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Ref. 6(29)/LC/Auction/Dust Tea/2024/893/1118

Dated 31.08.2026

Circular

Subject: Revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for implementation of 100% dust tea auction

Reference has been invited to the circular Ref. No.6(29)/LC/Auction/Dust Tea/2024 dated 22.04.2024 and 24.10.2024 wherein standard operating procedures (SOP) were outlined to ensure implementation of 100% dust tea auction initiative in compliance with the Gazette Notification No.S.O. 854(E) dated 23.02.2024. The committee, constituted to oversee implementation of dust tea auction, proposed certain amendments in the existing SOP to enhance operational effectiveness of the initiative. The proposals have been examined by Tea Board and accordingly revised SOP is enclosed herewith.

The revised SOP shall come into force with immediate effect superseding the earlier SOPs circulated for the purpose and shall remain valid upto the applicability period of the 100% dust tea auction or until further notice from the Board, whichever is earlier.

The content of this circular and its enclosure may be brought to the knowledge of all members of the respective Associations.

This issue with the approval of Competent Authority.


(Samarash Mondal)
Controller of Licensing

Distribution:

1.	All Tea Producer Association	For information and circulation among their members
2.	All Buyer Association	
3.	All Exporter Association	
4.	All Registered Auction Organaiser	
5.	Association of Tea Auctioneer (ATA)	
6.	All Warehouse Association	
7.	All Small Tea Grower Association	
8.	Committee Members	For information
9.	Executive Director, Guwahati	
10.	DDTD, Siliguri	
11.	System Analyst	For uploading on Board's website

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for implementation of 100% dust tea auction in respect of the dust teas produced in the manufacturing units located in the geographical area of States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal

1. All dust teas having **Factory Gate pass date** until 30th December 2026 shall come under the purview of mandatory auction as per Gazette Notification No.S.O.854(E) dated 23.02.2024 and Order issued by Board under Ref. No. 6(29)/LC/Auction/Dust Tea/2024/6674 dated 13th January, 2026.
2. One time out lots may be withdrawn and sold in private channel, if the sellers wish to.
3. Mandatory auction of dust teas shall be subjected to quality testing as per FSSAI norms and the same shall be facilitated by the brokers of each auction centre through an online platform under the aegis of Association of Tea Auctioneers (ATA).
4. Testing shall be conducted "mark-wise" by brokers, with selections made randomly through the online platform using AI and Algorithms. Each mark must be tested at least once within a six-month period. Retesting of any mark within this period will only be conducted after all marks have been tested at least once.
5. The lab after having received the List, should ensure visit to all auction warehouses immediately and draw two sets of samples of 200 gms of each invoice. Lab should timely share the soft copy of all the results of the entire list of samples with the Tea Board, FSSAI and Auction Organizers well before the date of Auction., who will inform all concerned. Control (second set) sample will be sealed and signed and left with warehouse keepers, which the seller can use for appeal purposes if required.
6. The samples shall be drawn (following procedures as mentioned in the FSSAI and Tea (Marketing) Control Order, 2003, as updated from time to time) and tested through a panel of Independent NABL accredited laboratories as per the updated list available in Tea Board's website. The samples are required to be analyzed for all parameters prescribed under the FSSAI Regulations for tea, including banned pesticides. The laboratories to be assigned for drawing and testing of samples should also be selected randomly through the online platform.
7. The details of marks to be tested should be intimated to the laboratory immediately upon arrival of the teas in the warehouse or at least 15 days before the date of sale to ensure issuance of test reports by the laboratories before auction of the specific tea. In case of ex-factory cataloguing (like Jorhat auction platform), the details of marks to be intimated to the laboratory after receipt of confirmation for offering from the sellers or at least 15 days before the date of sale.

8. In case, the laboratory fails to issue test reports prior to the date of sale, the said tea shall not be auctioned and necessary action against the laboratory should be taken by the ATA. Laboratories shall strictly adhere to the Tea Board's instructions regarding the collection and testing of samples. In the event of non-compliance, the Tea Board may not permit the concerned laboratory to collect or test auction tea samples.
9. Under no circumstances, the non-compliant teas should be routed back to the marketing channel through any manner which undermines efficacy and transparency of the public auction. The seller, the concerned broker and the auction organizer should ensure the same.
10. The Committee decided to permit sellers to take back teas to the factory in cases where the lots fail due to the exceeding MRLs of approved chemicals for relending with other teas.
11. Detection of any banned / off-label chemicals, pesticides and/or residues would be subject to destruction / denaturing. The failed tea lots may, as far as practicable, be destroyed within the warehouse premises to avoid unnecessary transportation and ensure better regulatory oversight.
12. Failed tea lots shall be destroyed or denatured within one month from the date of receipt of the test report, and / or if send for retesting one month from the date of retest report. The liability of ensuring timely destruction/denaturing shall be entrusted on concerned brokers/sellers and warehouse.
13. The cost of the testing shall be borne by the sellers and the same shall be proactively paid by the sellers to the respective party without fail. In case of any delay attributable to the seller, the Tea Board shall recover the cost incurred for destruction/denaturing from the seller's auction proceeds.
14. As per Paragraph 28(1) of the Tea (Marketing) Control Order, 2003, no manufacturer shall manufacture tea which does not conform to specifications laid down under Food Safety and Standards Rules, 2011, as amended from time to time or any other rules for the time being in force. Therefore, the teas failed to adhere to the parameters laid down by FSSAI shall be withdrawn from the auction before the date of sale under intimation to Tea Board by brokers. In cases where banned pesticides are detected, such teas shall be destroyed by Tea Board as per existing practice. For teas failing to meet FSSAI specifications other than due to banned pesticides, the sellers shall be permitted to undertake retesting, based on their request for the same. If the teas pass the retest, they may be allowed for sale through auction. If the teas fail the retest, the sellers shall

approach Tea Board for destruction of the contaminated teas, as per the existing practice. The details of all denatured tea lots shall be incorporated in the monthly returns (Form-E) submitted by the concerned manufactures.

15. The tea manufacturers shall mandatorily offer dust teas produced by them during the period mentioned above through auction. Similarly, all registered buyers, packers and exporters shall buy dust tea only from the auctions. Any violation both by the sellers and the buyers shall attract penalty provision as specified under the Tea (Marketing) Control Order, 2003 (TMCO, 2003).
16. At present only seven laboratories are engaged in testing dust tea samples under the auction system, despite the Tea Board having approximately forty empanelled laboratories. The Committee has proposed that the Tea Board shall undertake a comprehensive review of the list of empanelled laboratories and update the panel based on the required accreditation, infrastructure, and technical capabilities.
17. The Dust Tea Committee recommended that the awareness programmes on the judicious use of pesticides and compliance with Food Safety Standards should be initiated in West Bengal as no comparable improvement has been observed in the West Bengal region in respect of the incidence of Monocrotophos and Acephate residues in tea samples.
