



# “Problems Of Small Tea Growers (Stgs) In Dhemaji District Of Assam: An Economical Study”

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## Abstract

Tea plantation in small holding bears the fruit for present as well as for the future generation. Thus small tea plantation belongs to the concept of sustainable and will act as a role model for the future generation in the years to come. The small scale tea growers form a significant part of the global tea industry. About 70% of the global tea production comes from the small- scale tea growers in the tea growing regions in Asia and Africa (Voora et al, 2019). These growers form the backbone of the rural economy in several tea producing regions. Tea industry in Assam contributes significantly in the development of state economy. The figures had moved on to more than Rupees 5000 crores annually as agriculture income, the numbers append as the state also receives a share of income tax and export duties from the centre directly and indirectly. Besides, act as backbone of rural economy, the small tea plantation also provides us food and medicines; plants and trees play an essential role in industries. Many raw materials are obtained by plants and giant trees used to produce various industrial products, including paper, spices, cosmetics, pencils, rubber, furniture and others household products. Thus, small tea plantation play a vital roles for economics improvement in rural economy of Assam, but the small tea growers does not free from some common problems i.e., low wages, poor infrastructure, poor housing, health issues and lack of avenues for social mobility, no gaining of proper market values of their production, lack of quality of tea leaf, price fluctuation of tea leaf, price controlled by the big tea gardens etc

However, in this paper I would like to focus the various problems of small tea growers in Dhemaji of Assam under the economical aspects.

**Key words:** Small, Grower, Plantation, Tea, Economy etc.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Tea Board of India defines a small Tea Growers as a person who has a tea cultivation of up to 25 acres. But in the current scenario, most growers own less than 2 acres of land. STGs are often based at very remote areas and are scattered. The small tea growers in Assam are a group of local people who concentrate themselves mostly in producing green tea leaf.

The Tea industry occupies an important place in Assam and plays a very special role in the state economy in particular and in the national economy in general. The first Indian tea was sent to United Kingdom for public sale in the year 1838. Although the tea cultivation was extended to other parts of the country between 50s and 60s of the last century, as of today, Assam Tea has maintained its International reputation and commands significant share in the World Tea Market. The tea industry in Assam also provides average daily employment to more than Six lakh persons in the State, which is around 50 percent of the total average daily number of labour employment in the country. The total area under tea cultivation in Assam is accounting for more than half of the country's total area under tea. In addition to existing big & small gardens owned by reputed both India and multinational Companies, the profession of the tea plantation in the State has been taken up by common people as business venture at present, especially by unemployed youths.

During the last two decades of previous century, the rural areas of Assam experienced a phenomenal growth of Tea cultivation. The increase of Small Tea gardens began in early 90's and peaked in late 90's. The small cultivation in Assam is now on self employment and economics force for the state. Cultivation of Tea small holding has gained considerable momentum amongst the youth. Being a labour intensive industry, it is the source of employment for Assam's unemployed people. It has the potentials for making an economic sound ensuring new employment opportunities, proper utilisation of local resources and as a source of livelihood. According to the "All Assam Small Grower's Association" there are more than 144222 numbers of small tea growers in the state cultivating in about 80,948 hectors of land. The definition of Small Tea Growers is given differently by different agencies. Tea Board of India defines small tea gardens as those who have land holding less than 10-12 hectares under tea cultivation.

Government of Assam considers small tea gardens as those who have land area less than 30 bighas. On the other hand, according to All Assam Tea Growers' Association small tea growers are those who have land area less than 25 bighas for tea cultivation.

However, the contribution of small tea cultivators to tea production at the national level too is growing significantly and the production share is projected to be 50.29% in the year 2020-21. Even, in the financial year 2024-25, India's tea exports are projected to exceed 25 million Kg, a 2.85% increase compared to the previous year.( Report of Tea Board India). It is a very encouraging and commendable happening in the present economic history of Assam that the unemployed educated youth have come forward and planted tea bushes in their small landholdings.

## II. ABOUT THE SAMPLE DISTRICT.

Dhemaji District is an administrative district in the State of Assam in India. The district headquarters are located in Dhemaji and Commercial headquarters are located in Silapathar. Dhemaji covers an area of 3,237 Sq. Km and is a basically plain area lying at an altitude of 104 m above the Mean sea level. Dhemaji has a population of 686133 (Census report of 2011). Around 85% peoples of Dhemaji depend on Agricultural production specially rice, mustard oil, maize, potato etc. But, recently, medium and small tea cultivation is emerging rapidly by the educated youths in all over the Dhemaji, both in rural and urban areas where numbers of educated youths and surplus labour engaged directly and indirectly. As per record of tea

Board of India, the numbers of small tea growers in Dhemaji district is 516, the figure is much higher as per record small Tea Growers Association of Dhemaji District. According to their record there are about 900 small tea growers cultivating about 466, 67 hector of land.

