‘Ceylon tea’
Geographical Indication
Product Specifications

1/ Applicant

Sri Lanka Tea Board on behalf of the growers, processors, brokers and exporters of 'Ceylon tea'.

Established in 1976, the Sri Lanka Tea Board serves as the regulatory and administrative body of the Sri Lankan tea industry. The board is a government agency made up of representatives of government and representatives of all steps in the production chain from the farm to export. More specifically, to ensure representation of the value chain, the Sri Lanka Tea Board has created the 'Ceylon tea' Geographical Indication Management Committee, representing all the value chain segments, the green leaf producers including the small holders' sector, the collectors, the factories, the final packagers and exporters.

The 'Ceylon tea' Geographical Indication Management Committee is an ad-hoc committee under the responsibility of the Sri Lanka Tea Board. The decisions taken by the Management Committee are recommendations for implementation through the Sri Lanka Tea Board. This institution is co-chaired by the Sri Lanka Tea Board, the Tea Small Holdings Development Authority and the Ceylon Tea Trader Association.

2/ Legal protection in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the trademark of 'Ceylon tea' is owned by the Sri Lanka Tea Board. The first certificate of registration is dated 14 January 2011 and bears the trademark number 153931. It was renewed for a ten-year period on 24 August 2020 at the National Office of Intellectual Property of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka Tea Board is also the owner of a certification trademark comprising the Lion Logo and the words "Ceylon tea symbol of quality" (trademark number 92015), registered in Sri Lanka since 2005 under the Intellectual Property Act, No. 36 of 2003 and hereinafter called the "Lion Logo". The last renewal of the Lion Logo was in 2018 and is valid until 2029. This is in addition to the word trademark protecting the name 'Ceylon tea'.

The link between the lion emblem and the 'Ceylon tea' wording goes back to 1940 and officially started being used as a trademark on 'Ceylon tea' packs in 1966. The domestic registration number was 49112 in Class 30. However, the logo has been revised three times and the latest version is in use since 2005.

3/ Elements of the Product Specification

3.1 / Description of the Agricultural Product or Foodstuff

3.1.1 / *Classification of the agricultural product in accordance with the Combined Nomenclature heading and code, as referred to in Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143*

Combined Nomenclature Code: 09 02.

3.1.2 / Description of the product to which the name in (1) applies

'Ceylon tea' is derived from the leaves, buds and tender stems of the *Camellia sinensis* L. species as cultivated and processed in the delimitated geographical area in the island of Sri Lanka as described in this application.

'Ceylon tea' is placed on the market in the form of:

1. Orthodox leafy black tea, Orthodox-Rotorvane black tea, CTC (cut, tear, curl) tea;

Visually, orthodox black 'Ceylon tea' is characterised by a clean and neat appearance, depending on the desired grades. The dry leaves exhibit a desirable black hue. Some grades may display fine tips. Whole-leaf grades often feature a curly, well-twisted structure. Broken leaves grades feature an even and well-made or fair-make structure, following the terminology used by tea tasters. CTC grades display even and grainy textures.

2. Green tea;

Visually, green 'Ceylon tea' is characterised by a neat appearance, in relation to the desired grades. The dry leaves exhibit a desirable green hue, ranging from shinny green pellets to darker green colour leaves. Size varies from leafy to finer particles.

3. White tea (including silver tips and golden tips).

White 'Ceylon tea' including silver and golden tips are made out of the delicate new leaf buds on the tea plant whose visual shiny hairy appearance ranges from a silver colour for silver tips to white for golden tips. White tea made from the bud and immature tea leaves displays a white to ashy hue and is therefore known as White.

'Ceylon tea' is only for tea of the grades listed below:

ORTHODOX BLACK TEA MAIN GRADES	
BOP	Neat in style and of medium size, devoid of fine particles [fannings and dust]
BOP SP	Much superior to and neater than BOP
BOPF	Neat in style, smaller than BOP and devoid of fine Dust particles
BOPF SP	Much superior to and neater than BOPF

FBOP	Smaller and shorter than BOP1 and larger than FBOPF1, preferably with a presence of tips
Pekoe	a) Orthodox/Rotor vane manufacture: Neat, with fair twist, larger than BOP and could be choppy b) Leafy manufacture: Shotty, curly or semi curly leaf of large size
Pekoe1	Shotty, curly, smaller in size than PEKOE
BOPA	Flaky and larger than BOP
OP1	Long, wiry and well twisted
OP	Less wiry than OP1 and better twisted [less bold] than OPA
OPA	Long and bold with fair twist and preferably without excessive stalk
BOP1	Wiry, twisted and shorter than OP1
FBOP1	Longer than FBOP, twisted and wiry, preferably with a presence of tips
FBOPF	Similar in size to BOP and preferably with a presence of tips
FBOPF1	Larger than FBOPF and smaller than FBOP, preferably with a presence of tips
FBOPFSP	Similar in size to FBOPF or FBOPF1, with a fair presence of tips
FBOPFEXSP	Similar in size to FBOPF Sp., with an attractive show of golden or silver tips
FBOPFEXSP 1	Larger and leafier than FBOPF Ex. Sp., with an attractive show of golden or silver tips
D1	Dust 1 - Grainy, even, well-made and smaller than BOPF
D	Dust - Similar in size to DUST1, with flaky leaf but reasonably clean

CTC TEAS (CUT, TEAR, CURL) BLACK TEA GRADES

BP1	Corresponding in size to high grown BOP, but granular
BPS	Larger particle size than BP1
PF1	Corresponding in size to high grown BOPF, but granular
OF	Smaller than BP1 but larger than PF1
PD	Grainy and smaller than PF1
D1	Less grainy than PD and clean

BLACK TEA OFF GRADES & BOP1A GRADE (ORTHODOX)	
BP	Choppy and hard, with some stalk and fibre
BOP 1A	Semi-leafy and flaky, without excessive stalk and fibre
BM	Mixed and flaky, with stalk and fibre
BT	Larger than BM, ragged and mixed leaf of varying sizes, with or without stalk and fibre
FNGS1	Small, flaky leaf, without excessive fibre
FNGS	Similar to FNGS1, uneven and fibrous

BLACK TEA OFF GRADES (CTC)	
PF	Similar to or slightly larger than PF1 and may contain some fibre
D	Dust - Inferior to DUST1 and may be powdery & fibrous

WHITE TEA GRADES	
Silver Tips	These teas are small, unopened leaves of the tea plant. These tips are also commonly known as "buds," although they do not form flowers and also appear as silver mixed white colour
Golden Tips	Similar to silver tips colour, appear as gold mixed white

GREEN TEA GRADES (MAIN GRADES)	
GP	Gun Powder
GT D1	Green Tea Dust
GT OP	Green Tea OP
GT FF1	Green Tea FF 1
GT OPA	Green Tea OPA
GT OPA 2	Green Tea OPA 2
GT FBOP	Green Tea FBOP
SM	
GTCH	Green Tea Chun Mee
GP 1	Gun Powder 1
GP 2	Gun Powder 2
SENCHA	

MATCHA	
CB1SP	
CM 1	Chun Mee 1
CM 1 SPL	Chun Mee 1 Special
CM BULK	Chun Mee Bulk
GP SP	Gun Powder Special
GP 3	Gun Powder 3
YOUNG HYSON	
YOUNG HYSON SP	
GT BOPF	Green Tea BOPF
GT PEKOE	Green Tea Pekoe

GREEN TEA OFF GRADES	
GT FNGS	Green Tea Fannings
GT FNGS	Green Tea Fannings Special
GT BP	Green Tea BP
C FNGS	Chun Mee fannings

SENCHA FNGS	
GT DUST	Green Tea Dust
GT FNGS 1	Green Tea Fannings 1

'Ceylon tea' is for tea originating 100% from the defined geographical area in Sri Lanka. 'Ceylon tea' from different regions of the defined geographical area in Sri Lanka can be blended.

