

Problems and Prospects of Small Tea Growers in Himachal Pradesh: A Study of Kangra and Mandi Districts

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Abstract

Tea is an aromatic beverage prepared by pouring hot or boiling water over cured or fresh leaves of *camellia sinensis*, an evergreen shrub native to East Asia, which probably originated in the border hands of South Western China and Northern Myanmar. Tea has a stimulating effect in human primarily due to its caffeine content. Tea production in small holding has been growing worldwide. The contribution of small tea plantations has been growing significantly and currently shares a good proportion in the total tea production in the country. The small tea growers (STGs) are an alternative tea model of tea cultivation that fosters the growth of entrepreneurship and provides both direct and indirect employment. Emergence of small tea growers (STGs) has made the country self-reliant in the production of the beverage and to meet domestic requirements and exports. STGs have also helped local economic conditions and livelihood of the people in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The land holding of 96 percent of Small Tea Growers of Himachal Pradesh is less than 0.5 hectare. The average annual production of tea is around 10 lakh kg of which 4000kg tea is exported to the UK, Germany and France. Himachal Pradesh Small Tea Growers contribute 59.2 percent of the total production. The present study is an attempt to identify major problems and future prospects of small tea growers in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The study is descriptive and analytical in nature for which data have been collected through primary as well as secondary sources. The study found major problems faced by Small Tea Growers like, lack of subsidy, high cost of transportation, high labour rates, high labour turnover, lack of knowledge, high effect of climate changes, low quality of tea leaves etc. The study highlighted significant suggestions to overcome the major problems faced by Small Tea Growers and to improve the production of Small Tea Growers.

Keywords: Small Tea Growers, Average Annual Production, Tea Cultivation, Exports, Hectare.

Introduction

India is now the second largest producer of the beverage after China and the tea industry is one of the significant contributors in developing Indian economy. India annually produces nearly 1400 million kg of Tea out of which the contribution of the STGs is more than 50 per cent. Tea exports from India is \$ 800 million and attained a positive growth of 15 per cent in volume of around 220 million Kg in 2022. In March, 2023 the Kangra Tea in Himachal Pradesh has been granted the prestigious geographical indication registration by the European Union with the collaborated efforts of the Department of Agriculture and HIMCOSTE and has now become the second product of India to receive the GI of European Union. Kangra Tea was granted the Indian GI in the year 2005. Tea Board of India defines small tea growers as a person who has a tea cultivation of up to 25 acres of land. However in the current scenario, most the growers own less than 2 acres of land. The landholding of 96 percent small tea growers of Himachal Pradesh is less than 0.5 hectare. Small tea growers of Himachal Pradesh play an important role in the economic growth and production of tea. Small tea growers providing large number of direct and indirect employment for the people of Himachal Pradesh. The tea cultivation area of Small Tea Growers is situated at place of namely, Baijnath, Paprola, Langhu, Kandrul, Banuri, Rajpur, Sullah, Khlate, Mansimbal, Bhawarna, Dugni, Saloh, Nagri, Chachian, Gopalpur, Dharamshala, Bir, Chauntra, Jogindernagar (Dehlu), fall in Kangra and Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh. The present study is an attempt to identify and analyse the major problems and future prospects of Small Tea Growers of Kangra and Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh.

Review of Literature

Thakur Chahat and Singh Prakash (2016) carried out their study on topic “The tea from hills of Himachal Pradesh” with the objectives of exploring the Kangra tea for their health benefits. The study conclude that Kangra tea has been known for their distinct flavour, aromas and presence of bioactive compounds all around the world. This sector stays to be the key strength for economic growth in state. Since people are now more focused on switching their regular lifestyle

towards health side, hence the nutraceuticals play a very dominant role in this regard. Moreover, research must also focus on exploring the Kangra tea for their other health benefits too, hence helping everyone to understand this everyday beverage from nutraceutique point of view. In the coming decades, this industry will drive handsome revenue for state.

Sood Meghna (2016) carried out her study on topic “Development of Tea Industry in Himachal Pradesh” with the objective of development of a Tea in Himachal Pradesh. Considering the rich history of origin of Tea in Himachal Pradesh, effort by the state government should be initiated for regaining the glory as this sector continues to be the major force for economic growth in state. The tea industry should be modernized with the change in technique of plantation, improvement of encouragement to electronic tea auction and managerial excellence.

Dogra Dr. Reena (2018) carried out her study on topic “Problems and Prospects of Tea Industry in Himachal Pradesh” with the objectives of to analyse the growth of production, area, and yield of tea in Himachal Pradesh and to examine the problems faced by tea industry in Himachal Pradesh. The study found that the tea industry in Himachal Pradesh is striving for its survival for a long time now. There is continuing decline in production, area, and productivity of tea in the state. Most of the tea planters are small tea growers who are shying away from the tea business owing to low profitability in tea production. This has led to the abandonment of many tea estates in the state.

Sharma¹Sargik, Sachan ² Sharad, S³ Pavithiran, Singh⁴Jaskaran, Prasad Swin Subham ⁵ and Mukati⁶ Harit (2020) conducted study on Cultivation and Marketing Analysis of Kangra Tea with the objective of Cultivation and Marketing Analysis of Kangra Tea. The study found that the Kangra tea is an orthodox variety of tea and also has a lot of potential to uplift the economy of Himachal Pradesh and could generate the employment in the area. As it is a boon for Himachal Pradesh, Govt. has to play a key role in retrieval of the grandeur of the tea sector. There is need of Mechanization, improvement in planting material, an auction centre near the state and providing the subsidies to the tea estate owners and small farmers to encourage them. These steps can define the future of the tea industry in Kangra and help it to again conquer its position in the world map.

