being purple and pink mites as well as thrips. Hail damage is common and this causes serious damage to tea recovering from pruning.

Replanting and Renovation of Old Tea Lands:

The oldest seedling tea that is between 55 to 60 years is being replanted to clonal tea. The interesting point to note here is that a good bulk of our seedling tea is over 70 years old of which at least half is over 90 years. Such seedling fields between the ages of 55-60 years that are yet yielding around 1,800 kg/ha are being replanted at the targetted rateof 2% per year.

In nurseries jungle soil is being used for bagging in polythene sleeves measuring 10 cm in diameter and 30 cm long (lay flat). Single node or double node cuttings are planted and these are kept under sealed polythene tents during the callusing and rooting stages. The polythene tent is then removed and the bags transferred to beds under high shade. The nursery plants are disbudded and sometimes centred to encourage branching in the nursery.

New planting is done on the contour at a spacing of 1.2 m x 0.8 m in planting holes 23 cm wide and 40 cm deep. The plant population of new and replanted area is around 10,000 plants per ha. The planting period is from April to September.

Frame development is encouraged by centring and no bending is done. The framing is done at different intervals at different heights. The plant is initially centred at 22 cm when the plant has grown to a height of about 38-40

cm. The second cut is given at 30 cm and the final cut is given when the branches grow beyond 60 cm high, when they are cut back to about 45 cm. The plants are ready for harvest in the third year of their growth in the field.

The average clonal field yields around 3,500-4,000 kg/ha and the highest is claimed to be in the region of 6,000 kg/ha.

Manufacture:

The leaf from 3-4 separate estates is transported to a central factory and each such factory has a rated capacity of 90,000-100,000 kg of green leaf per day. There are a total of 64 factories catering to the entire needs of Kenyan tea industry. An average factory manufactures over one million kg of made tea per year.

More than 95% of the factories manufacture tea by the CTC process and they are all geared to handle a large volume of green leaf in a continuous process and are all fully automated.

All factories use troughs which are placed across and not lengthwise. The leaf is allowed to undergo a very light wither with a removal of only about 25-30% moisture.

Preconditioning is done on 38 cm Rotorvane and thereafter the conditioned leaf is passed through a set of three CTC machines in series and the macerate is sent direct to moving fermenting trays (which are old drier trays). Fermentation goes on for 80-90 minutes and the tea is fed on conveyor belts with the aid of hoppers into the drier. From the drier the tea is conveyed to a Myddleton and then to a Fibrex and finally to the Vibro screen which is the one that does the real sorting. Batteries of Electrostatic Stalk Extractors are placed at strategic intervals right along the conveyor system.

The grade composition of the manufactured tea by this method is as follows:

Main grade	Secondaries	
BP 1 = 17.49%	BP 2 = 0.22%	BMF = 0.87%
PF 1 = 54.42%	PF 2 = 2.46%	Waste = 0.02%
PD = 12.70%	D = 2.25%	
D 1 = 9.57%		

Thus the main grades account for as much as 94.18% and the secondaries account for 4.93%. The Off-grades account for 0.87% and waste only 0.02%.

SMALLHOLDER SECTOR

The Smallholder Sector plays a significant role in the tea industry of Kenya and accounts for 41.6% of the total production of tea in the country. There are a total number of 143,617 registered smallholders cultivating tea on 54,693 ha, with each farmer owning an average plot of tea of 0.38 ha. The average current production by this sector is about 730 kg of made tea per ha as against the average production level of 2,100 kg per ha in the larger Plantation Sector. This is mainly on account of the fact that a significant hectarage of land in the Smallholder Sector is yet under immature tea which has not yet come into bearing, whilst the hectarage in the Plantation Sector are under mature tea, in full bearing. It is expected that by the end of this decade the smallholder sector will account for nearly 65% of the total production of tea in Kenya and factory capacities are accordingly being geared to meet this demand.

The Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA), which was formed in 1963, has been solely responsible for the organization and development of tea cultivation by the village farmers who were debarred from cultivating tea prior to independence in 1963. Prior to this period, tea cultivation was the sole monopoly of colonial settlers and multi nationals.