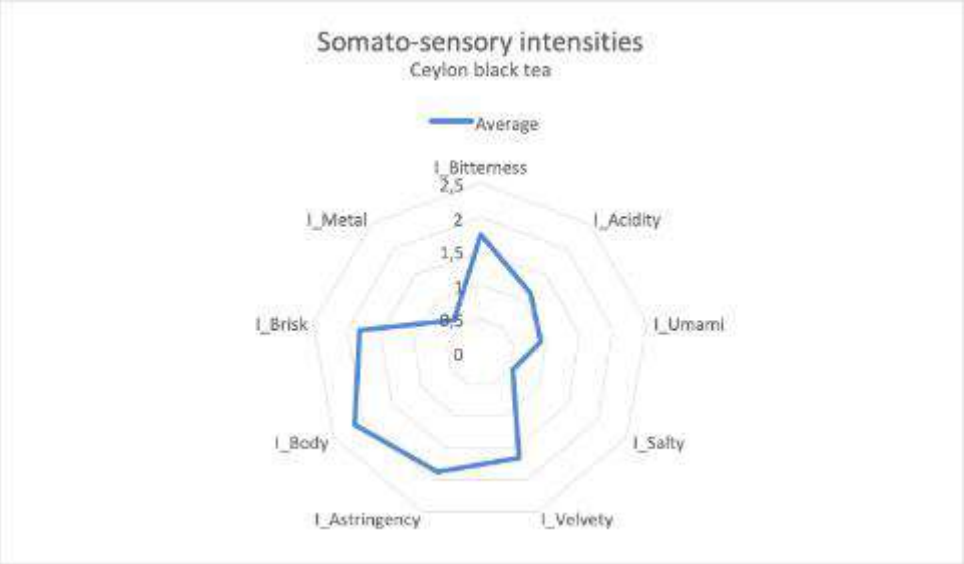
'Ceylon tea' may also be flavoured, provided that the distinctive characteristics of 'Ceylon tea' remain clearly recognisable. Flavouring may be achieved through the use of fragrance oils, which may be natural, nature-identical or artificial aroma compounds, and/or through the inclusion of plant-derived or apicultural products. 'Ceylon tea' may also be flavoured through a scenting process. In all cases, the process must complement and must not mask the sensory characteristics of 'Ceylon tea' as defined in Section 3.1.3, ensuring that the finished product remains recognisable as 'Ceylon tea' in terms of its appearance, flavour, taste and mouthfeel.

3.1.3 / Sensory and chemical characteristics of 'Ceylon tea'

3.1.3.1 / Ceylon black tea – The colour of the liquor

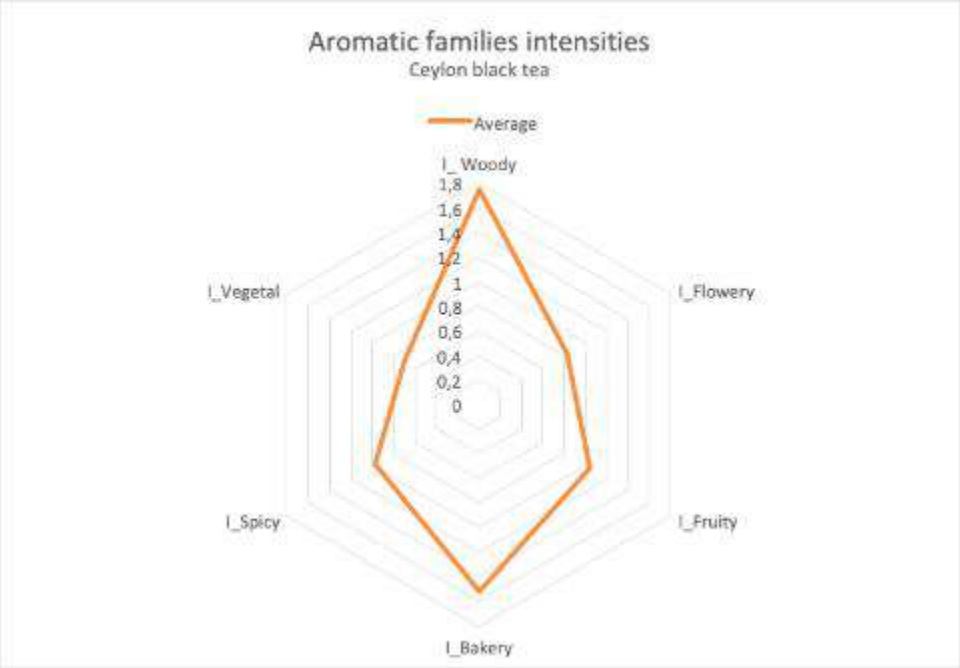
The colour of the liquor varies from amber to ochre, mahogany and copper with brightness and transparency.

3.1.3.1 / Ceylon black tea – The somato-sensory profile



The somato-sensory structure of 'Ceylon tea' black tea shows that Ceylon black tea has a strong body, is brisk and velvety, carried by bitterness and astringency, is not salty or metallic and is very lightly umami and acid.

3.1.3.1 / Ceylon black tea – The aromatic profile



The dominant aromas of Ceylon black tea are in the following aromatic families:

- Woody with dry wood, sandalwood and cedar notes
- Bakery with malted, jaggery and biscuity notes
- With less intensity, the spicy family with honey, wax and leather notes
- Fruity with stewed fruit, prune and tamarind notes.

Vegetal and flowery elements are not found in Ceylon black tea.

3.1.3.1 / Ceylon black tea –The chemical profile

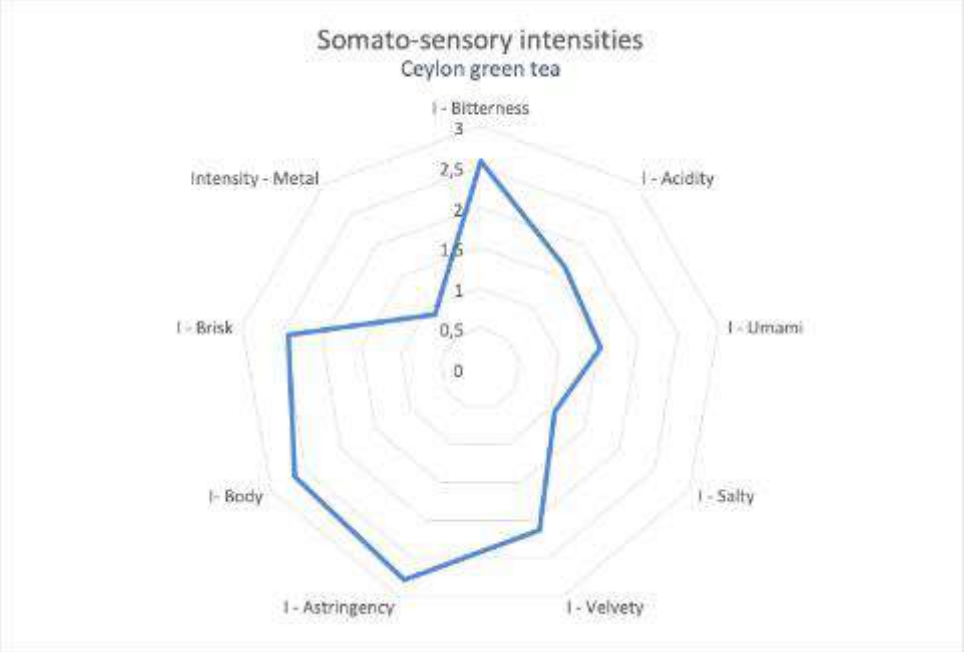
Chemical Parameter	Mean
Total polyphenol content(ISO 14502-1)(%)	14.59 ± 3.44
Caffeine (ISO 14502-2) (%)	3.07 ± 0.50
Water extract (ISO 9768) (%)	36.86 ± 3.14
Total Catechins (ISO 14502-2) (%)	4.42 ± 2.28