Kumar Virender¹ and Sharma Divya², Jamwal Neha³(2020) undertaken their study on “Economics of tea growing in Himachal Pradesh” and examined the comparative cost of tea production on small and large farms and other factors affecting tea production in Himachal Pradesh. The study revealed that, labour days, area under tea and experience in tea cultivation had positive and significant influence on production of tea leaf. The study also revealed that, the average size of farm was 2.05 ha and 55 ha on small tea farms and estates, respectively. The economic viability of tea production was higher in the estates as compared to that on the small farms due to mechanization of some operations and the economies of scale.

Need of the Study

The existing studies have been conducted on different aspects of tea industry in the state of Himachal Pradesh. However challenges of small tea growers in terms of land holding, variety and quality of tea, financial assistance and subsidy, dependency on tea cultivation, problems related to continuity of tea cultivation with many other future prospects for the growth of tea production unfold the scope for promotion and motivation of small tea growers in the state. Hence, the present study is significant in this context to identify and analyse the problems and prospects of Small Tea Growers in Kangra and Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the growth in production and area of Tea cultivation in Himachal Pradesh.
2. To identify and analyse the problems faced by Small Tea Growers of Kangra and Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh.
3. To explore future prospects of Small Tea Growers in Himachal Pradesh.

Research Methodology

Source of Data: The present study is based on primary as well as secondary source of information and data. Primary data have been collected through a well structure questionnaire circulated among the registered small tea growers of Kangra and Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh. Personal interviews were also conducted with the respondents. Whereas the

Secondary data have been collected through various published reports, journals, official website of Tea Board, and Tea Association of India, other published and unpublished sources of information.

Coverage: The present study has covered Kangra and Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh. The area where these Tea Gardens are located namely, Baijnath, Paprola, Langhu, Kandral, Banuri, Rajpur, Sullah, Khlate, Mansimbal, Bhawarna, Dugni, Saloh, Nagri, Chachian, Gopalpur, Dharamshala, Bir, Chauntra, Jogindernagar (Dehlu), fall in Kangra and Mandi districts of Himachal Pradesh. The present study is an attempt to identify major problems and future prospects of small tea growers of these two districts of Kangra and Mandi in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Population Size: The population size was 909 registered and active Small Tea Growers of Kangra and Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh which is registered under Tea Board.

Sampling Design and Sample Size: Random sampling has been used under the study. In the study area, there were 909 Small Tea Growers. Out of the 150 numbers of Small Tea Growers have been selected randomly under the study which was more than 15 per cent of the total registered and active small tea growers.

Statistical tools used: In this study statistical tool such as, Percentage Analysis, Pie Charts and Diagrams were used.

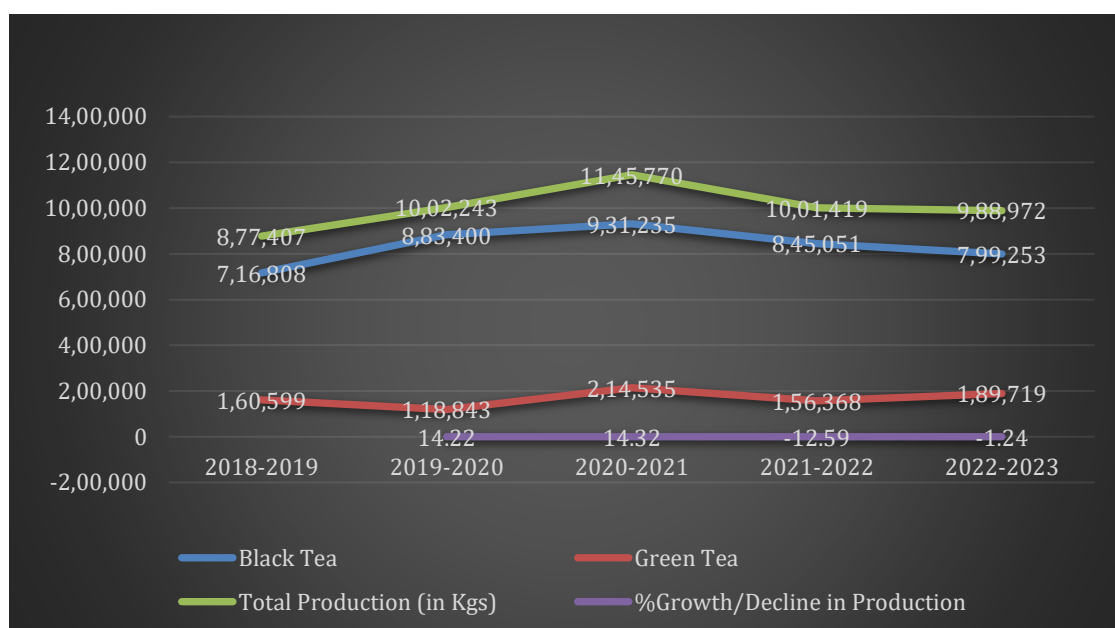
Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 Growth of Total Production of Tea in Himachal Pradesh

Year (Up-to March)	Black Tea	Green Tea	Total Production (in Kgs)	%Growth/Decline in Production
2018-2019	7,16,808	1,60,599	8,77,407	
2019-2020	8,83,400	1,18,843	10,02,243	14.22
2020-2021	9,31,235	2,14,535	11,45,770	14.32
2021-2022	8,45,051	1,56,368	10,01,419	(12.59)
2022-2023	7,99,253	1,89,719	9,88,972	(1.24)

Source: Concept Note on Tea Cultivation in Himachal Pradesh, March, 2023 by Technical Officer Tea, Chaye Bhawan, Palampur, Distt. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

Figure 1.1 Growth of Total Production of Tea in Himachal Pradesh



It is observed from the Table No. 1 and Figure 1.1 that the production of Black Tea and Green Tea is highest in the year of 2020-2021. In the period of 2021-2022 the production of Black Tea and Green Tea has been declined by 12.59% whereas in the period of 2022-2023 the production of tea is declined by 1.24% i.e. at low rate in comparison to the previous year decline in production of tea i.e. 2021-2022.

