

Tea: The World's Green Gold



The tea plant is trimmed (or pruned) every five years to enhance its branch spread and keep it short as a bush that makes it commercially viable to obtain a greater harvest of buds necessary for tea production. If allowed to grow without interruption, it would grow to a height of 60 to 85 feet as a tree.

In good weather conditions, bright morning sunshine and fair evening rain, the tea bush produces fresh harvesting buds every seven to eight days. A good quality harvest is just two leaves and a bud, but soft succulent third leaves too can be harvested for production in good weather conditions.

Approximately four and a half kilos (4.65 kg) of green leaf tea makes just one kilo of made black tea. An amazingly staggering quantity of over 1.5 billion kilos (1,511,250,000 kilos) of green leaf is harvested each year in Sri Lanka to produce 325 million kilos of made tea.

The Tea Industry of Sri Lanka generates over two million job opportunities in the three sectors of Plantations, Broking and Exports. The Industry contributes over USD 1.5 billion to the national economy with over 95 percent of the inputs being generated within the country.

Tea is produced in over 690 tea factories spread around the seven different agro-climatic regions of Nuwara-Eliya, Udapussellawa, Dimbula, Uva, Kandy, Sabaragamuwa and Ruhuna, making employment generation a healthy spread.

Tea produced in each factory is sold under its factory name, referred to as the Estate Mark, which gives each tea its own identity. A factory produces many grades of tea identified by its leaf (particle) size - the largest being Orange Pekoe (OP), and the smallest powdery size referred to as Dust.

Anslem Perera (Mlesna Tea Centres)