Data represent the mean value for chemical parameter± standard deviation

3.1.3.2 / Ceylon green tea – The colour of the liquor

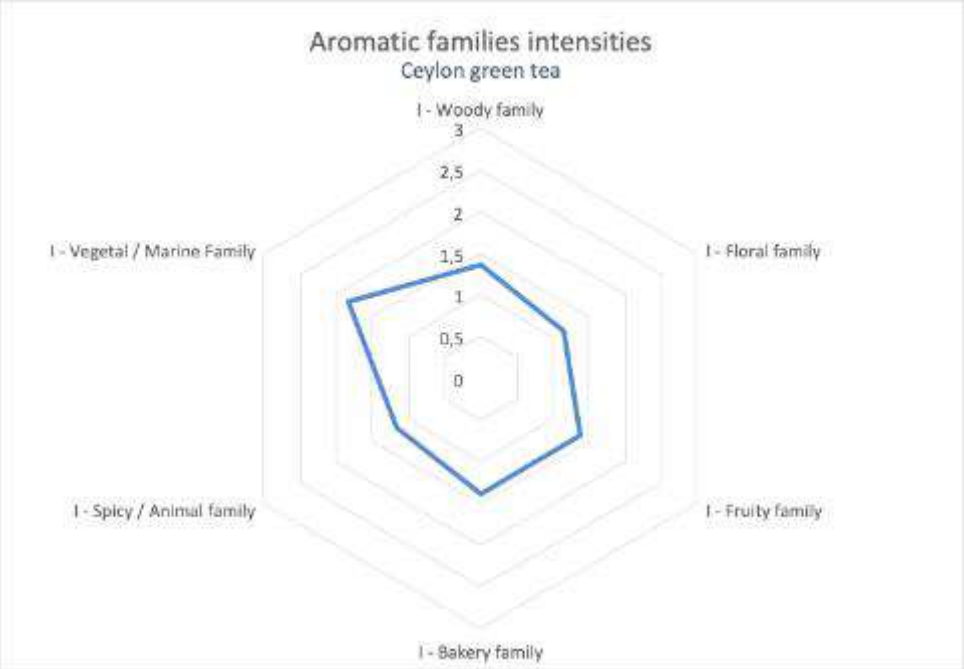
The colour of the liquor varies from light yellow with green or gold reflections to light amber with brightness and transparency.

3.1.3.2 / Ceylon green tea – The somato-sensory profile



The somato-sensory structure of 'Ceylon tea' green tea is a strong body, brisk and velvety, carried by bitterness and astringency, not salty or metallic and is very lightly umami and acid.

3.1.3.2 / Ceylon green tea – The aromatic profile



The dominant aromas of Ceylon green tea are in the following aromatic families:

- Vegetal marine with cooked vegetable, grassy and fresh seaweed notes
- Equal intensity for woody, with dry wood notes
- Fruity with citrus notes
- Bakery with toasted notes.

3.1.3.2 / Ceylon green tea – The chemical profile

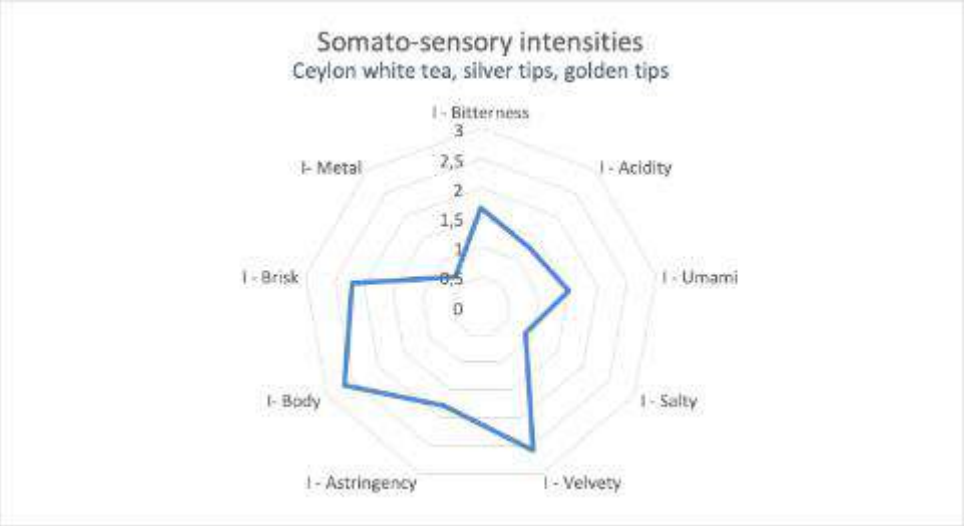
Chemical Parameter	Mean
Total polyphenol content (ISO 14502-1) (%)	22.80 ± 2.86
Caffeine (ISO 14502-2) (%)	2.92 ± 0.51
Water extract (ISO 9768) (%)	41.02 ± 3.04
Total Catechins (ISO 14502-2) (%)	15.34 ± 1.28
Individual Catechins (ISO 14502-2)	
(+)-catechin (C) (%)	0.17 ± 0.03
(-)-epigallocatechin (EGC) (%)	3.64 ± 0.52
(-)-epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) (%)	7.74 ± 1.52
(-)-epicatechin (EC) (%)	1.49 ± 0.20
(-)-epicatechin-3-gallate (ECG) (%)	2.30 ± 0.33

Data represent the mean value for chemical parameter± standard deviation

3.1.3.3 / Ceylon white tea, silver tips, golden tips – The colour of the liquor

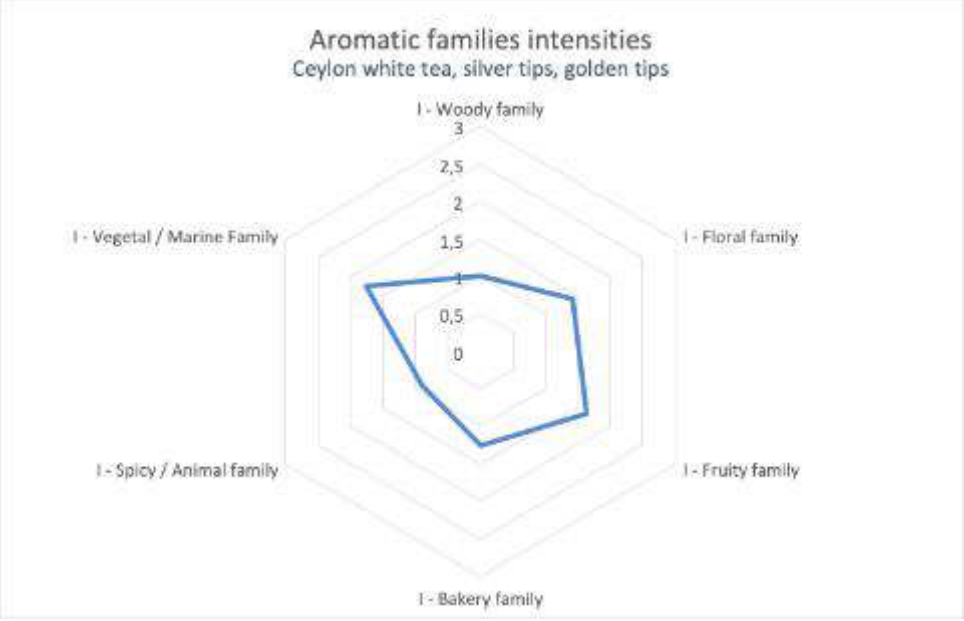
The colour of the liquor varies from light yellow to light amber with brightness and transparency.

3.1.3.3 / Ceylon white tea, silver tips, golden tips – The somato-sensory profile



The somato-sensory structure of 'Ceylon tea' white tea, is based on 2 dominant sensations: body and velvety, carried by light briskness, astringency and bitterness. It is not salty or metallic and is very lightly umami and acid.

3.1.3.3 / Ceylon white tea, silver tips, golden tips – The aromatic profile



The dominant aromas of Ceylon white tea are in the following aromatic families:

- Vegetal marine with notes such as cooked vegetable and hay
- Fruity with cooked fruit, yellow fruit and citrus noted
- Equal intensity for floral with geranium notes

- Bakery with toasted notes.

3.1.3.3 / Ceylon white tea, silver tips, golden tips – The chemical profile

Chemical Parameter	Mean
Total polyphenol content (ISO 14502-1) (%)	22.63 ±3.60
Caffeine (ISO 14502-2) (%)	3.64 ± 1.48
Water extract (ISO 9768) (%)	38.98 ± 3.95
Total Catechins (ISO 14502-2) (%)	11.52 ± 5.34
Individual Catechins (ISO 14502-2)	
(+)-catechin (C) (%)	0.26 ± 0.11
(-)-epigallocatechin (EGC) (%)	1.96 ± 0.68
(-)-epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) (%)	6.68 ± 3.78
(-)-epicatechin (EC) (%)	1.10 ± 0.34
(-)-epicatechin-3-gallate (ECG) (%)	2.25 ± 0.83

Data represent the mean value for each chemical parameter± standard deviation

3.2 / Feed (for products of animal origin only) and raw materials (for processed products only)

'Ceylon tea' is obtained from quality green fresh tea leaves grown in the delimited geographical area, in the island of Sri Lanka. Picking occurs all year long, through different regions and seasons – no dormant period. Plucking standards adapt to that seasonal variability, but only healthy tea shoots have to be plucked.