The village farmer who owns his own plot of farm or "Shamba" grows his own maize, millet, vegetables, potatoes and plantain and in almost in every place rears his own cattle as well. A part of his 'Shamba' is now converted for tea growing which generates a significant income for

him. With the assistance rendered through the KTDA, several farmers in the various tea growing districts have been encouraged to grow their own tea on plots of land ranging from 0.1 ha to as big as 2 ha. As a result of a highly organized network of facilities provided through KTDA, there has been a tremendous response by the farmers to cultivate tea and this is on the increase.

During the short period of 20 years, the KTDA had made very significant strides in encouraging and developing the Tea Smallholder Sector. The KTDA comprises of a well organized matrix of interdependent Divisions, including the secretarial, accounting, technical, leaf collection, factory, marketing and public relations divisions, with the General Manager as the Chief Executive. The authority is managed by a Directorate comprising of the Chairman, General Manager, Representative of Growers, Chairman of the Tea Board, Representative of the Commonwealth Development Corporation and Nominees of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Technical Division of the KTDA has a good complement of trained agricultural personnel including the Senior Tea Officer, Tea Officers, Assistant Tea Officers, Agricultural Assistants and Junior Agricultural Assistants. The staff of this Division give advice to farmers on land preparation, planting, plucking and other general aspects of crop husbandry and their work is co-ordinated by the Chief Technical Officer at the Head Office in Nairobi. Each Agricultural Assistant looks after the needs of 600 Smallholders and each Junior Assistant under him is in-charge of 150 holdings. It is thus possible for these officers to have a very close contact and good rapport with the individual growers.

The tea smallholdings are distributed in 11 tea planting districts, including Embu, Kiambu, Kakamega, Kericho, Kirinyaga, Kisii, Kitale, Meru, Muranga, Nandi and Nyeri. In every tea growing district there is a District Tea Officer of the KTDA who looks after the district on all matters connected with tea collection.

The smallholders are issued selected clones to grow on their plots and the officers of the KTDA give demonstrations on how to take suitable cuttings and planting them in nurseries.

Fertilizer use by the small grower is very much encouraged by the Technical Division staff and fertilizer demonstration plots are set-up in all the tea growing districts, with assistance from the Tea Research Foundation. This campaign to use fertilizer and farmyard manure has proved successful in boosting yield and to maintain and improve the status of soil nutrients in a soil that is already rich in such nutrients. The authority has evolved a fertilizer credit scheme by which the KTDA purchases the fertilizer in bulk and in turn distributes and sells to the individual growers on credit at cost. Fertilizer is distributed in special pick-up trucks. During the year 1981/82, 7,514 metric tons of the 20:10:10 NPK fertilizer mixture was distributed to all growers. On the basis of the hectarage figures under cultivation, the above quantity accounts for an average distribution of 137 kg of fertilizer mixture per ha, which is an even better level of input than in commercial tea estates. Fertilizers are also supplied through the Kenya Farmers' Association (KFA), which supplies direct to the farmers.

The leaf harvested by the small grower is of a high standard and this is attributed to the close attention paid by the KTDA field staff. A large network of leaf collection and buying centres are operated by the authority which also owns a fleet of lorries that transport the leaf to the factories which are also entirely managed by the authority. Each factory has a fleet of seven to nine leaf collection lorries, each of which make two trips per day (around 2 p.m. and again at about 6 p.m.). The buying centres are spread around the processing factory with the furtherest smallholding being not more than 15 km from the factory. The leaf is thus transported over short distances and brought to the factory with minimum delay.

Each factory has a Leaf Officer who is in-charge of collection and payments to the growers. The Leaf Officer visits the various collection centres attached to the factory regularly. Each factory has around 25-30 collection centres with each centre being in-charge of a Leaf Collection Clerk.

The Leaf Officer makes payments directly to the growers at selected centres. The various centres are grouped into clusters amongst which one serves as the payment centre.

