



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT

GREEN LEAF QUALITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE KENYA TEA INDUSTRY

1.0 Handling pre-harvested and post-harvested green leaf from farm to factory

1.1 Pre- harvesting practices

- a) Pre - harvesting practices include: nursery management, bringing bushes to bearing, pruning, tipping, fertilizer application, soil management, weed control, pest & disease management, infilling and replanting;
- b) Pre-harvest practices shall be as per Tea Research Foundation of Kenya (TRFK) Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) guidelines provided for both Mechanical Tea Harvesting and Hand Plucking tea;
- c) A tea factory shall ensure that optimal ratio of tea extension officers to grower is maintained at 1:1500 to ensure that the growers receive adequate support and guidance from the extension staff;
- d) A grower intending to establish a new farm shall seek guidelines on the best practices from the factory where he/she intend to register;
A factory shall develop standard operating procedures and maintain records of pre-harvesting practices.

1.1.1 Fertilizer application

- a) Fertilizer application shall be done in accordance with the recommended guidelines by tea cultivation manual for good agricultural practices-TRFK;
- b) A documented policy on fertilizer application shall be maintained and implemented by the tea factories for optimizing growth, yields and quality of tea leaf.

1.1.2 Weed Management

- a) Cultural or biological methods of weed control shall be applied on tea farms to ensure healthy tea plants and higher yields;
- b) A grower shall put in place measures to prevent drifting, leaching or contamination of tea bushes with chemical used in adjacent farms.

1.1.3 Pest & Disease management

- a) A grower shall apply cultural and biological methods in control of tea pest and diseases;
- b) Pests and diseases shall be controlled in accordance with Tea Grower's Handbook-TRFK.

1.1.4 Infilling and replanting

A tea grower or factory shall establish a tea infilling and replanting program for replacement of moribund tea bushes as stipulated in Tea Grower's Handbook-TRFK.

1.1.5 Pruning cycles

- a) A tea grower or factory shall develop and implement a pruning program in accordance with Tea Grower's Handbook-TRFK;
- b) Pruning records shall be maintained for reference purposes;
- c) A tea factory shall issue an advisory to its growers on the appropriate time to prune;
- d) A factory shall ensure that a training program for pruning is implemented and appropriate records are maintained.

1.2 Harvesting and post - harvesting practices

- a) Harvesting and Post-harvesting practices includes: hand plucking, machine harvesting, leaf handling & preservation, weighing, transportation and receiving at factory;
- b) Harvesting or plucking of tea shall be done in accordance with the requirements under the Tea Growers Handbook and Production and Processing of tea – Code of practice KS EAS 1175;
- c) Post –harvest handling of leaf shall be done in a manner that ensures proper aeration and prevents scorching, leaf breakage, damage and temperature built up;
- d) A tea factory shall develop standard operating procedures and maintain appropriate records.

1.2.1 Hand Plucking guidelines

- a) Hand plucking shall be done in a manner that is hygienic and maintain the quality and integrity of the leaf.
- b) A factory shall train tea pluckers on proper plucking practices to avoid over-handling of green leaf by holding too much leaf in their hands;
- c) A tea plucker shall use a standard harvesting basket that is rigid and perforated;
- d) The harvesting baskets shall not be loaded with more than 10 kgs of leaf to prevent compression and allow free air circulation;

1.2.2 Mechanical Tea harvesting

- a) Mechanical tea harvesting involves use of machines, which include but are not limited to hand-held, motorized or self-propelled machine;
- b) Mechanical tea harvesting shall be done in a manner that is hygienic and maintain the quality and integrity of the leaf;
Machine harvesting shall ensure proper aeration, prevent damage and contamination of the leaf.

1.2.3 Green leaf collection

- a) A tea grower shall ensure harvested green leaf is preserved in a shaded area prior to transportation;

- b) A tea factory shall ensure that green leaf is collected from a leaf collection or buying center where tea growers supply their green leaf;
- c) Harvested leaf shall be transported to a tea collection or buying Centre within four (4) hours after plucking to maintain freshness and prevent fermentation
- d) It is recommended that leaf collection centres should be situated at least 250 meters apart and no factories shall share a collection centre;
- e) Every tea buying centre shall be labelled with the name of centre and factory to which it is affiliated.