4/ Specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographical area

4.1 / Tea cultivation

0. The tea is cultivated in the tea gardens of the delimitated geographical area of the island of Sri Lanka.
1. Tea species are exclusively *Camelia sinensis*.
2. Tea bushes are either multiplied by vegetative propagation (VPs) or seedlings.
3. Tea gardens must be well maintained through good agricultural practices.
4. All new planting and replanting of seedlings or VPs should ensure good shade management.

Shade trees are important element of tea gardens as they simulate forest conditions, which are the natural habitat of tea. Shade trees provide additional environmental co-benefits important for the sustainability of tea gardens, especially in the context of climate change.

5. Weed management must follow the Integrated Weed Management (IWM) system. Herbicides/weedicides/pesticides use must respect a minimum interval of one week before harvest (Pre-Harvest Interval).

The Integrated Weed Management (IWM) approach includes preventive, manual, biological, cultural, mechanical and chemical methods (in rotation) as defined by the most current TRI circular on Weed Management. Tea gardens must limit chemical weeding to levels of inputs and application frequency as defined by the up-to-date version of the TRI advisory circular on Chemical control of weeds in tea lands.

4.2 / Plucking

0. The tea bushes are plucked at required intervals of 6 to 10 days to ensure a regular renewal of juvenile leaves and a bud.
1. Plucking can be done by hand or by a mechanical device. A sub-labelling of “Hand plucked” can be used for tea that is 100% hand plucked.
2. Plucking standard is systematically determined at factory gate.

4.3 / Transport of green leaf

0. The green leaves must be transported in a way to preserve the quality of the leaves from farm gate (or collection point) to factory.
1. Green leaves must be delivered to the factory before 8:30PM on the same day they have been plucked.
2. Green leaf transport must be done with one or more approved containers recommended by the Tea Commissioner if located from and more than 5 km from the factory:
    1. Plastic crates with a maximum load of 20 kg.
    2. Coir sacks (80cm x 65cm - minimum size) with a maximum load of 20 kg.
    3. Imported nylon sacks (90cm x 70cm) with a maximum load of 20 kg.
    4. Transport vehicles must be adapted and equipped for the transport of fresh green tea leaves. Collection lorries must be ventilated and equipped with racks and/or shelves

for sacks handling. There should also be protection against the rain. They must be without any contamination.

Figure: Green leaves collector lorries

4.4 / Processing

All steps of processing of tea shall take place in the delimited area of the geographical indication 'Ceylon tea'.

There are different types of tea commonly manufactured in the region:

0. Black tea: pure Orthodox, Orthodox-Rotorvane, CTC
1. Green tea
2. White tea, silver tips, golden tips

4.4.1 / Black tea

Black tea is produced from the green leaves, by the following processes - notably withering, leaf maceration, aeration and drying.

There are 3 sub-categories of black tea, each based on a type of manufacturing:

1. Orthodox black tea, which produces leafy and broken tea grades
2. Orthodox-Rotorvane black tea, which produces broken tea grades
3. CTC (Cut, tear, curl), which produces predominantly small and even tea grades

Withering: upon arrival at the factory, the leaves are checked for quality and the required quantity is weighed and loaded on withering troughs. Air is passed through the bed of leaves to reduce its moisture content to 55 – 60% (w/w, wet basis) in Pure Orthodox & Orthodox-Rotorvane type of manufacturing and

to 68-70% (w/w, wet basis) in CTC manufacturing. A minimum of 6 hours of withering is required for necessary chemical changes in leaves.

Figure: leaf quality check

Figure: withering lines:

Rolling: the withered leaves are then transferred/directed from the withering section to the rolling section. They are then twisted, which, by subjecting the withered leaves to a rolling movement under pressure, twist the leaves, rupture the cells and release cell sap, promoting oxidation and accelerating pigmentation.

For the production of Orthodox-Rotorvane black tea, a slight variation happens at the rolling step where Rotorvanes are used to macerate the leaves after the step of rolling in orthodox roller.

For the production of CTC black tea, the withered leaves are preconditioned in Rotorvane followed by successive CTC machines arranged in series.

Figure: Rolling machine

Figure: Rotorvane machine

Aeration: The leaves are then moved to the aeration area and spread at desired thickness on tables or floor or machine under a controlled humid environment for completeness of aeration reactions. It allows the rolled leaves to develop the desired flavour and colour. The optimum aeration period and temperature of aerating tea are decided by a prediction and correction method mastered by the factory staff to achieve the desired flavour and liquor characteristics.

Figure: Aeration

Firing/drying: The firing/drying step arrests fermentation and brings down the moisture content to a maximum of 3% (w/w, wet basis) for the sake of stability during storage.

Figure: Firing machine

Sorting/ grading: The tea is sorted to different grades according to size, shape and density, cleaned to present them in the most attractive and acceptable manner and prepared for marketing and transport. These grades are finally invoiced and must be packed in paper or paper board sacks with the SLS logo.

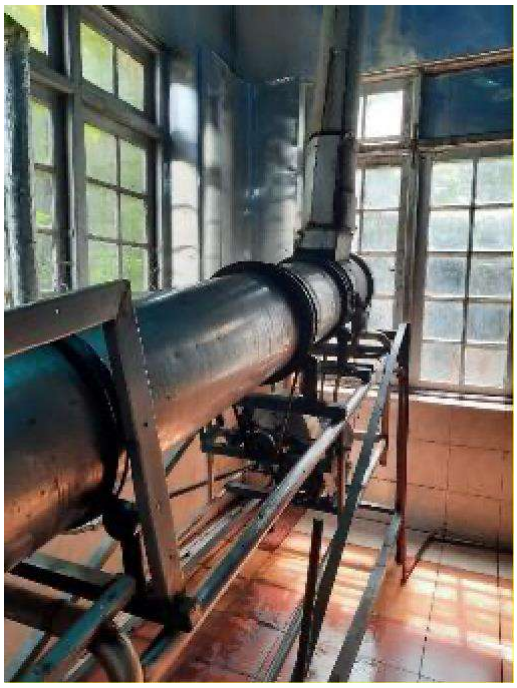
Figure: Sorting of the tea and packed tea

4.4.2 / Green tea

Green tea is produced from the green leaves, by the following processes - notably fixing (panning or steaming), rolling, drying and grading.

Panning or steaming: The objective of panning or steaming is to inactivate the enzymes of the fresh tea leaves through exposure to desired high temperature. Panning consists of tossing the leaves on a heated surface while steaming involves exposing the tea leaves to steam. As a result, it arrests fermentation/oxidation. The leaf temperature is reduced and surface moisture is removed.

Figure: Panning system



Rolling: Leaves are then subjected to rolling in suitable rollers to achieve the desired/ required shape.

Firing/drying: This reduces the moisture to the desired level while fixing the shape of the leaf through exposure to the desired high temperature.

4.4.3 / White tea, silver tips, golden tips

Ceylon white tea, silver tips and golden tips are processed from tea leaves and buds only.
Drying: This reduces the moisture to the desired level.

4.5 / Grading of teas

The tea is sorted into different grades at the factory. The tea is sorted into different grades according to size, shape, and density, is then cleaned and prepared for marketing and transport.

These grades are finally invoiced and must be packed in paper or paper board sacks with the SLS logo. The moisture content of the end-product at the factory gate should not exceed 6.5% (w/w, wet basis).

Figure: SLS logo displayed on paper sack

4.6 / Blending of teas

'Ceylon tea' can be a blend of different teas from Sri Lanka complying with the present Specifications and originating from the geographical area. Such blending of teas from Sri Lanka must be carried out in Sri Lanka.

4.7 / Flavouring

'Ceylon tea' may be flavoured with the maximum amount of flavouring components not exceeding 25% of the total weight of the final product. Flavouring of 'Ceylon tea' shall only be carried out in Sri Lanka.

The aroma and taste of 'Ceylon tea' mustbe determined by a trained tea taster qualified to certify the tea by the Sri Lanka Tea Board. The aroma and taste of different batches of 'Ceylon tea' may differ, but through the analysis of a large sample set, the aromas, tastes and mouthfeels listed in section 3.1.3 have been demonstrated to occur in 'Ceylon tea' to varying degrees.

Any additional flavouring notes must be complementary and may enhance the aromatic complexity, but must not obscure or replace the underlying 'Ceylon tea' character.