Table 2 Area Covered under Tea Cultivation

District	Zone	Area (in Hectare)
Kangra	Palampur	1414.82
	Baijnath	478.96
	Dharamshala	202.14
	Kangra	13.64
Total of Kangra District		2109.56
Mandi	Joginder Nager	198.80
	Karsog	00.40
Total of Mandi District		199.20

Source: Field Survey

Figure 2.1 Area under Tea Cultivation in Kangra and Mandi District

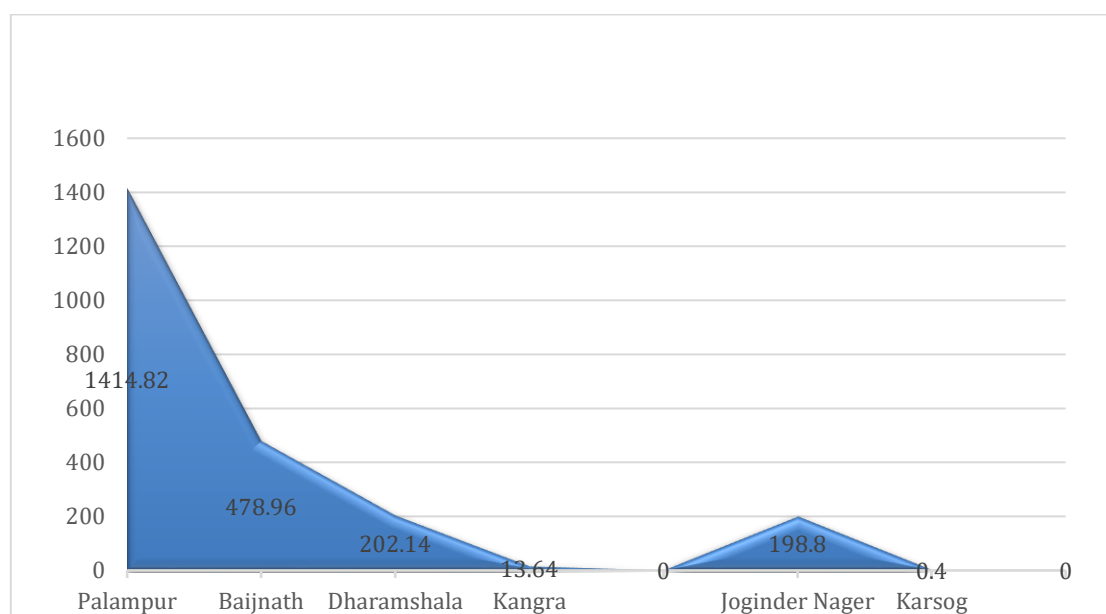


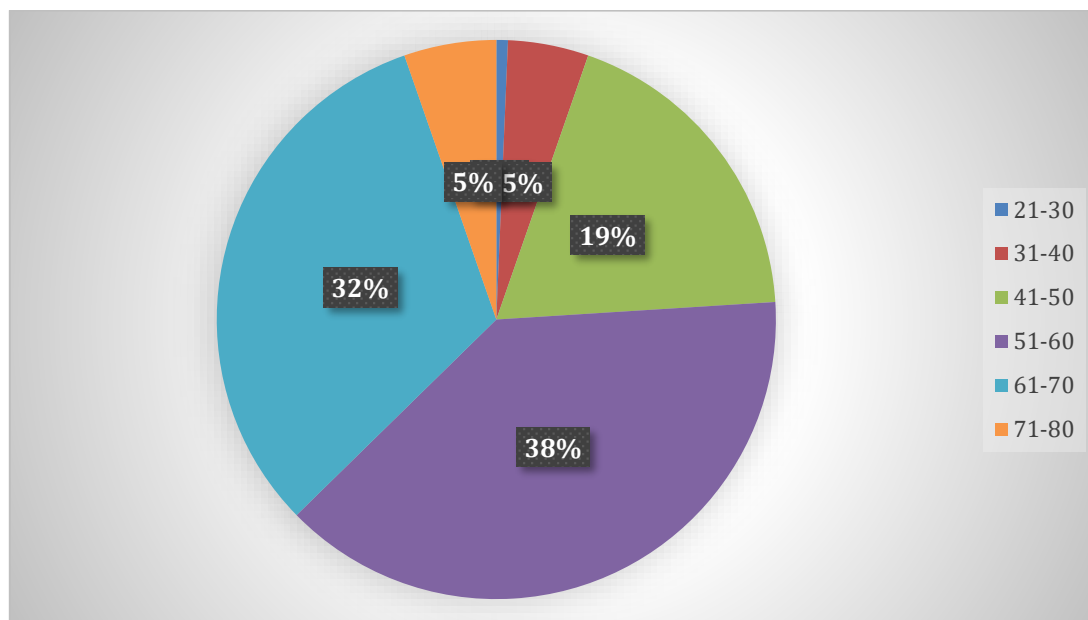
Table No. 2 and Figure 2.1 show that total area covered under Tea Cultivation in Kangra and Mandi district is 2308.76 hectare. The Large number of Areas under Tea Cultivation fall in zone of Palampur followed by Baijnath, Dharamshala and Jogindernagar in both the districts of Himachal Pradesh.