### III. OBJECTIVES

1. To focus the history of small tea growers in Assam.
2. To analyze the Economic back ground of Small Tea growers..
3. To identify the problems of small tea growers.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

The data for the study are collected from two sources i.e. from Primary sources and secondary sources. For sampling designing keeping in view the relevance and scope of the study, it will decided to choose small tea growers of Dhemaji District on the basis of representative sampling instead of taking the whole Universe. For these purpose 100 respondents selected randomly from 50 Small Tea growers as primary data are to be collected through administration of suitable questionnaire prepared for the purpose by considering the pros and cons of the study by meeting respondents of growers and workers of small Tea cultivation personally. Data for secondary nature are collected from the secondary source i.e, from books, national and International journals, periodicals, official websites and others.

### V. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In spite of detailed analysis made in the present study, the study is not free from limitations. The following are the important limitations-

- i. The study is purely based on the views of 100 respondents only and hence the results may not be universally applicable.
- ii. The geographical area of this study is confined only to Dhemaji District as well as based on economical aspects only.
- iii. The study is period specific.
- iv. The information supplied by the sample respondents at the time of survey cannot be taken as hundred percent accurate.
- v. Similarly, 100% accuracy cannot be attached to the secondary data used in the study.

### VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

**6.1 HISTORY OF SMALL TEA GROWERS IN ASSAM:** - The small tea growers in Assam are a group of educated elite of local people who concentrate themselves mostly in producing green tea leaf. According to the association, there are nearly 1.34 lakh small tea growers in Assam and they produce 42% of the tea. For more than three decades since year 1978 indigenous youths of Assam with their little capital and unskilled labourers established more than 65000 small tea gardens in the state. Basically, growth of small tea plantation in Assam can be considered into the following three periods-

**(a) Period between of 1978-1987:** This is the infant period of small tea plantation in Assam. During its period, the tea plantation on small holdings gradually expanded to most of the upper Assam districts. Former Agricultural Minister Sjt. Soneswar Borah of Golaghat District is known as founder of Small Tea cultivation who was availed government approval for small tea



grow in Assam. For the first time at Golaghat District formed a small Tea grower Association in 1987. Being the founder district of small tea growers, the Association became formed the All Assam Small Tea Growers Association.

- (b) **The period of 1987-1997:** -It was the most affluent period during which the number of growers, area under small scale tea plantation, production, hector age yield etc, have increased remarkably. The prices of green leaf reached its peak and numbers of new growers were introducing to take up small tea scale to cultivation, as their alternative sources of livelihood. During that year, for encouraged Small tea growers, the government of Assam took imitative various schemes i.e., arrangement of training/workshop under the scheme of Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Yojna, they have given the opportunity to take an amount of 2 lakhs as loan . Such initiatives given by the government had influenced greatly to the native people.
- (c) **1997 and aftermath:-** It period was marked by developing and recovering performances featured by government incentives, tea board of India's Development Schemes to the small Tea growers. Tea cultivation expanded to new areas and more processing units, the Bought Leaf factories and co-operative Factories have come into existence. Thus, the small tea cultivation come into the society and gradually spreading across the rural and urban areas of Assam.

So, at present times, small Tea cultivation became a farmer's crop, ushering in new avenues for economics prosperity as well as employment opportunities. The abundance of uplands, availability of proven aggro-technology skilled labour , established and assured green leaf market, advantages of a long-term plantation crop is comparison to the other seasonal agricultural crops, blessing of suitable soil, climate were some of the factors that encouraged the small and marginal farmers as well as the unemployed to take up tea plantation. The growth of this sector was phenomenal as it assumed a form of an economic revolution within a short period and service as a vehicle of economic innovation and revolution in the state. It led to the establishment of a large number of tea factories in small-scale industrial sector, which created up employment opportunities in the tea estate.