The leaf that is weighed at the collection centre is re-weighed at the factory and the difference in weight of 1% is usually allowed. Around 300-500 smallholders supply leaf to each collection centre, the average daily intake of which is around 3,000-6,000 kg, which amount could significantly increase during the cropping months.

Each collection centre has a Committee of its own that holds office for a term of four years. The Committee that is elected from amongst the growers has the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and four Committee Members. This Committee is in a position to take up growers problems with the Leaf Officer and the Assistant Tea Officer of the region. The leaf collection centre belongs to the growers and the maintenance of such buildings is the responsibility of the Committee.

During the month of June 1983, the first instalment payment for green leaf was 1.11 K.shillings (K.sh.)/kg green leaf of which 0.31 K.sh. is deducted as Cess, to cover the cost of maintenance of the service rendered by the KTDA. The second payment which is made at the end of the year (bonus payment) for the year 1982 worked out to 1.51 K.sh./kg.

A total of 291 vehicles are used by the KTDA to serve 848 leaf collection centres manned by 831 Leaf Clerks.

The leaf collected from the smallholders is all processed in factories managed by KTDA. The authority manages 38 factories, each of which is a Limited Liability Company, managed by individual Boards of Management. The KTDA serves as a Managing Agent of all these factories. The authority has also constructed its own factories and is in the process of constructing more. Amongst the 38 factories, 23 are subsidiary companies of the KTDA, with shares owned by the smallholders themselves. Each smallholder is entitled to a maximum of 600 shares.

The factories of each district come under a Group Factory Manager, who works directly under the Chief Factory Superintendent at the Head Office in Nairobi. The Chief Factory Superintendent makes regular visits to the

different districts. The office of the Group Factory Manager is located in the premises of one of the group factories where there is also a workshop with a full complement of staff to service the factories. These workshops are equipped to sharpen the CTC rollers, which are sharpened after every charge of 200,000 kg of leaf. The Lathe Operators, Electricians, Mechanics, the Chief Mechanic and the Chief Electrician all come under the Engineering Division headed by the Chief Development Engineer, who is located at the Head Office.

The Marketing Division of the KTDA handles the sale of made tea through auctions and private sales. The authority has agents in every tea buying country who negotiate and finalize private sales. Every manufacturing factory pays a cess of 10 K.sh. per 100 kg of made tea to the Kenya Tea Board.

A typical tea growing "Shamba" is one owned by a farmer by a name of Mr Gori Arora, who has a tea block of about 0.5 ha with a stand of 4,800 tea bushes. He obtains a yield of around 3,000-3,500 kg of green leaf per annum, which corresponds roughly to around 1,500 kg of made tea/ha. The tea was planted in 1972 at a spacing of 1.7 m x 0.8 m. The tea is regularly fertilized with the 20:10:10 NPK mixture. Mr Arora obtains a monthly income of about 300 K.sh. from this block of tea. Besides tea, he cultivates corn, millet, vegetables, bananas and pulses and he also raises cattle and poultry. He is able to lead a modest life with two wives and ten children, the eldest of whom is a son who is also married and has four children of his own. They all work in the same 'Shamba'. If not for the very large family to support, with the income and produce generated from this 'Shamba', the total extent of which is about 1.5 ha, Mr Arora would be a reasonably wealthy man.

The above 'Shamba' is in the Kisii district, which is one with the highest population density. The land in this district is also very fertile. No form of birth control is being adopted in the country and the efforts of organizations like the KTDA would prove more fruitful if the social aspects of these growers are also been looked into.

The 'Shambas' in the Kisii district are all very crowded and close to each other and the lands are owned for generations by the individual families. Each son obtains a share of the land from the father.

In contrast to these 'Shambas', are the settlement areas, which are not crowded and are widely spaced. These areas were earlier owned by European colonial settlers, who used such lands mainly to raise cattle. The government that took over such lands, divided such areas into blocks of approximately one hectare each and have settled colonists. These colonists are growing tea in areas each up to about 0.5 ha.