Table 3 Age Wise Distribution of Small Tea Growers

Age Group (Year)	No. of Small Tea Growers	Percentage
21-30	01	0.66
31-40	07	4.66
41-50	28	18.66
51-60	58	38.66
61-70	48	32
71-80	08	5.33
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 3.1 Age Wise Distribution of Small Tea Growers



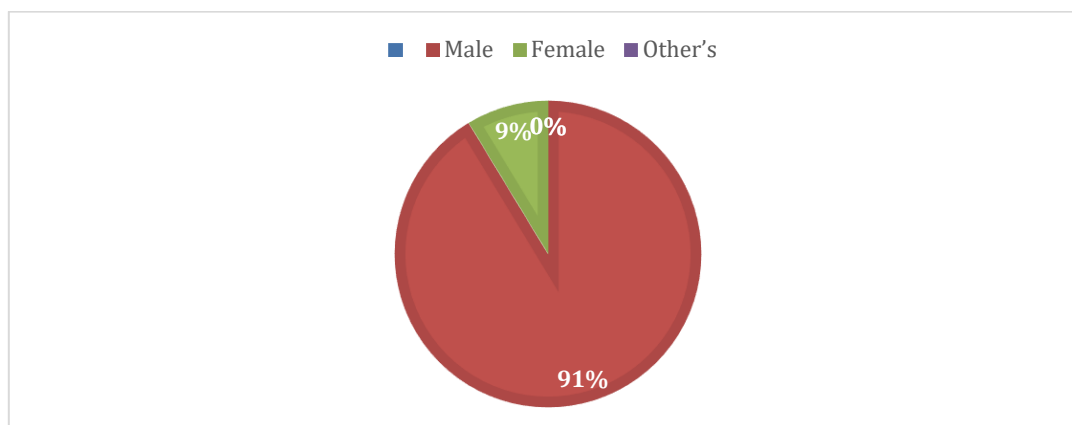
It is depicted from the Table 3 and Figure 3.1 that 38.66 percent of Small Tea Growers are under age group of 51-60 whereas 32 percent of Small Tea Growers fall under the age group of 61-70 followed by 18.66 percent in the age group of 41-50 years. There is only one Small Tea Grower is in age group of 21-30.

Table 4 Gender Wise Distribution of Small Tea Growers

Gender	No. of Small Tea Growers	% of Small Tea Growers
Male	137	91.33
Female	13	8.67
Other's	0	0
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 4.1 Gender Wise Distribution of Small Tea Growers



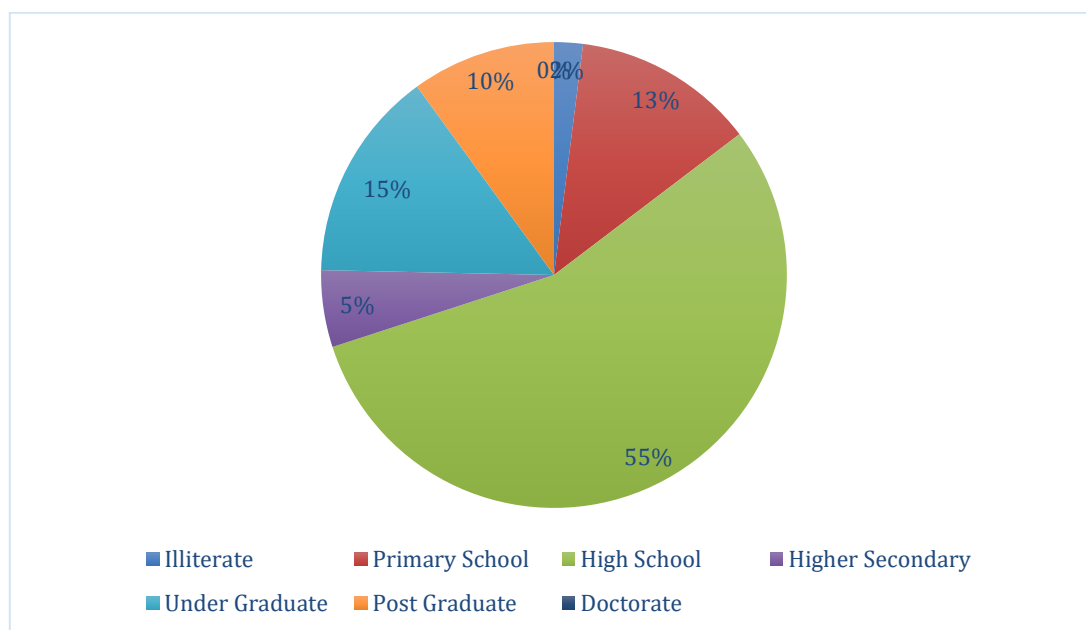
It is observed from the above Table 4 and Figure 4.1 that 91 per cent of small Tea Growers are Male and 9 per cent are female Small Tea Growers. It shows that the greatest number of Small Tea Growers are male who engaged in cultivation of tea.