As following figures shown the month-wise tea production data for the year 2022-23 by the small tea growers in Assam (Qty, in M.Kgs)

Month	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Total 2022-23
Qty.produc ts	40.45	33.81	9.68	0.00	0.05	20.02	104.01

Source: - Tea Board of India

- 7. ECONOMICS BACKGROUND OF SMALL TEA GROWERS:** -The economy of Dhemaji is generally agro-based. Sericulture, fishing and driftwood business are practiced in smaller scale. Agriculture is the principal occupation and more than 85% of the total population depend on it. Irrigation is largely rain-fed with mechanized shallow tube wells. Paddy cultivation covered 62.59% of total cropped areas. Sand deposition and other adverse effects of chronic floods on fertile agricultural land have made even affluent land less. However, in this paper, researcher tried to highlight economic background of the incumbents of small tea growers. **The researcher asked this question to know the economic condition of the families of the incumbents.** The question was asked regarding the data of income of the family. The finding is traced out in the following table. The purpose of the study is taken 100 incumbents from 50 nos. of small tea plantation.

### 7.1 Occupation of Family Head:-The following table has shown the occupation of the incumbents.

**Table-1**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Govt. service	7	7%
Business	13	13%
Agriculture	68	68%
Self employed	12	12%
Total	100	100%

**Source:- Field Study.**

The above table revealed that 68% Of the incumbent's family depends on agriculture. Majority of their source of income is agriculture. 13% family head depends on the business, 7% and 12% respectively are self employed and depend on government service. So, it is clear that majority of the incumbents family's Head engage in agricultural productions.

7.2. Educational status of the incumbents-Educational qualification of small tea growers are shown as given table.

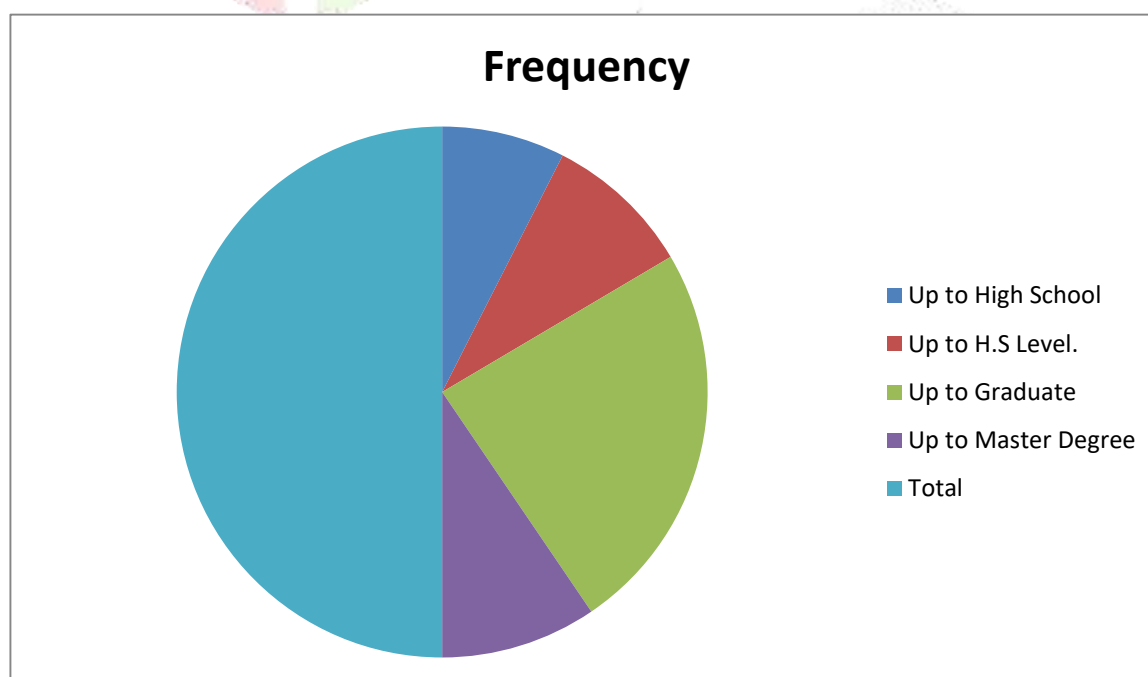
**Table-2**

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
Up to High School	15	15%
Up to H.S	18	18%
Up to Graduation	48	48%
Up to Master degree	19	19%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Study.

From the above table, it has guised that majority i.e. 48 % of the small tea growers have obtained graduation from different disciplines. 19% of growers have master degree holders, 18% of growers passed H.S Examination and 15% of growers qualified Matric level. So, it is clear that majority of the small tea growers are educated.