THE TEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF KENYA

A local research department of African Tea Holding Limited was set-up in Kericho in early 1949, to serve Brooke Bond interests in East Africa. With this initiative, the Territorial Tea Association showed interest to widen the participation to service the whole tea industry in East Africa and consequently, the local research department of African Tea Holding Company Limited included all tea producers in its terms of reference.

The Institute commenced its operation with three scientists in January 1950. The former Agricultural Chemist of the Tea Research Institute of Ceylon, Dr T. Eden, was appointed the first Director. The other two scientists included a Chemist, Dr R. Child, who was the Director of the Coco Research Scheme in Ceylon and an Agricultural Assistant, Mr N.A. Goodchild, who was seconded from the services of the African Tea Holdings Limited (Brooke Bond).

The Tea Research Institute of East Africa was formerly incorporated in Kenya as a Company Limited by guarantee without share capital under the Companies Ordinance, on the 5th of May 1951. The members of the Institute and of its governing body were composed of *ex-officio* members representing the government of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and members appointed by the Tea Boards of the same country.

In 1957, some 160 ha of forest reserve were leased

to the Institute from the Kenya government at Timbilil, Kericho, thus opening up the Timbilil Tea Estate. From 1951 to 1978 the Institute continued to function as a three-country Institution with headquarters in Kericho with one substation opened at Amani, Tanzania in 1959 and two others opened in 1960 in Rwebitaba, Uganda.

Due to certain practical problems that developed subsequently, it became difficult for the Institute to operate efficiently as a three-country Institution thus resulting in the inevitable fragmentation in 1978.

The Institute was maintained on a caretaker basis by the Tea Board of Kenya who also took steps to set-up the Tea Research Foundation in January 1980. The first Board of Directors of the Tea Research Foundation was appointed in April 1981 and the foundation started its operations using the assets and facilities of the former Institute and with the following scientific departments and service.

Agronomy Department
Botany Department
Chemistry Department
Crop Environmental Department
Field Advisory Service

New research areas are in the process of being created including a Plant Protection Department and a Tea Technology Department. The foundation is intensifying its research activities into the economics of tea production, rehabilitation of old tea fields and is in the process of opening up additional research substations in the different ecological zones.

The Tea Research Foundation of Kenya is financially supported by the Tea Board of Kenya. It is managed by an independent Board of Directors on which are represented the Ministry of Agriculture, the Kenya Tea Development Authority, the Kenya Tea Growers' Association and the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute. The Director of the Institute is also a member of this Board.

The senior staff of the Institute comprised of the Director and Senior Scientists including a Plant Breeder, a

Crop Physiologist, two Chemists, an Agricultural Physicist, an Agronomist, an Entomologist and a Field Advisory Officer and the Officer-in-Charge of Timbilil Estate.

The Advisory Officer, either alone or in the company of the Scientific Officers of the TRF make advisory visits for specific reasons or problems. Since of late more visits are being made to the KTDA small-growers. During the year 1981, of a total of 91 visits, 82 were to KTDA small-growers, one to a private estate property and only eight visits were made to the large estates. Advice is also given through correspondence. The visits to private growers and large estates were mainly on nursery problems and on pests and diseases, while visits to the KTDA growers were mainly on fertilizer demonstration plots and pests and diseases.

A joint venture between KTDA and TRF scientists, to demonstrate to the smallholder tea growers the need for and use of fertilizer application, commenced in 1978 at each tea growing district. At present there are a total of 51 smallholder farms with such demonstration plots.

Among the tea pests there appears to be a widespread incidence of Purple Mites whilst others such as Aphids, Moles, Red Spider Mites and Soft Scale, have also been consistently reported. Severe infestation of Thrips have been reported to be on the increase.

Amongst the diseases of tea, *Armillaria mellea* is found widespread, whilst *Hypoxylon serpens*, *Phomopsis theae* and Blight were consistently reported.

Hail storm damage is a common occurrence. There were 27 hail storm incidences during the year 1981, causing an estimated crop loss of 9,734 kg of made tea on Timbilil Estate, which amounted to 7% of the total crop.