Table 5 Educational Status Wise distribution of Small Tea Growers

Education Qualification	No. of Small Tea Growers	Percentage
Illiterate	03	2
Primary School	19	12.66
High School	83	55.34
Higher Secondary	08	5.33
Under Graduate	22	14.67
Post Graduate	15	10
Doctorate	0	0
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 5.1 Educational Status Wise Distribution of Small Tea Growers



The above Table 5 and Figure 5.1 show that, the greatest number Small Tea Growers i.e. 55 percent of total 150 Small Tea Growers reported to have passed High School education followed by under graduate i.e.14.67 percent. Only 2 percent reported them as illiterate.

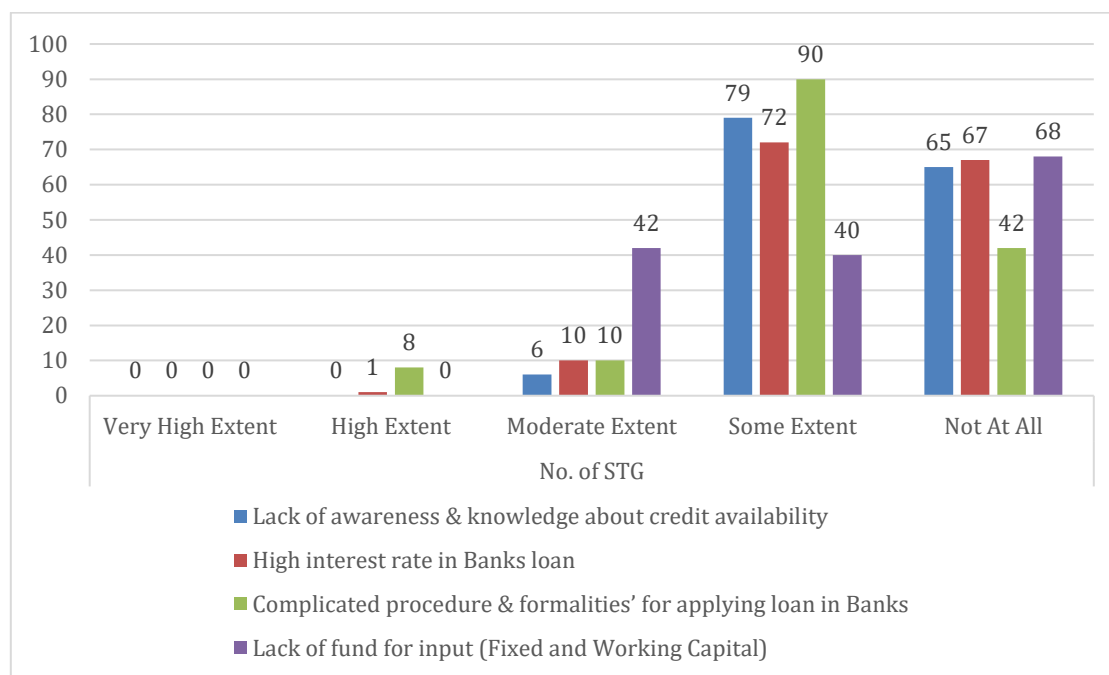
Table 6 Views of Respondents Regarding Problems Related to Finance

Description	Degree				
	Very High Extent	High Extent	Moderate Extent	Some Extent	Not At All
Lack of awareness & knowledge about credit availability	0	0	06	79	65
High interest rate in Banks loan	0	01	10	72	67

Complicated procedure & formalities' for applying loan in Banks	0	8	10	90	42
Lack of fund for input (Fixed and Working Capital)	0	0	42	40	68

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 6.1 Views of respondents regarding problems related to Finance



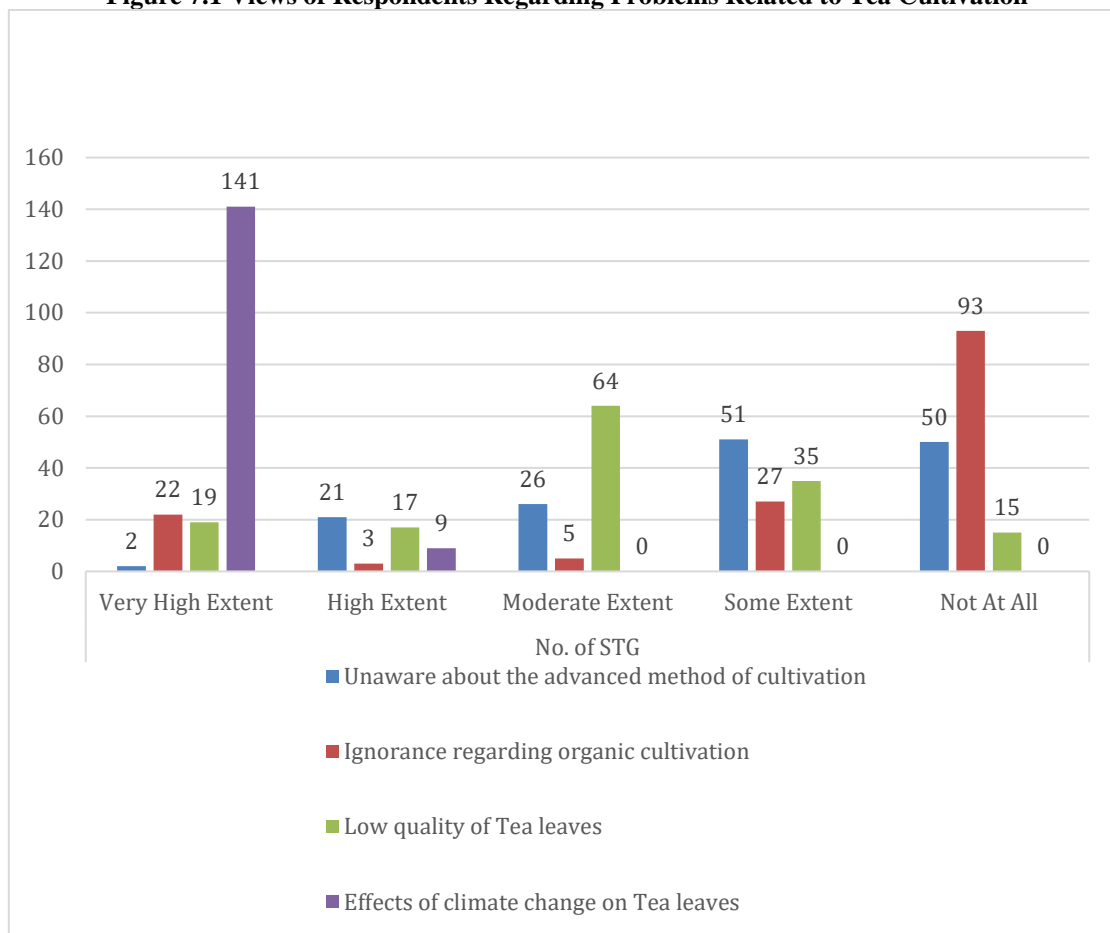
The Table No. 6 and Figure 6.1 indicate the lack of awareness and knowledge level of greatest number of Small Tea Growers to some extent about credit availability. Maximum number of Small Tea Growers have responded that Bank loans are available in low interest rate but they are not dependent on Bank loan since, they have used their own funds. 90 Small Tea Growers reported that to some extent, there is complicated procedure & formalities for applying Banks loan whereas 8 number of Small Tea Growers responded the degree of complicated procedure & formalities for applying loan in Banks to a greater extent. Majority number of Small Tea Growers reveals that they have sufficient fund (Fixed and working capital) for input.