4.8 / Final packing

The tea sold under the name 'Ceylon tea' must be packed within Sri Lanka.

Consumer packaging takes place in Sri Lanka, thus guaranteeing not only the product's authenticity, but also that it retains its qualities and characteristics and at the same time protecting the 'Ceylon tea' geographical indication. Moreover, given the miscible nature of the tea, the obligation to package the tea in Sri Lanka

guarantees its traceability and origin.

To be released to the market for consumption, the tea can be packaged in any form.

Only the packs containing 100% 'Ceylon tea', as defined in the present specifications and compliant with ISO 3720/ ISO 11287 and/or SLS 135 standards, Tea Board standards/guidelines and, conforming to the relevant specifications for content and packing requirements established by Sri Lankan food authorities and the Sri Lanka Tea Board, will be eligible to use the words 'Ceylon tea'.

4.9 / Specific rules concerning labelling of the product to which the registered name refers

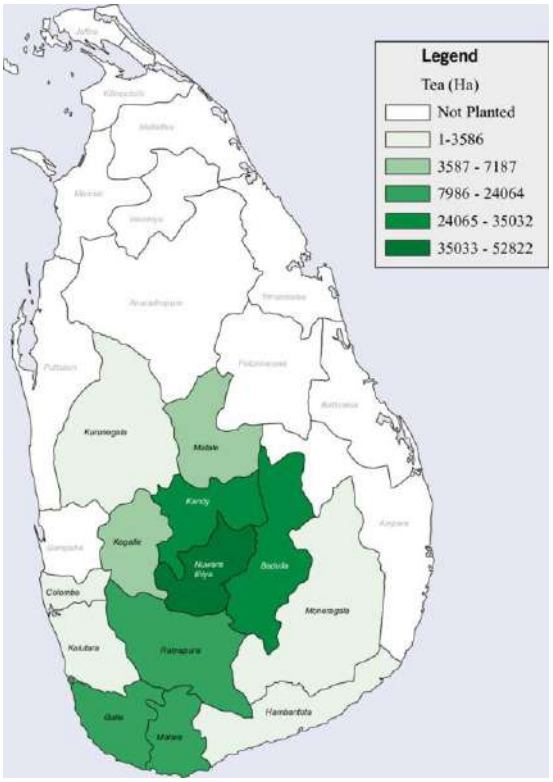
The words 'Ceylon tea' must appear on a prominent manner in each final consumer package.

When flavoured in accordance with the specification, the name(s) of the flavouring(s) must be declared alongside the PGI name, for example: *'Ceylon Tea PGI – <<name of the flavourant(s)>>*. The final product must still be recognisable as 'Ceylon tea' as characterised in Section 3.1.3 in terms of its aroma, taste and mouthfeel.

5/ Concise definition of the geographical area

The area for tea cultivation and processing is the 13 districts as defined in map below:

- Badulla
- Colombo
- Galle
- Hambantota
- Kalutara
- Kandy
- Kegalle
- Kurunegala
- Matale
- Matara
- Moneragala
- Nuwara Eliya
- Ratnapura



Blending, flavouring and packing are allowed on the whole island of Sri Lanka.

6/ Link with the geographical area

6.1 / Specificities of the product

Tea cultivation in Sri Lanka succeeded that of coffee which was introduced to the then British colony of Ceylon in the 1840s. A blight, also called the coffee rust, showed first signs in 1869 and subsequently wiped out the coffee production in the span of a decade[1]. Witnessing the devastating effects of the coffee rust, coffee planters soon started looking for an alternative commercial crop. After years of experimental cultivation and processing of tea at the border of his coffee estate of Loolecandera near Kandy and attempts to match the know-how of Assam tea planters, the Scottish planter James Taylor established the first commercial tea plantation in 1867. He was the first planter in Ceylon to succeed with tea but he was not the first to try. Though records are scant, there is evidence that the cultivation of tea plants imported from China was attempted as early as 1824[2]. Tea presented numerous advantages. Tea bushes are well-suited to tropical climate and hilly topography of the island and public and private existing infrastructure, initially geared to the requirements of the coffee enterprise, could be adapted rapidly to serve the needs of tea. By the end of the century, the emerging tea industry soon surpassed all successes of its coffee predecessor in terms of export volumes, revenues and area under cultivation[3]/ Historical reputation of 'Ceylon tea'

6.2 / Current reputation of 'Ceylon tea'

The reputation of 'Ceylon tea' still reaches far beyond the borders of Sri Lanka. The name of this global product is recognised and promoted in all parts of the world thanks to the constant efforts of the Sri Lanka Tea Board to take part in global events. The 150 years of the 'Ceylon tea' industry was celebrated in 2017. This milestone showed the historical reputation that 'Ceylon tea' has upheld for decades and Sri Lanka's key role as a global tea supplier.

'Ceylon tea' is renowned for a combination of sensory and cultural traits that distinguish it from other teas. In December 2024, the independent tea website *Sally Tea Cups* described the "*global acclaim*"[1] associated with 'Ceylon tea' noting its '*distinct aromas and flavor profiles"* that "*set it apart from other teas like those from China and India"*. In January 2025, *Heal with Tea*[2] referred to its "*renown"* for a "*fresh and robust taste"*, calling it a *"unique choice among teas"* that has "*earned global recognition"* for its "*distinct flavour and unmistakable aroma"*. In May 2025, Ricardo R. Matos writing for *The Tea World* explained "*why Sri Lanka's Teas are among the world's finest"*, attributing their reputation to *"generations of careful cultivation and artisanal processing'* and '*celebrated for their bright, brisk character, golden color, and lively arom'"*[3].

'Ceylon tea' is also deeply embedded in cultural traditions. In Sri Lanka, offering a freshly brewed cup to visitors is a customary gesture of hospitality. Internationally, it is integrated into diverse tea cultures: in the United Kingdom, it is a traditional choice for afternoon tea; in Russia, its full flavour and bright colour make it ideal for samovar service; in Chile, it is *"one of the essentials on any Chilean table […] among the favorites when it comes to choosing which to drink"* (translated from Spanish, October 2023), particularly associated with *la once*, the

[1] Sally Tea Cups | *How Sri Lanka Became a Tea Powerhouse*, 16 December 2024. https://sallyteacups.org/sri-lanka-tea-history/ . Consulted the 04/03/2025

[2] Heal with Tea | Ceylon Tea – Benefits, Side Effects and Nutrition Facts, 29 January 2025. https://healwithtea.com/ceylon-tea/. Consulted the 04/03/2025

[3] Matos, R.R. | *Why Sri Lanka's Teas Are Among the World's Finest*, *The Tea World*, 14 May 2025. https://teatheworld.com/blog/ceylon-tea-why-sri-lankas-teas-are-among-the-worlds-finest/. Consulted the 11/08/2025

daily tea-and-bread meal.[4][5][6] Its international recognition is further evidenced by Sri Lanka's longstanding participation at UNESCO's International Tea Day: *"Sri Lanka proudly showcased its iconic Ceylon Tea […] marking the fourth consecutive year of participation in the prestigious global event"*[7] *(June 2025)*.

Beyond its sensory appeal, **'**Ceylon tea' is also valued for its health-related qualities, which add to its reputation. The Sri Lankan Export Development Board notes that 'Ceylon tea' "*also comes with numerous health benefits supported by ingredients such as antioxidants, polyphenols, sodium, proteins and carbohydrate"*[8]. Independent health sources corroborate this: *Healthline* reports in June 2023 that "*certain types of Ceylon tea have been linked to impressive health benefits — ranging from increased fat burning to better blood sugar control and decreased cholesterol level"*[9]*.*

This sustained reputation has been recognised in international competitions over the past 5 years, with 'Ceylon tea' being awarded several prizes:

Name of the competition	Year	Award title
Global Tea Championship	2019	(Spring Hot) Ceylon Open – Lumbini Tea Valley (Pvt) Ltd – Sinharaja Wiry Tips – Gold Medal
Global Tea Championship	2017	Ceylon Open – Lumbini Tea Estate (pvt) Ltd – Sinharaja Wiry Tips – Gold Medal
Global Tea Championship	2017	Ceylon low grown – Lumbini Tea Estate (Pvt) td – Lumbini Tea Valley Tippy Eve – Gold Medal
AVPA	2022	Thés monovariétaux - Diplôme Gourmet – Ceylon Black Pearl – Kaley Tea
Great Taste Awards	2024	The Island of Tea - Special Pure Ceylon Black Tea - 100g Loose Leaf Tea
Great Taste Awards	2024	The Island of Tea Gold - Pure Ceylon Black Tea - 100g Loose Leaf Tea

