INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON TEA

INTERSESSIONAL MEETING

Report of the Working Group on Tea Trade and Quality[[1]](#footnote-1)

**CHAIR: Sri Lanka**

**CO-CHAIRS: Kenya, India, China and Indonesia**

**Responses received from:**

Argentina

India

Japan

Malawi

Sri Lanka

**PROGRESS SINCE THE INITIAL PROPOSAL FOR THE WORKING GROUP IN 2003:**

* 2003 – Initial proposal mooted at the 15th Session in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
* 2005 – Proposal ratified at the 16th Session in Bali, Indonesia.
* 2006 – Agenda paper submitted at the 17th Session in Nairobi, Kenya.
* 2008 – Formation of the Working Group proposed at the 18th Session in Hangzhou, China.
* 2009 – Sri Lanka appointed as Chair, and India, Kenya, China and Indonesia selected as Co-chairs at Working Groups meeting in Rome, Italy.
* 2010 – Progress reported by Sri Lanka at the 19th Session in New Delhi, India.
* 2011 – Road map proposed by Sri Lanka at the intersessional meeting in Mombasa, Kenya.
* 2012 – Actions and resolutions adopted at the 20th Session in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
* 2012 – Actions and resolutions adopted at the intersessional meeting in Washington, DC, USA, where Argentina and the UK were co-opted to the Committee.
* 2014 – Actions and resolutions adopted at the intersessional meeting in Rome, Italy.
* 2014 – Actions and resolutions adopted at the 21st Session in Bandung, Indonesia.
* 2015 – Actions and resolutions adopted at the intersessional meeting in Milan, Italy.
* 2016 – Actions and resolutions adopted at the 22nd Session in Naivasha, Kenya.

**STATUS OF ADOPTION OR IMPLEMENTATION OF ISO 3720 MINIMUM QUALITY STANDARD**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Status** | | **Local Body** |
| Sri Lanka | Fully Implemented | | ISO 3720 / SLS 135/ 1979 |
| India | Fully Implemented | | ISO 3720/ PFA/ FSSAI |
| Kenya | Fully Implemented | | ISO 3720 / KS65 - 2009 |
| Vietnam | Fully Implemented | | ISO 3720/ Vietnamese  Standard |
| Bangladesh | Fully Implemented | | ISO 3720/ BDSS |
| Rwanda | Fully Implemented | | ISO 3720 |
| Argentina | Fully Implemented | | CAA slight variation to ISO 3720 (Crude fiber: 20% in the CAA and 16.5% Water extract: 28% in CAA and 32%) |
| Tanzania | Implementation on-going | | ISO 3720/ TZS 352 |
| Uganda | Implementation on-going | | ISO 3720 / US 292:2002 |
| Malawi | Fully Implemented | | ISO 3720 |
| China | Partially Implemented | | * ISO3720-2011 * GB/T 13738.1-2008 Black Tea-Part 1 Broken Black Tea * GB/T 13738.2-2008 Black Tea-Part 2 Congou Black Tea (Water extract and total ash are not equivalently compliant with ISO 3720\*1986) * GB/T 13738.3-2008 Black Tea-Part 3 Souchong Black Tea (Water extract and total ash content are lower than ISO 3720) |
| China -Part 1 and 2 are currently being revised by the National Technical Committee 339 on Tea of Standardization Administration China (SAC/TC339) | | | |
| Japan | | In the process of collecting data. Low black tea production and most of the black tea produced comply with ISO 3720 | |  |
| Indonesia | | Awaiting Response | |
| Burundi | | Awaiting Response | |
| Nigeria | | Awaiting Response | |
| Nepal | | Awaiting Response | |
| Zimbabwe | | Awaiting Response | |

**ACTION PLANS AND RESOLUTIONS**

1. Introduction of a self-regulating code of conduct to continue compliance of ISO 3720 minimum quality standard.
2. Collation of all existing literature on additional quality benefits on tea if conforming to ISO 3720 or above.
3. Formulation of a road-map to undertake further research on ISO 3720 compliant vis-a-vis non-compliant teas on the connectivity to quality and food safety parameters (establish a business model for higher safety levels).
4. A closer synergy between the Working Group on Tea Trade and Quality and ISO for a combined collation of information and data.
5. Proposal to arrange a workshop among ISO 3720 compliant and non-compliant member countries.
6. Initiate a pragmatic program to prevail upon the governments of consumer countries, tea trade and consumers of importing countries to encourage buying teas complying with ISO 3720 parameters or above in view of better quality and safety.
7. Identifying donor funding/technical assistance for countries requiring support in the implementation of ISO 3720 minimum quality standard.
8. Given the significant growth in the production and demand from green tea globally, the WG recognized the need to establish a minimum quality standard and proposed the introduction of a self- regulating code of conduct conforming to ISO 11287. The ISO Technical Committee confirmed that standards had already been published and was working on improving the analytical methodology.
9. The WG recognized the need for a global sustainability standard and emphasized that the implementation of ISO 3720 could later include other parameters on food safety in consultation with consuming countries.
10. In suggesting the addition of a promotional element, members agreed to focus on the health benefits of tea consumption and conduct regular promotional activities.
11. Agreed to have an International Tea Day as recommended at the inter-sessional meeting in October 2015. India had already submitted the proposal to its Ministry of Commerce and Industry which would be formally submitted to the FAO Council.

