



# Fair Trade Tea 101

Use these facts to educate yourself and others  
about the need for Fair Trade Tea

## Fast Facts

- The four largest tea-producing countries are China, India, Kenya, and Sri Lanka, accounting for **75 percent** of the world's tea production.
- Tea is the **second most popular** beverage in the world, after water. China is the world's largest consumer by volume, while Turkey, Ireland, and the UK have the highest per capita rates of consumption.
- The United States is the **third largest** importer of tea in the world, after Russia and Pakistan.
- There are approximately **1,500** types of tea, but just four main categories: green, black, white, and oolong.

## The Need for Fair Trade Tea

- Tea plants are sensitive to changes in temperature and precipitation, leading to unpredictable yields.
- Tea farms and estates are facing loss of workers due to urbanization, as smallholders and other rural workers move to cities in search of better wages and opportunities.
- While tea is not a water-intensive crop, the use of irrigation has been steadily increasing in recent decades, in part to deal with changing weather patterns.

## Conventional Tea

- Wages have traditionally been low in the tea sector, often falling below local minimum wage thresholds and failing to cover the basic needs of workers.
- As part of worker compensation, many tea estates provide in-kind benefits like housing, education, and medical care. However, studies have found the quality of these services is often lacking.
- Low wages and poor services make it difficult for workers to access adequate healthcare. Women, who make up the majority of the tea picking workforce, often work until late in their pregnancies to avoid lost wages, contributing to high rates of maternal mortality.
- While market prices for tea are increasing, these changes haven't reached the production level, where prices have seen little change over the past 30 years.

## Fair Trade Tea

- The Fair Trade Minimum Price sets a lower limit for the sale price of tea, providing a safeguard against unstable markets. In years when markets are strong, the sale price will increase to meet the market rate.
- Fair Trade standards limit the use of harmful chemicals and require that water is used sustainably.
- For workers living on-site with their families, primary education and daycare are provided for their children.
- The Fair Trade Premium supports community development projects, based on worker-identified needs. In India, workers at the Sewpur Tea Estate use premiums to improve healthcare, purchasing medicine for the tea estate hospital. In Uganda, workers at Mpanga Growers Tea Factory voted to use premium funds to build a well, providing the entire community with access to clean water, which they previously had to walk an hour to collect.