In addition, tea-based tourism is a key asset for the island's tourism industry, further contributing to its distinct reputation as a travel destination. Images of tea fields and tea-related landscapes are frequently featured on the covers of travel guides, alongside other iconic attractions. Notably, the 10th English edition of *Lonely*

[4]Tasha Marks **|** *The tea-rific history of Victorian afternoon tea*, *British Museum Blog*, 14 August 2020. https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/tea-rific-history-victorian-afternoon-tea. Consulted the 11/08/2025

[5] David Hill | *Russian-Style Tea: How to Use a Samovar*, *Europe Up Close*, 13 September 2010. https://europeupclose.com/article/russian-style-tea-how-to-use-a-samovar/ consulted the 11/08/2025

[6] Chef & Hotel Coffee & Tea **|** *"En Chile el té de Sri Lanka se consume desde hace más de 50 años"*, *Chef & Hotel Coffee&Tea*, 5 October 2023. https://chefandhotel.cl/coffeetea/en-chile-el-te-de-sri-lanka-se-consume-desde-hace-mas-de-50-anos/. Consulted the 11/08/2025

[7] Lanka News Web | *Sri Lanka Highlights Ceylon Tea at UNESCO's International Tea Day in Paris*, *Lanka News Web*, 27 June 2025. https://lankanewsweb.net/archives/94684/sri-lanka-highlights-ceylon-tea-at-unescos-international-tea-day-in-paris/ Consulted the 11/08/2025

[8] Sri Lanka Export Development Board | *Benefits of Ceylon Black Tea*, https://www.srilankabusiness.com/faq/tea/benefits-ceylon-black-tea.html Consulted the 11/08/2025

[9] Ajmera, Rachael (MS, RD) | *Ceylon Tea: Nutrition, Benefits, and Potential Downsides*, *Healthline*, updated 13 July 2023. https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/ceylon-tea. Consulted the 11/08/2025

Planet (2006) for the destination Sri Lanka showcased a tea plucking woman on its cover, while the 10th French edition (2021) highlighted the Odyssey Blue Train traversing lush tea plantations. Ceylon Tea is the most purchased souvenir among tourists, with 53.1% of visitors taking it home—ranking above handicrafts and accessories (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019).

Furthermore, the *Pekoe Trail*, a 300-kilometer-long walking route that winds through the highlands and tea estates from Kandy to Nuwara Eliya, pays homage to one of the grades of Ceylon tea. This initiative has garnered international recognition, winning the *Best Wider World Tourism Project 2023* award from the British Guild of Travel Writers and earning a spot in *National Geographic's* "Top 20 Travel Experiences" for 2024 and *Time*'s "World's Greatest Places 2025".

6.3 / Specificities of the geographical area

6.3.1 / Specificities of the Natural Factors

The quality of 'Ceylon tea' relies on the geography of the delimitated geographical area of 'Ceylon tea'. The climate, soil and topography specificities of the delimitated geographical area gives 'Ceylon tea' both physical and organoleptic recognisable characteristics.

Located on a tropical island (between 5° 55' to 9° 51' North latitude and between 79° 42' to 81° 53' East longitude) 'Ceylon tea' cultivation extends over an altitude gradient ranging from sea level up to high altitudes (above 1200 meters). In the tea sector, it is therefore common to refer first to 'Ceylon tea' growing area by their altitude, namely: the "low country" (ranging from sea level to 600m), "mid country" (600m to 1200m) and "up country" (above 1200m).

The agro-climatic specificities of 'Ceylon tea' are defined by an important diversity in climate in the tea growing areas. This is a signification feature in the wet and intermediate zones of Sri Lanka. The rainfall pattern is distinctly seasonal with two pics. More specifically, rainfalls are paced by the South-West monsoon from May to September, and the North-East monsoon from December to February, followed by inter-monsoonal rains covering the whole island (March-April and October-November). The central mountains act as a divider between those two annual climatic events, which results in different periods of rainfall on either side of the mountains. The amount of rainfall and its distributions are the most important factors that affect the productivity of tea. The number of rainless days in the wet zone is very small compared to the total number of rainy days in a year. In addition, the agro-climatic conditions of the delimited geographical area offer good exposition to solar radiation. The mean annual sunshine duration in the wet zone ranges from 4.9 to 6.4 hours per day depending on the location.

The above-mentioned criteria, combined with soil conditions, terrain and land use pattern, defines 46 Agro-Ecological Regions (AERs) for the whole of Sri Lanka (see Map of agro-ecological regions of Sri Lanka (Panabokke and Kannangara, 1975), of which 25 are found to be particularly suitable for 'Ceylon tea' production. Today, tea grows in 25 AERs, each experiencing variations from one to another (see Map in the section "Geographical area" above).

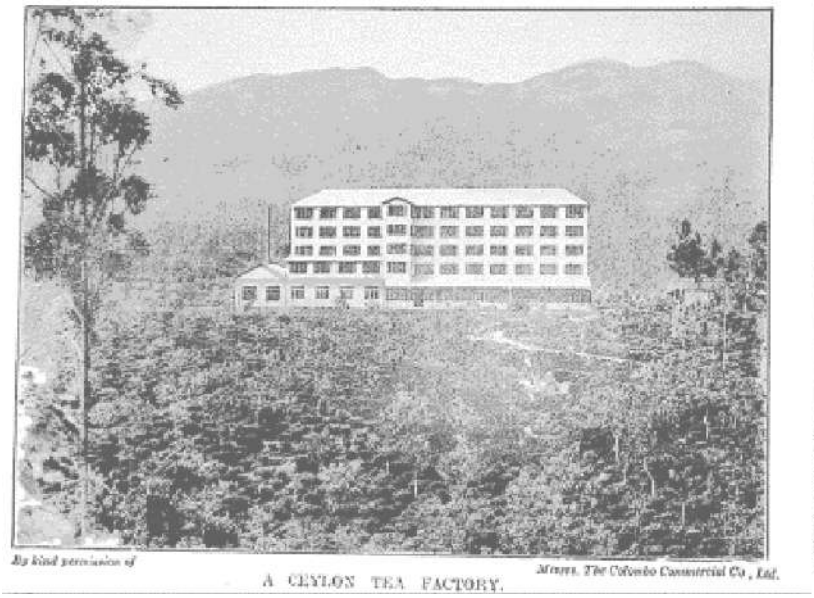
The complex topography, combined with changing weather patterns over the span of a year, generate favourable conditions for tea cultivation resulting in year-round production. It also creates a diversity of tea growing conditions, which in turn is responsible for the complex taste of 'Ceylon tea'.

6.3.2 / Specificities of the Human Factors

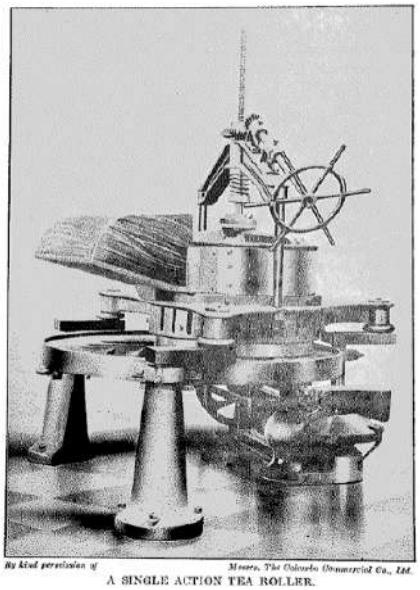
In addition to the above-mentioned factors, the great reputation of 'Ceylon tea' has been built thanks to the continuous efforts of people who, over the years, have developed specific know-how oriented towards quality production at each stage of product processing: plucking, tea manufacturing, auctioning, tea blending and flavouring.

Plucking - Most of 'Ceylon tea' is harvested or plucked manually. The particular know-how of tea pluckers allows them to select the best leaves to produce quality 'Ceylon tea'. The tea pluckers master different types of plucking techniques to identify the good leaves to be plucked, foster the productivity of the tea bush and support the maintenance of the tea bushes.