It has showed with Pie diagram as below-



7.3. Economic conditions of the families of the incumbents before engaging in the small tea plantation.

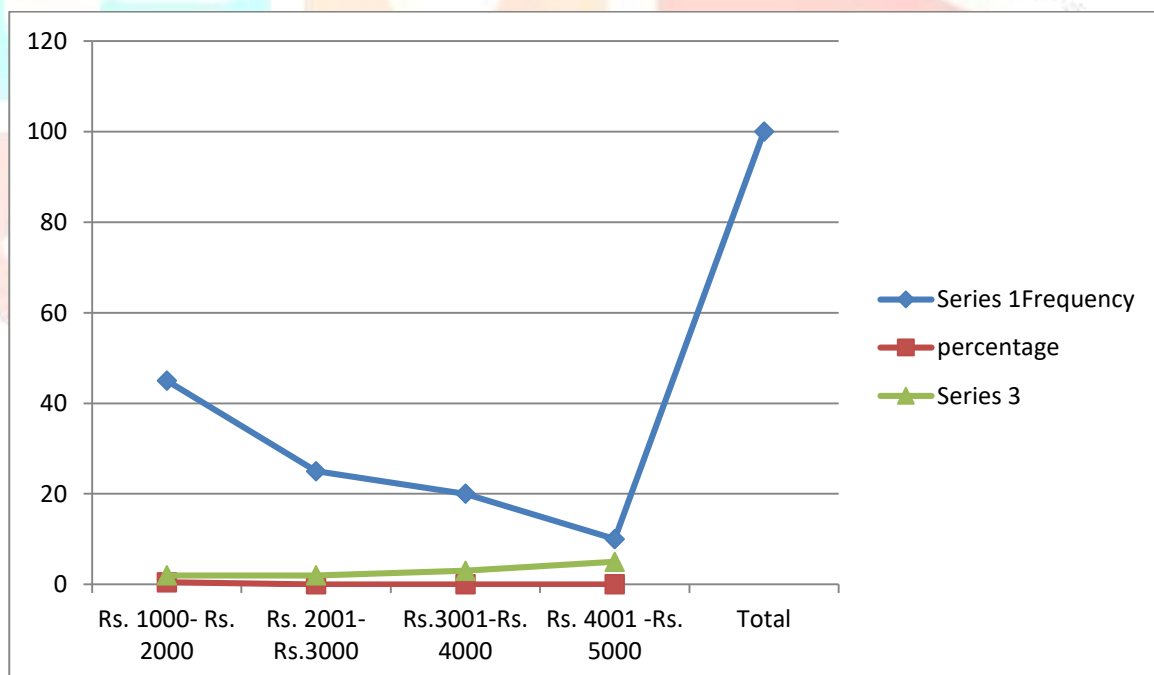
**Table-3**

Income before growing (Per month).	Frequency	Percentage
Rs. 1000-2000	45	45%
Rs. 2001-3000	25	25 %
Rs.3001-4000	20	20%
Rs.4001-5000	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Source- Field study/survey.

From the above table, it has found that 45 percents of incumbent's income was Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000/- per month before planted the small tea plant. Similarly, 25 percent incumbent's income was Rs. 2001 to 3000/-, 20 percents incumbent's income was Rs. 3001 to Rs. 4000/- and 10 percents incumbent's income was Rs. 4001 to 5000/- respectively. They are generated their income by engaged in activities like shop owner, weaving, knitting cutting, animal rearing. They were replied that they were rearing of piglets, chicken, cow, Goats etc and sold them in their nearby market. Some are earned from daily from their un-skill labour wages worked in their neighbour villages. It is also found that majority of the incumbent's income is very low which is not sufficient to maintaining their daily livelihood.

It is shown with line diagram.



## 7.2.2 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF INCUMBENTS AFTER HAVING PLANTED THE SMALL TEA PLANTATION.