1.2.4 Transportation of green leaf from collection Centre to factory

- a) The harvested leaf shall be transported from the tea collection or buying Centre to the factory within (2) hours to prevent deterioration of quality.
- b) Leaf handling during transportation shall be done in a manner that prevents contamination, compression, breakage or damage and ensures that the leaf is well aerated.
- c) Where carriers or conveyor systems are used to transport leaf from the farm to the factory, the transporter shall ensure that the integrity and quality of the leaf is preserved.
- d) The design of green leaf bags shall be in accordance to Knitted bags (100% polyethylene) for green tea leaf – Specification KS 2780 Standard and the maximum leaf to be loaded in the bag should not exceed 12kilos.

1.2.5 Green leaf transportation vehicles turnaround time

- a) A tea factory shall document a schedule for collection of green leaf to ensure that turnaround time does not exceed three (3) hours.
- b) A tea factory shall ensure that the leaf collection schedule is aligned to specific routes and tea buying or leaf collection centres.

1.2.6 Plucking and Harvesting cycles

- a) A tea factory shall establish, communicate and implement a harvesting/plucking plan;
- b) Plucking cycles for hand plucked tea shall be 7-10 days, whilst for mechanical tea harvesting it is recommended that a harvesting cycle of between 10-21 days;
- c) A tea grower or factory shall ensure that a proper plucking or harvesting table is maintained.

2.0 Green leaf quality standard for Tea Producers in Kenya

- a) A tea grower shall produce and supply good quality leaf to the factory for processing;

- b) A tea factory shall ensure good quality leaf is received for processing;
- c) For hand plucked leaf, good quality leaf shall constitute: **a bud, 1Leaf and a bud, 2Leaves and a bud**, and **soft bhanji** and shall constitute not less than 65% by weighment method;
- d) For mechanically harvested leaf, good quality leaf shall constitute: **a bud,1Leaf and a bud, 2Leaves and a bud, soft bhanji** and **soft loose leaf** and shall constitute not less than 65% by weighment method;
- e) Leaf quality shall be determined by weight from a composite sample picked randomly from the leaf delivery carrier;
- f) A tea factory shall conduct growers' education on leaf quality standards on continuous basis;
- g) A tea factory shall maintain records on the quality of green leaf received at the factory;
- h) A tea factory shall submit monthly status reports on green leaf quality to TBK by the 10th day of the following month.

3.0 Outturn – Conversion of Green leaf to Made Tea

The conversion of green leaf to made tea depends on the weather conditions. The outturn during the wet seasons due to rains to dry seasons shall range between 20% to 24% whereas weighing scales used to weigh the green leaf are accurately calibrated and have not been manipulated.

4.0. Implementation plan for green leaf quality Standard

- a) Sensitization forums of stakeholders;
- b) Adoption of the guidelines by the tea factory shall be done immediately the tea regulations have been published & gazette by 31st December 2024;
- c) Factories will come up with an implementation plan;
- d) factories to submit returns on implementation on the guidelines using a prescribed format;
- e) A multi-stakeholder technical committee shall be constituted by TBK to oversee implementation and monitor the green leaf quality guidelines.

5.0. Green leaf sourcing practices

- a) A tea factory shall be sourcing green leaf as per the terms and condition of the tea manufacturing license issued by Tea Board of Kenya;
- b) A tea factory shall source green leaf within a radius of 50km from the location of the factory;
- c) A tea factory shall establish a grower recruitment policy and exercise diligence when recruiting new growers;
- d) A tea grower shall be registered with one factory to which they shall deliver green leaf for processing;

- e) A tea grower who wishes to transfer to another factory shall give a minimum of one-month notice to the factory to which they are registered;
- f) A tea factory shall ensure that a tea grower who transfer from another factory to which they are registered to deliver leaf provides proof that he/she has been officially released from the previous factory;
- g) A tea grower shall not exceed the productivity limit stipulated in the Greenleaf supply agreement unless where supply of excess leaf is justified, e.g. from lease of bushes;
- h) A tea factory shall collect green leaf from only designated tea collection or buying centres that meet factory's set guidelines;
- i) A factory shall not collect leaf from the roadside or other non-designated points or areas;