Tea manufacture - The quality of 'Ceylon tea' is the result of a dense network of tea factories, which gradually developed a tea manufacturing process to optimize natural, agronomic, logistic and economic conditions. When tea bushes replaced dying coffee plants, tea factories were built on-site to allow processing of raw leaves, in order to maintain their freshness and quality. From then, tea planters started to develop the art of 'Ceylon tea' manufacture. Through shared experience, they developed the principles of the industrialized manufacturing process for 'Ceylon tea', adapted to climatic conditions, newly acclimatized tea plants and market requirements (e.g. withering time depending on relative humidity and the quality of the tea leaves, number of rolling revolutions, ideal firing temperature, etc.). Even though technological innovations are constantly springing up in the tea sector, the main manufacturing principles defined in the first half of the 20th century (e.g. "Tea manufacture – its theory and practice in Ceylon" by HJ Moppett 1922 (2nd edition in 1931)), remain accurate today. The tea factories' machineries are today a patrimonial heritage of the 150-year-old knowledge of craftsmen. The 'Ceylon tea' craft is also followed and adapted to a small scale by artisanal manufacturers who produce 'Ceylon tea' using a combination of machines and manual techniques.



A CEYLON TEA FACTORY.



A SINGLE ACTION TEA ROLLER.

Source: H.J. Moppett, 1922

Then 'Ceylon tea' manufacture principles have been consolidated by the Tea Research Institute of Ceylon (TRI), notably through a series of Monographs on Tea production in Ceylon. The N°4 deals with "Tea manufacture in Ceylon", by the technologist E L. Keegel published in its second edition in 1958, and still counts as a major reference for today's TRI (cf. TRI Handbook on Tea).

The quality officer of the tea factory is instrumental in ensuring that the manufacturing process is thoroughly executed. He/she is also the holder of the fine knowledge of tea manufacturing. They adapt the duration of the sensitive steps of withering and fermentation/oxidation of the tea leaves depending on the climatic conditions of the day. A rainy day can lengthen the withering time, whereas hot sunny weather speeds up the fermentation/oxidation of the rolled leaves. The quality officer is a tributary of the 'Ceylon tea' planter's and manufacturers' traditional experience in maintaining and evaluating the quality of the made tea. This know-how further stretches out to an extensive list of grades of 'Ceylon tea' manufacturers and other industry stakeholders to identify and adhere.

Colombo Auction – The auction system can be considered as part of the cultural heritage that showcases the 'Ceylon tea' quality and contributes to its truthful recognition. Tea auctions were first introduced in Colombo in 1883, on the premises of Somerville & Co., a Colombo merchant house, on the basis of those conducted

at Mincing Lane in London.

By the turn of the century, most of the estates were owned by joint-stock companies, either listed in sterling or in rupee. Shareholders of those companies were British, often far from the plantations. The management in the estates was delegated to 'management companies' or 'agency houses', which handled the cultivation, processing and sale of tea. In Colombo, the agency houses employed teams of expert tea-tasters to sample and report on the quality of each estate's produce before it was put up for auction in Colombo or London. The brokers and buyers, too, had their tasters, and it was tasters from both sides who attended the auctions. Once established, the structure of the 'tea trade' was little altered. Overseen by trade associations such as the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (est. 1839) and the Colombo Tea Traders' Association (est. 1894), it continued to function with little change in operational procedure, management style or ownership structure throughout the colonial period and was British-dominated[106]. The Colombo tea auction in Sri Lanka now operates as an online platform; the first historical online auction was successfully conducted on 4 April 2020. The bidding process is similar to the physical system - transparency is maintained throughout similar to the original auction process - contributing to steer up the best price for the best quality.

Tea Blending and Flavouring – The specificity of 'Ceylon tea' is evident in the wide range of tastes and flavours derived from the diversity of the agro-ecological regions in which it is found. As a result, the 'Ceylon tea' sector has developed recognised know-how in terms of tea identification and blending, to obtain the desired appearance, qualities and aromatic notes in the final beverage. Tea tasters have an important role in factories and brokers and exporters' houses. They are specifically trained for quality assessment. Experienced tea tasters can identify defects, their origin and consequently advise the manufacturer regarding over or under firing, over or under fermentation/oxidation, over or under withering, etc. They are also trained to recognise the special regional characters of 'Ceylon tea' as well as the wide range of grades. Therefore, like tea factory quality officers, tea tasters are defenders of an origin and taste that make the quality of 'Ceylon tea' special.

Blends of teas from Sri Lanka and flavouring in Sri Lanka are important features of 'Ceylon tea' exporters' specific know-how. As described earlier, blending of teas from Sri Lanka and flavouring is traditionally done in Sri Lanka to produce 'Ceylon tea'. It is a currently established practice to flavour the tea. Flavour like bergamot is ancient, whereas botanicals is more recent. Exporters tend to respond to customers' requests for a specific taste, smell and appearance (colour and shape) of the tea. Exporters build standards, which act as references to respond to those requirements. Blending of teas from Sri Lanka and flavouring therefore fall into a tradition of tailor-made teas, which vary from customer to customer, and from one market to another.

Blend sheets are testimonies of those practices and are a mandatory document, which must be submitted to the SLTB prior to export. A blend sheet lists the various teas from Sri Lanka that are mixed together, along with flavours and their respective quantity. It is part of the exporter's expertise to decide which grades can be blended and in which proportion, to replicate a specific, custom-made tea. Blending of teas from Sri Lanka and flavouring are important indicators of quality control of 'Ceylon tea' and encapsulate the knowledge that 'Ceylon tea' exporters have of their markets, which in turn justify that these two steps must take place in Sri Lanka.

At present, the Sri Lanka tea industry involves more than 397,233 smallholdings (2005) and 328 tea estates (293 in RPCs & 35 in States) (MPI, 2018); 1,596 registered tea leaf dealers; 782 active registered factories; 8 registered tea brokers; 386 registered tea exporters and 189 registered packers (Sri Lanka Tea Board (SLTB, 2022)).

6.3.3 / How the specificities of the geographical area influence those of the product (causal link)

[10] History of Ceylon Tea | Sri Lanka Tea Board. https://www.srilankateaboard.lk/ceylon-tea/history-of-ceylon-tea/. Consulted the 04/03/2024

The combination of climate, topography and the human knowledge of blending of teas from Sri Lanka give all colours of Ceylon tea their distinctive aromatic profiles. Black tea is characterized by prominent woody and bakery aromas, tinted with malted, jaggery and sandalwood notes, while Ceylon green and white teas display vegetal and marine aromas.

7/ Evidence that the product originates in the defined geographical area

Traceability of the 'Ceylon tea' is ensured by two mechanisms defined in the Tea Control Act.

- All operators involved in the tea value chain must be registered at the public authorities in charge of tea in Sri Lanka
- Operators have frequent and mandatory exchanges with Sri Lankan authorities and are compelled to record their operations (especially regarding inputs and outputs of materials)

7.1 / Traceability at the level of tea leaf growers, leaf collectors

Tea gardens below 10 acres are under the supervision of the Tea Small Holdings Development Authority (TSHDA) while other tea gardens (Regional Plantation Companies and private gardens, here called "estates") above 10 acres are under the supervision of the Sri Lanka Tea Board. Finally, a very tiny proportion of the leaves are produced by state-owned estates under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation Industries. Regardless of their size however, all tea gardens are registered with the Tea Land Registration System managed by the SLTB.

All quantities of plucked leaves supplied to the tea factory are recorded. If the tea factory is on the same land as the tea garden (for instance estates of Regional Plantation Companies collecting tea leaves from their own estate), the traceability is ensured by internal documents.

When the tea garden is independent from the tea factory (this is the case for 78% of the tea leaves that are sourced from gardens under 10 acres), the supply of tea leaves can be done either directly by the tea grower himself, or through a collector, registered at the Sri Lanka Tea Board serving as a middleman between tea garden and factories, or directly by a tea factory employee. Regardless of the collection method used, all operators (tea farmer, collector, and factory employee) record the quantities of leaves supplied since tea leaves are paid according to quantities supplied (for a tea grower) or collected (for collector or factory employee).

Collectors must monthly communicate to the SLTB the quantity of leaves received and supplied to factories. They are therefore submitted to a particularly strict and mandatory bookkeeping practice(s).

7.2 / Traceability at the factories level

The traceability at factory-level operates on the same basis. All tea factories are registered at the Sri Lanka Tea Board. Factories must record the quantities of leaves received (whether from their own tea gardens, independent tea gardens, or from collectors) and must record all operations tea leaves undergo (withering, rolling, fermenting etc). Every month, factories must send to the SLTB all information about their production: the quantity of leaves received, production output, quantity and use of refuse tea, sales details of the production.