Table 7 Views of Respondents Regarding Problems Related to Tea Cultivation

Description	Degree				
	Very High Extent	High Extent	Moderate Extent	Some Extent	Not At All
Unaware about the advanced method of cultivation	02	21	26	51	50
Ignorance regarding organic cultivation	22	03	05	27	93
Low quality of Tea leaves	19	17	64	35	15
Effects of climate change on Tea leaves	141	09	0	0	0

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 7.1 Views of Respondents Regarding Problems Related to Tea Cultivation



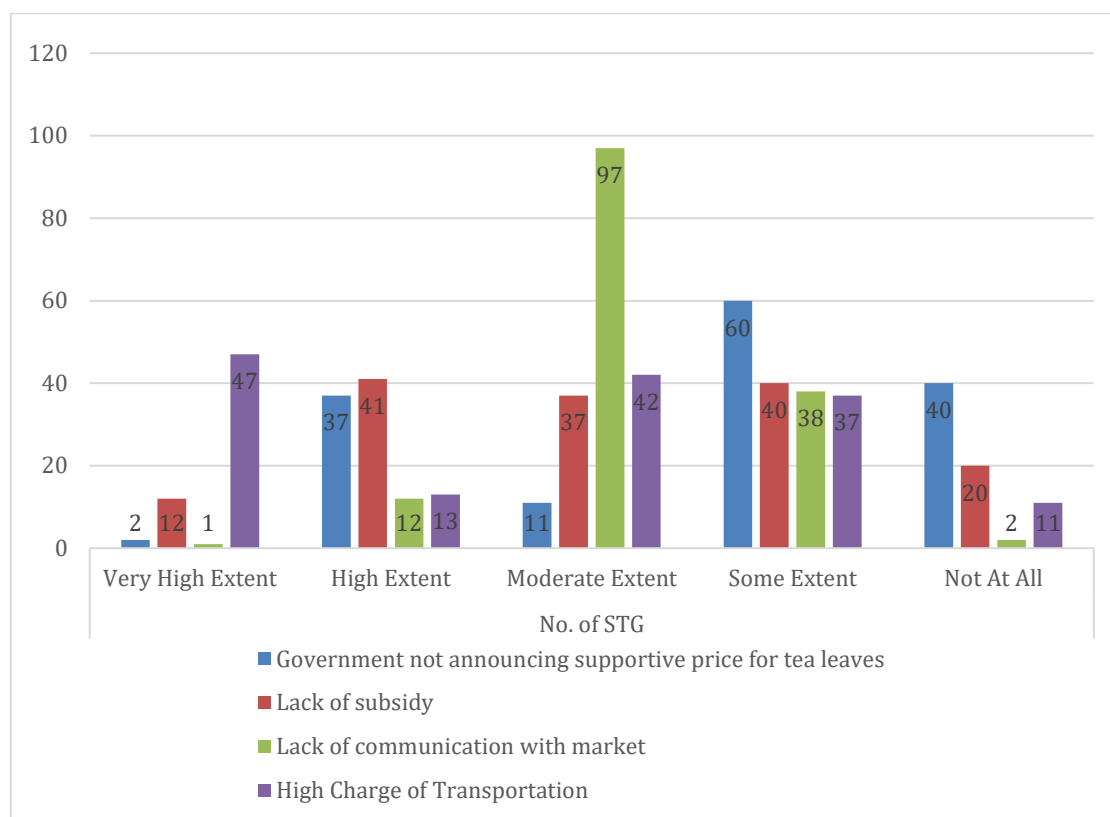
The above Table No. 7 and figure 7.1 reveals the degree of opinion related to tea cultivation problems of small tea growers in Himachal Pradesh. It indicates that, the majority number of Small Tea Growers are aware about advanced method of cultivation as well as organic tea cultivation. The study reported effect of climate change on tea leaves to a significant level.