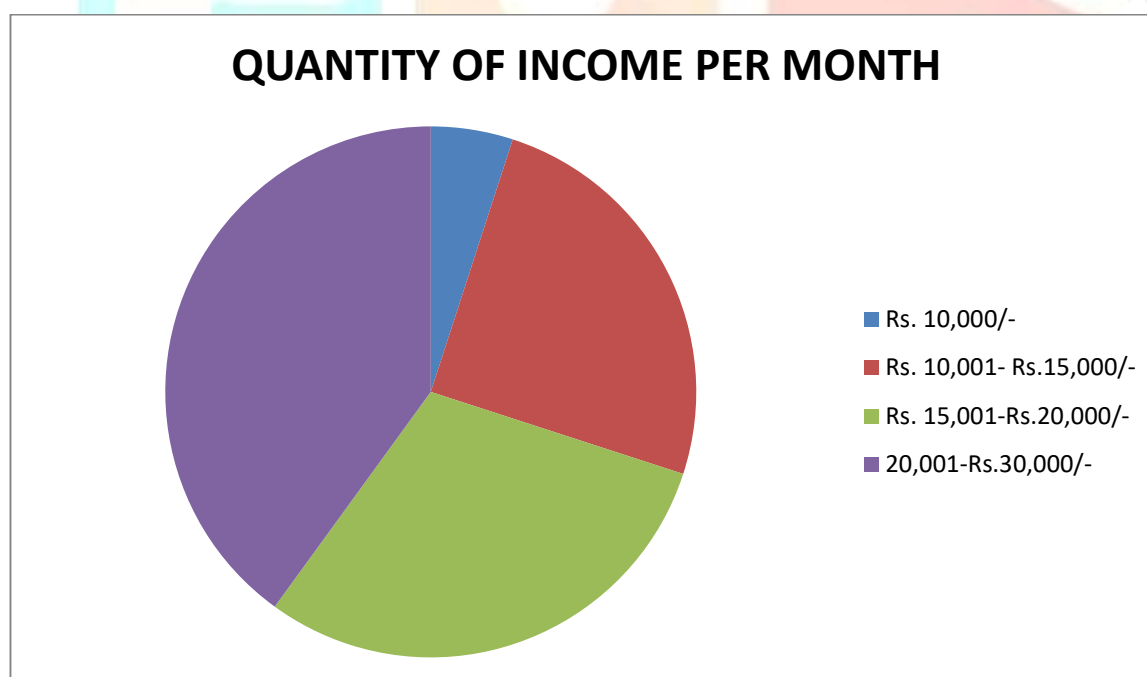
**Table-4**

Monthly Income	Nos. of incumbents	Percentage
Rs. 10,000/-	5	5%
Rs. 10,001-Rs.15,000/-	25	25%
Rs. 15,001-Rs.20,000/-	30	30%
Rs. 20,001 –Rs. 30,000/-	40	40%
Total	100	100%

❖ Source-Field study

From the above table, it is clear that after planted of small tea plantation in small plot of their land i.e., 25 (25%) incumbents earned income between Rs10, 001 to 15,000/- per month. Similarly, 30 (30%) incumbents earned income between Rs. 15,001 to Rs.20000/- and 40 (40%) incumbents earned between Rs. 20,001 to Rs.30, 000/-. So, majority of the incumbents able to earned more money after planted the small tea plantation. They informed that now their financial condition is so high with compared to the before they had engaged and they have little financial problems facing now due to inflation. Now, their economic as well as social status is so pronounce.

It is shown with a Pie diagram as follow.



## VIII. PROBLEMS OF THE SMALL TEA GROWERS

At present scenarios of Dhemaji District, the small Tea cultivation is play an important and integral part of the Tea industry of Assam and it provides employment opportunity to educated elites as well as surplus workers of the rural and urban workforce. Through this paper, the Researcher highlighted some problems or constraints facing by the Small Tea cultivators of Dhemaji District. Collect all requires data and information by physical observation and reports given by the respondents. Though, small tea grower has been confronted with multiple existential challenges. These are presented as below-