The finished product called 'made tea' is stored in air and moisture-proof bags, which are gathered into invoices composed of 10 to 40 bags of the same grade. Each bag is tagged with the invoice number and the number of the bag within the invoice.

7.3 / Traceability at the level of brokers

90% of the tea produced in Sri Lanka is sold at the auction, through 8 brokers. The 8 brokers are registered at the SLTB and are intermediaries between factories and exporters/local distributors.

Once invoices are ready at factory level, the broker collects them and gives a batch number to each invoice (without any change of the content of the invoice). Brokers do not blend, flavour or modify the tea, they just serve as middlemen to introduce this tea at auctions. All the operations of the online auctions (i.e. sale and purchase of tea) are recorded.

7.4 / Traceability at the level of exporters

95% of the tea produced in Sri Lanka is exported. Exporters must be registered at the Sri Lanka Tea Board. Exporters buy tea batches (so the factories' invoices) at auctions.

Most of the tea produced in Sri Lanka, whether exported or not, is blended by exporters with other teas from Sri Lanka. As explained previously, to ensure traceability, exporters must create a blend sheet that records the different teas mixed into one blend. To obtain the authorization to export, exporters must submit this blend sheet to the Sri Lanka Tea Board.

8/ Controls

The Ministry of Agriculture Plantation Industries (MAPI) of Sri Lanka is the competent authority in charge of the overall 'Ceylon tea' GI control system, as defined in the Tea Control Act. The Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation Industries is headed by a Minister appointed by the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka under the approval of the Parliament. As the competent authority of the Geographical Indication, the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation Industries delegates its authorities to two control bodies:

The Sri Lanka Sri Lanka Tea Board (SLTB) and the Tea Small Holdings Development Authority (TSHDA) are already under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation and Industries which validates every year their budget and action plan. Moreover, every quarter, the TSHDA and the SLTB report their activities to the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation and Industries (for instance: number of inspections conducted on the value chain, number of formations delivered, number of advertisement campaigns done). Finally, within the MAPI, a team composed by 6 employees has been appointed to follow the Geographical Indication project.

The scope of SLTB's control activity is under the purview of a dedicated department, located in the central office in Colombo, called the Tea Commissioner division. It is headed by a Tea Commissioner supervising the control activity.

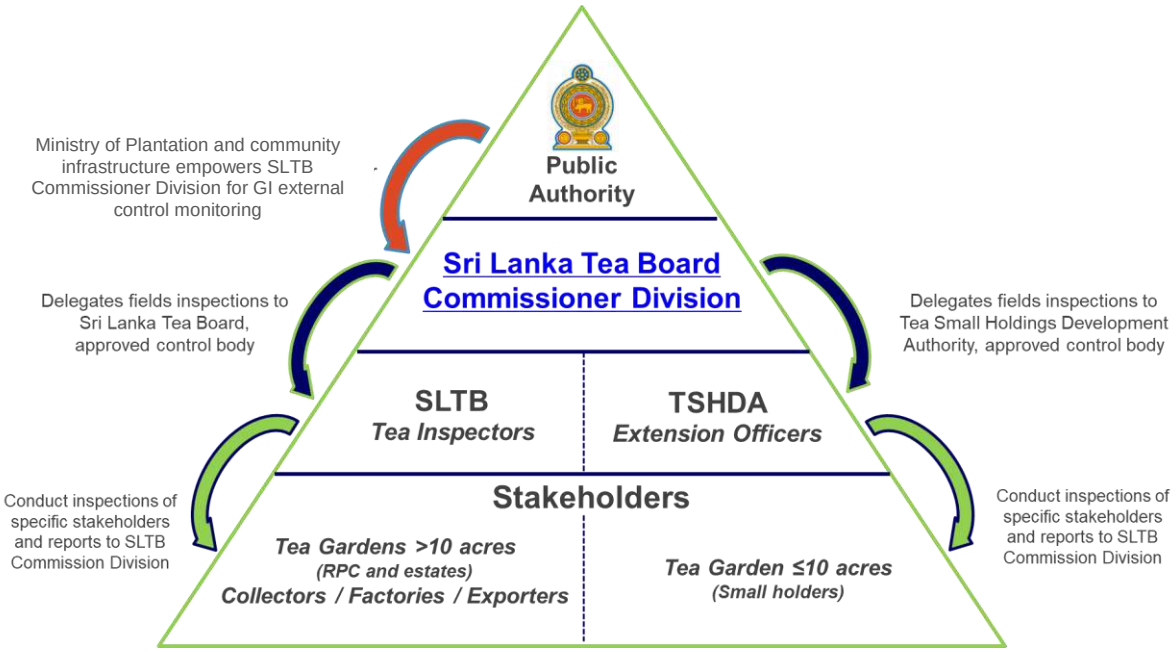
At the regional level, this function is delegated to Assistant Tea Commissioners. They manage a team of tea inspectors who inspect tea gardens (with an area larger than 10 acres), the factories and exporters.

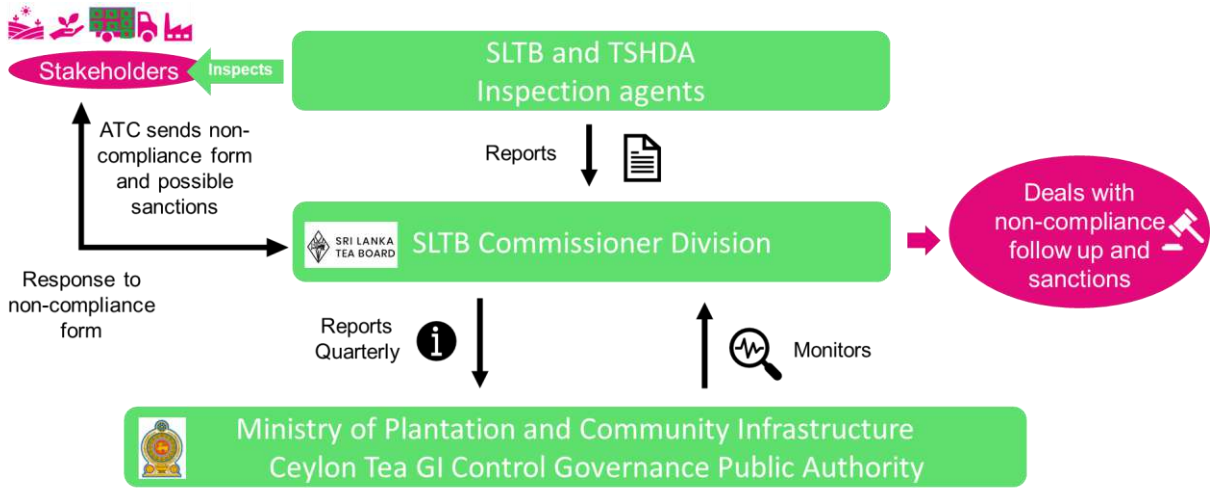
TSHDA is a public body responsible for small tea growers producing tea on plots of land less than 10 acres. Inspections are conducted by tea inspectors, under purview of regional extension officers, who are themselves supervised by the extension officers of the central office located in Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte, the administrative capital of Sri Lanka.

The responsibilities of the SLTB and the TSHDA are not conflicting as both control bodies control different sets of stakeholders. The TSHDA extension officers have no power of constraint. The TSHDA conduct inspections to check compliance with the book of specification and produce an inspection report; the results are sent to the SLTB commissioner division for possible sanction implementation.

The SLTB can impose specific sanctions (i.e. specific conditions of return to conformity) to non-compliant stakeholders, depending on a sanctions grid drafted in the control plan which is approved by the MAPI. For coordination and monitoring purposes, upon request, the GI Management Committee in charge of the governance of the GI can consult the status of controls carried out, their results and sanctions applied by both public control bodies. The SLTB commissioner division informs the GI management Committee and the MAPI within one (1) week of any sanction issued against a non-compliant stakeholder. Finally, in the event of a new type or an unusual non-compliance (unanticipated in the sanction grid), the MAPI is responsible for designing the conditions of return to compliance. The stakeholder can appeal a decision regarding non-compliance to the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation Industries.

Figures: Current Control System of Tea – SLTB and TSHDA





Annexures

Annex 1 - 'Ceylon tea' traceability flow chart