

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for TEA MARK

Certification

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes the formal operational framework for implementing, certifying, monitoring, and enforcing the **‘TEA MARK’ Certification** process.

1. Purpose

TEA MARK functions as a voluntary National Certification Mark for Indian Teas issued under the authority of Tea Board India. It provides standard operational protocols for:

- Certification of eligible Teas and Tea Products.
- Quality Verification and Laboratory Testing.
- Permitting use of the official ‘TEA MARK’ Logo.
- Traceability and Digital Authentication of the product.
- Monitoring, Market Surveillance, and Enforcement.

Tea Mark establishes a unified national benchmark for quality, authenticity, sustainability, and traceability of Indian teas. Because it is voluntary, it does not restrict or alter the manufacture, sale, export, or distribution of tea under existing Indian statutes.

2. Legal Authority

This SOP derives its legal power and governance from the following regulatory provisions:

- The Tea Act, 1953- Section 10 relating to the regulatory and quality functions of Tea Board India.
- The Tea (Marketing) Control Order, 2003 (TMCO)
- The Trade Marks Act, 1999- Legal provisions governing *Certification Marks*
- The Regulations and Guidelines issued by Tea Board India from time to time.
- The ‘TEA MARK’ shall function as an official Certification Mark issued by Tea Board India

3. Scope & Eligible Entities

3.1 Product Category Coverage

The 'TEA MARK' Certification shall apply to the following Tea categories in retail packets:

- Orthodox Tea
- CTC Tea
- Green Tea
- Organic Tea
- Specialty and Single-Origin Teas
- Value-added Teas and Tea Products

3.2 Eligible Stakeholders

- Initial Phase: Restricted to Mini Tea Units and Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs) duly registered under the TMCO, 2003.
- Subsequent Phases: Expansion to tea estates, corporate factories, independent packers, and exporters with further Tea Board notifications.

4. Definitions

- **TEA MARK:** An official certification mark indicating authenticated compliance with prescribed quality, trace-origin, and production sustainability indices.
- **Applicant:** A registered Mini Tea Unit or Bought Leaf Factory
- **Certification Authority:** Tea Board India is responsible for issuance of Tea Mark certificate
- **Accredited Laboratory:** The Quality Control Laboratory (QCL) in Siliguri, or any NABL-accredited laboratory empanelled by Tea Board.
- **Traceability System:** The digital platform enabling verification of tea origin, production, processing and certification details.
- **Inspection Authority:** Officers authorised by Tea Board India to inspect and draw samples.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Tea Board India

- Define, notify, and update analytical benchmarks for TEA MARK.
- Review applications and issue or renew Certification.

- Host, manage, and secure the central digital traceability database.
- Conduct field inspections, sampling and retail market surveillance.
- Impose penalties or revoke access in cases of logo misuse or quality failure.

5.2 Accredited Laboratories

- Receive and analyze tea samples submitted by field office.
- Upload certified Test Reports through the portal.
- Maintain compliance with quality control protocols.

5.3 Certified Entities

- Ensure compliance with all TEA MARK standards.
- Maintenance of raw material records and ensure traceability supply chain.
- Display the logo strictly within the designated packaging guidelines.
- Facilitate inspections and sampling by Board's officials

6. End-to-End Certification Workflow

i. Online Application for Tea Mark certificate

Applicants shall submit application along with Valid TMCO Certificate, GST Registration, FSSAI Registration, product category specifics and QR code cards of the applicant or their member growers through the Tea Board Licensing Portal

ii. Preliminary Verification:

Tea Board shall verify the application completeness and eligibility. Incomplete applications shall be returned for correction.

iii. Issuance of Tea Mark Certificate:

Tea Board shall issue Tea Mark certificate for complete application and the applicant shall be able to download the Tea Mark certificate along with logo (for package printing) through the Licensing Portal.

iv. Online Application for Batch permission:

Applicants with valid Tea Mark certification shall submit application for batch permission along with the details of batch of teas to be offered for sale through the Tea Board Licensing Portal

v. Sampling of packed teas:

Authorized official shall inspect the unit and shall collect samples from the packed batch of teas which are to be offered for sale through the e-commerce platform (teamarketplace.in).

vi. Laboratory Testing:

Samples shall be sealed and dispatched to QCL, Siliguri or any NABL lab enlisted by the Board for testing of compliance with FSSAI standards for tea. On testing of samples, the laboratory shall upload the results through the online portal.

vii. Issuance of batch permission:

Upon receipt of laboratory reports, the Tea Board shall issue batchwise permission to the manufacturer to sell the packet teas with Tea Mark logo for the teas complying with the FSSAI standards. And the manufacturer shall use e-commerce platform (teamarketplace.in) for sale of such Tea Mark certified teas.

8. Validity, Renewal, Fee and Logo Usage

8.1 Term of Validity

A TEA MARK certificate valid for a fixed term of **three (3) years** from the date of issuance.

8.2 Renewal procedure

Certified stakeholder shall apply online for renewal at least 30 days before expiry of the certificate with prescribed renewal fee

8.3 Fee

- For new and renewal of Tea Mark Certificate is **Rs.1000/- + GST** for all stakeholders
- For each Batchwise permission is **Rs.5400/- + GST** for all stakeholders

8.4 Logo Application Rules

- Packets shall have Certificate Number or the system-generated traceability QR code printed beneath or adjacent to the mark.
- The mark may be applied across consumer packaging, export shipping consignments, and authorized corporate promotional materials. It cannot be altered in colour, font, or structural aspect ratio.

9. Traceability & Digital Integration

The certification process is a centralized and the digital platform establishes clear visibility on supply chain enabling the customer to check the product's processing history, manufacturing date, laboratory clearance token, and estate/factory origin.

10. Sanctions for Non-Compliance:

Unauthorized use of the TEA MARK logo is prohibited. If an entity fails a retail sample test or misuses the logo, Tea Board shall suspend/cancel TEA MARK Certification immediately.

11. SOP Revision Protocol:

This SOP undergoes formal committee review annually to integrate market dynamics, technological updates and modifications to FSSAI or international statutory limits.