- i. Financial problems: Primary problem is non abundance of fund. Due to lack of sufficient fund, the small tea grower unable to extend and engage of labours for quality and quantity production. Even, they are unable to purchased necessity medicine for fast and qualities grow. Consequently, the quantity of product is decrease instead of increased.
- ii. Labour problem: All the small tea growers engage themselves in their own tea garden. But, at the time of plucking of the leaf, it is needs to more labours. It is seen that there are no enough labours are getting during that time. As a result, they could not harvest properly. So, labour supply is found to be scares.
- iii. Marketing Problem: The small tea growers sell their products either to nearby big gardens or to bought leaf factories and average price varies from Rs. 35 to Rs.40/- per Kg. They are facing problems in selling green leaf at reasonable price. As evident from the study, the price of green leaf is fluctuating regularly. As result, they could not adopt any further plan to decide any decision.
- iv. , Lack of Irrigation Facility: The small tea growers are face the problem of lack of irrigation facilities. One hectare standing mature tea plants requires about 10,000 liters of water per day which is equivalent to 2.5mm rainfall. Tea plants also need water after pruning which is generally done during the months of December to January. This period is generally dry in Assam, receives a few showers of retreating monsoon, eventually fruitful for the growth of tea plants after pruning. However, erratic nature of rainfall in recent times particularly during the Non-Monsoon period, forces the growers to make arrangement for irrigation infrastructure. Considering the size of the holding, however it is uneconomical to make provisioning of irrigation infrastructure. Drawing water from the nearby water bodies, river and extraction of ground water is expensive for small growers.
- v. Labour problems: Small tea growers do not come under the preview of the plantation labour Act on ground of size. On account of limitations of fund, they are unable to provide living quarters and all the facilities provided by the large tea estate to employed labourers. Ideally, a small holding of about 2 bighas can be run by the family members; however, considering the large size of the plantation, the growers seek the service of hired labourers.
- vi. Besides the above mentioned constraint factors, it has also found some important factors i.e. Communication problems, exploiting by big tea gardens on fixation of prices, natural disasters like flood, erosion, climate change, poor infrastructural facilities, non-abundance sufficient funds of the growers, lack of proper knowledge for huge products of green leaf etc.

## IX. FINDINGS

The major findings of the study on the basis of analysis and discussions provide suggestions to improve the conditions of small tea growers, and makes concluding remarks for the study.

Aim of the present study is to understand the economic conditions of the small tea growers of Dhemaji district of Assam. In this paper it is also examine the financial and marketing problems faced by small tea growers and suggest measures to improve the conditions of small tea growers. In order to fulfil the objectives specified above, the study collected relevant information 100 of small tea growers from 50 small tea gardens from the Machkhowa Development block of Dhemaji District. Collection data are analysed with appropriate statistical devices. Following are main observations from the study:-



- (i) It is found that 68 percent family Head are depends of agriculture. Rice is their staple food.
- (ii). Among the small tea growers, majority are highly educated. There are no any illiterate growers in the areas.
- (iii). Government service holders of the family are found to be low.
- (iv). Majority of the Family Head do not intend to engage in business field.
- (v). Majority of incumbent's income varied from 1000 to 2000 per month before cultivated small tea plants. As a result, they are unable to keeps minimum level of their life standard.
- (vi). It is found that 40% of incumbents earned 20,000 to 30,000 per month after having growing of small tea plant. Now, they opined that they have little escaped from economics problems.

#### X. SUGGESTIONS:

In order to get ride from their facing such problems for growing of small Tea cultivation, the following suggestions have drawn for improving the position of small tea growers:

- (i). Financial problems is the fundamental problems confront by small tea growers. Due to shortages of sufficient fund; they are unable to product more tea leaf. Even, they cannot expand their growing. So, the small tea grower needs to collectively demand for financial sanctioned from government as well as from financial institutions as loans or assistance.
- (ii). To solving of marketing problems, the Small Tea Growers Association should set up strong and effective co-operative from of cultivation and a standard for production of green leaf for proper price. Government can come to rescue the small tea grower with a minimum support price concept, which is applicable with other agricultural products.
- (iii). The Irrigation facility of small tea growers are found to be poor. So, improvement for irrigation facility, the growers needs management to synchronize farm activities to the tune of market requirement in every area.

#### Conclusion

Tea is the largely consumed drink in the world. Almost, 4 billion cups of Tea is used daily, across the world wide. Since the introduced of Tea leaf, people are used it as a beverage. Tea is one of the most important non alcoholic drinks and is popular due to its stimulation property. In India tea is the main beverage for each and every household. Small Tea growers in Dhemaaji District helps to identify the reason of choosing tea cultivation as well as changing occupational pattern of Dhemaaji. From the last two decades, the educated elite groups of the Dhemaaji, choose to planting of small tea cultivation, which help them to economically make sound and sustaining their family. Besides, the small tea plantation creates job opportunities to educated youths also vary widely. Therefore, for further economically sound, self employment; the small tea growers play an important role in Dhemaaji District. But, the small tea growers of the Dhemaaji District have been facings some burning problems which cannot be easily end, because, geographically it is not suit to products tea permanently. However, the small tea plantation creates new renaissance in Dhemaaji District at present time.

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