Table 8 Views of Respondents Regarding Problems Related to Marketing of Tea

Description	Degree				
	Very High Extent	High Extent	Moderate Extent	Some Extent	Not At All
Government not announcing supportive price for tea leaves	02	37	11	60	40
Lack of subsidy	12	41	37	40	20
Lack of communication with market	01	12	97	38	02
High Cost of Transportation	47	13	42	37	11

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 8.1 Views of Respondents Regarding Problems Related to Marketing



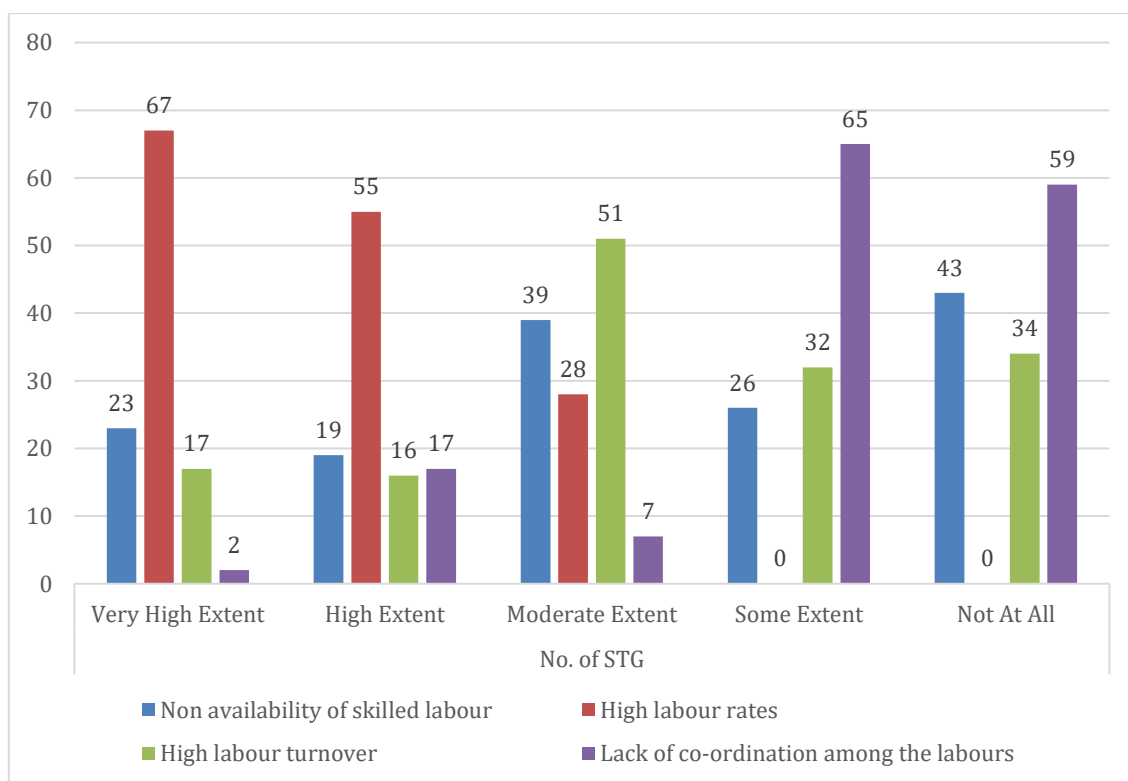
It is depicted from the above Table No. 8 and Figure 8.1 that 60 number of Small Tea Growers responded that government has not announced supportive price for tea leaves to some extent. Whereas majority number of Small Tea Growers i.e. 41 reported lack of subsidy to a high extent from tea board. Majority number of Small Tea Growers reveals that there is lack of their communication with market to a moderate extent. Transportation cost has been reported to a very high extent by majority of respondents.

Table 9 Views of Respondents Regarding Problems Related to Labour for Tea Cultivation

Description	Degree				
	Very High Extent	High Extent	Moderate Extent	Some Extent	Not At All
Non availability of skilled labour	23	19	39	26	43
High labour rates	67	55	28	0	0
High labour turnover	17	16	51	32	34
Lack of co-ordination among the labourers	02	17	07	65	59

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 9.1 Views of Respondents Regarding Problems Related to Labour