KENYA TEA PACKERS LIMITED

The above Packaging Factory was established in 1940 by Brooke Bonds for the Associated Tea Growers of East Africa and referred to as the Associated Tea Growers Packaging Company of Kenya, with a voluntary membership. The government of Kenya realized that the tea that was

being made available to the local population of Kenya was not effectively distributed to reach the different parts of the country and also that the quality of the product was far below standard.

In 1977, the government requested the Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA) to take-over and run this Packaging Factory, and with this change of management, it came to be referred to as the Kenya Tea Packers Limited. It became mandatory for every licensed manufacturer of tea to own shares and deliver tea on a share per cent basis. Despite such a change in the organization and the quality of the product having improved the distribution of packeted tea within the country still suffered a set-back.

In February 1979, the Company was made autonomous and was removed out of the hands of the KTDA, which continued to be merely a shareholder. Thus the Company became an independent organization and was also responsible for the distribution of the packeted tea throughout Kenya. With this change in the organization it became obligatory for every licensed tea factory to supply 15% of their respective total production to the above Packing Factory. On an average this factory packs 55,000 kg of tea per day. The standard blends packeted in this factory include the following:

(a) Fahari Kenya (Pride of Kenya)
(b) Karibu Chai (Welcome to tea)
(c) Safari Pure
(d) Tea Bags

The above Company is responsible for transporting the tea from the various factories to the packaging plant and it bears the entire cost of transport. The tea is transported in canvas bags each of which hold approximately 45 kg of tea. The furthest factory from which place tea is collected is from Meru located in the Eastern Province, about 400 miles from the packing plant.

The tea thus brought to the factory is blended using mechanical blending drums and there are three such blending units. Twenty eight bags of tea go into each blending drum at a given time. Blending of tea is done in batches

and goes on for 24 hours in three shifts. Each of the above cited brand names is made up of a special blend using different proportions of the different grades of tea and the blend is maintained as a standard one throughout the year. The packeted tea is sent out to three main Depots located in Nairobi, Kericho and in Mombasa respectively. The depot at Nairobi stores about 65% of the total production whilst the one at Kericho stores 20% of the production and the one in Mombasa stores 15%. From these different depots the packeted tea goes to the different agents scattered throughout the eight provinces in Kenya (Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Central, Eastern, North-Eastern, Coast, Nairobi). The organization as it is presently comprised ensures a very good distribution of these packeted tea. The local population in Kenya is thus ensured of a good standard of tea throughout the country at reasonable prices.

The above packing plant, besides blending and packing tea in standard blend packs, also produces tea bags. The factory owns three bagging machines with an output capacity of 50 bags per minute each and each bag contains approximately 2 gm of tea. The tea bags are sold in cartons each containing 50 tea bags.

All the packets are marked as "Product of the Kenya Tea Packers Limited - A Blend of Africa's Quality Teas" and it is also marked as "Not for export". The average cost of packing, including the cost of transport, is around 3 K.sh. per kg. The major cost component is the packing material. All factories that supply tea are paid the same ex-factory price, irrespective of the distance of their location. The average price paid by the consumer for a good quality blend such as "Safari Pure" is around 14 K.sh. per 500 gm pack. This is one of the most popular tea consumed in Kenya and it is essentially composed of the BF 1 blended along with a little of BP 1 grade.

The annual consumption of tea in Kenya in 1977, was estimated to be 8 million kg. The year 1981, happened to be the highest year of consumption amounting to 14.1 million kg. In 1982 there was a drop to 13.7 million kg. The targetted production level of this packing factory is 16 million kg. The average consumption per head in Kenya is approximately 0.8 kg of tea per annum.

Sri Lanka could learn a good lesson from the arrangements observed in Kenya to supply good quality standard blends of tea in packets at reasonable price to the local population. Since the large majority of the estates (nearly 60%) are now owned by both the JEDB and SLSPC and there are also factories owned by the TSHDA, they could all be made to supply a small fixed percentage of their respective production (different proportions of the different grades) to a central packaging plant that could pack standard blends to be made available to the local public at reasonable price. Such a packaging factory could also have tea bagging machines, ensuring the output of good quality tea bags that could be made available to the local tourist industry.