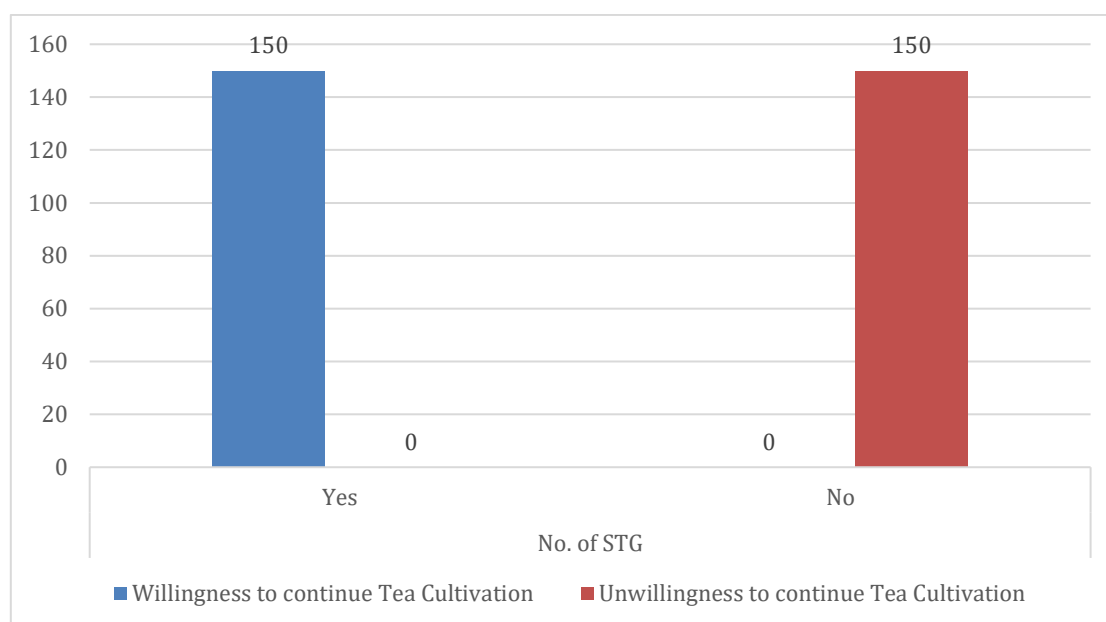
The above Table No 9 and Figure 9.1 show the shortage of skilled labour, better coordination among labourers, high labour rates, whereas the labour turnover has been reported to a moderate extent by majority respondents under the study.

Table 10 Willingness and Experience of Respondents to Continue Tea Cultivation in Future

Description	No. of Small Tea Growers	
	Yes	No
Willingness to continue Tea Cultivation	150	0
Unwillingness to continue Tea Cultivation	0	150
Experience in Tea Cultivation (in Years)	2 to 60 Years	

Source: Field Survey (Collected through Questionnaire)

Figure 10.1 Willingness to Continue Tea Cultivation in Future



It is depicted from the Table 10 and Figure 10.1 that all the Small Tea Growers selected under study shown their willingness to continue tea cultivation in future for many factors viz. dependency, livelihood, land utilization, climatic conditions and their long past experiences and practices etc.

Findings and Conclusions

The study found highest production of Black Tea and Green Tea in the year 2020-2021. During the period of 2021-2022 the production of Black Tea and Green Tea has been declined by 12.59 percent due to covid-19 pandemic. Whereas in the year 2022-2023 the production of tea declined by 1.24 percent at low rate as compared to its decline in previous years under the study. The large number of areas under tea cultivation situated in zone of Palampur followed by Baijnath, Dharamshala and Jogindernagar. 38 percent of Small Tea Growers fall under the age group of 51-60 years whereas 32 percent of Small Tea Growers reported their age between 61-70 years. The greatest number of Small Tea Growers have awareness & knowledge about credit availability and other financial assistance for the cultivation of tea in Himachal Pradesh. The maximum number of Small Tea Growers have responded availability of bank loans at low rate of interest however no dependency on loans and utilisation of own funds for tea cultivation have been reported by the respondents under study.

Further, the study found that the majority number of Small Tea Growers reported quality of tea leaves to a moderate extent and effects of climate change on tea leaves to a very high extent. Lack of subsidy from Tea Board, lack of communication with market, less amount of subsidy provided by the Tea Board, high cost of transportation, high labour rates found major consideration under the study.

Hence the study concludes that, the tea production in small holding has been growing worldwide. The contribution of small tea plantations has been growing significantly and currently shares a good proportion in the total tea production of Himachal Pradesh. The Small Tea Growers (STGs) are an alternative tea model of tea cultivation that provides both direct and indirect employment. The study further concludes that, the major problems faced by Small Tea Growers viz. lack of subsidy, high charge of transportation, high labour rates, high labour turnover, level of knowledge and awareness regarding credit and finance benefits, high effect of climate changes, low quality of tea leaves etc are the significant factors for the promotion and growth of tea cultivation in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The Small Tea Growers are willing to continue their tea cultivation in future due to their full dependence on tea cultivation, lack of knowledge on

cultivation of other crops, protecting the land from becoming barren, preserving the land of their ancestors and their own long past experiences and practices of tea cultivation.

Suggestions

Finally, the study suggested that proper training and awareness programmes for Small Tea Growers regarding Tea Cultivation, availability of proper market or place for packaging and selling facilities of final tea product. Most of Small Tea Growers depend upon single variety of tea plants hence government and tea board may provide variety of tea plants to Small Tea Growers on minimum price. There should be minimum supporting price for final tea product of Small Tea Growers while they are selling their final tea product in market or tea factories. The state government and tea board need to take initiative for the promotion of tea of Small Tea Growers in local and outside markets. Further the study recommends that the Government should allow the supply and availability of tea of Small Tea Growers in fair price shops which would help Small Tea Growers encouraging & motivating to continue their tea cultivation in future. There is need to frame government policies regarding promotion of tea tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The effects of climate change on tea leaves are very high. The tea production is affected by drought, heavy rains, boost of pests and diseases and soil degradation. An appropriate plan for climate change adaption and mitigation strategies should be developed for sustainable development of tea industry of Himachal Pradesh. The tea boards should be provided subsidy for purchasing equipment required for tea cultivation. There should be proper planning, transparency and decision making which can lead to minimise overall cost of tea transportation e.g., selecting well optimised routes. The tea boards should have a subsidy scheme to overcome the problems of labour shortage like, non-availability of skilled labour, high labour turnover, and also to include Small Tea Growers under the preview of the board's schemes to boost tea production in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

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