**PROGRESS MADE ON ACTION PLANS AND RESOLUTIONS**

**Introduction of a Self-regulating Code of Conduct to Continue Compliance of ISO 3720 Minimum Quality Standard**

* **Sri Lanka** – The compliance of ISO 3720 is fully active from factory gate to point of export governed by Tea Control Act and the quality assurance is provided by Sri Lanka Tea Board.
* **Argentina** – Governed by Argentine Food Code (CAA) is in compliance with ISO 3720 but differing in crude fiber (20 percent against 16.5 percent) and lack of definition for total polyphenols (exceeds 9 percent of total polyphenols, water extract 28 percent against 32 percent). Proposes discussion at national level and need for revision and updating of the CAA.
* **India** – A self-regulating code of conduct has already been introduced since India has been long following ISO 3720 and Tea Board of India’s Acts and Regulations (Distribution and Export Control Order, 2005, Tea Marketing Control Order, 2005). Tea Research Institutes in India have been working on different biochemical quality parameters for the improvement of quality of Indian tea in order to maintain international standards (ISO 3720) on a continuous basis.
* **Kenya** – Reviewed its Tea Quality Standard KS: 65:2009 to conform to ISO 3720 and also in the process of reviewing the Code of Practice for Tea Industry to incorporate changes in Sustainability, Safety and Quality requirements 2128:2015.
* **Malawi** – has a code of practice for ISO 3720 and Tea Research Foundation of Central Africa (TRFCA) plays a key role in ensuring compliance by all stakeholders in the tea industry. Every year Tea Research Foundation of Central Africa collects made tea samples from every tea factory in Malawi and send for analysis at Polucon Laboratory Services Kenya Ltd.
* **Japan** – Low Black Tea production and most of black tea is consumed in the domestic market. There is no move to introduce ISO 3720 as the self-regulating code and it was stated that most of Japanese black tea complies with ISO 3720.
* **China** – Governed by GB/T 13738.1-2008,GB/T 13738.2-2008 and GB/T 13738.3-2012 in general compliance with ISO 3720.

***Way forward***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*Non- complaint member countries will share data on their standards with the other member countries and with the ISO technical committee.*

*To be discussed further.*

**Collation of all existing literature on additional quality benefits on tea if conforming to ISO 3720 or above**

* **Sri Lanka** – Tea Research Institute has already provided published scientific literature and submitted to members.
* **Argentina** – Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA), Estación Experimental Cerro and Universidad Nacional de Misiones, Argentina have carried out some studies on evaluation of catechins, epigallocatechin(EGCG), EGC, EC in tea culitvars in Argentina, Total polyphenol content and antioxident capacity of commercially available Camelia sinensis in Argentina.
* **India** – Correlation of different quality parameters in maintaining the quality of tea is important, indicating requirement of detailed study to be undertaken by the participating countries/institutes. Tea Research Institute (TRI) has undertaken studies and the level of polyphenols decreased while crude fiber content increased with increase in coarse leaf percentage.

Some published scientific literature on fermentation, theaflavin and thearubigin are submitted for consideration. E.g: “Spatial variability of theaflavins and thearubigins fractions and their impact on black tea quality”, “Detection of theaflavins in black tea using a molecular imprinted polyuacrylamide – graphite nanocomposite electrode” *Sensors and Actuators*.

* **Kenya** – Publications available on: Owuor Philip Scholars citation Tea and Quality on Google ++.
* **Japan** – There is no literature available.
* **Malawi** – TRFCA started some work on quantifying the health benefit properties of its cultivars as shown in the attached report. The work has tentatively been suspended due to limited funding. TRFCA is looking for funding so as to continue this important work.
* **China** – Some research has been carried out but all the papers are in Chinese language.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasha, Kenya:*

*Literatures have been received from India and Sri Lanka. Responses from other members are lukewarm. Collated scientific literatures from member countries will be categorized and compiled. Some scientific literature have now been received from Argentina and Malawi. To be discussed further.*

**Formulation of a Road-Map to undertake further research on ISO 3720 compliant vis-à-vis non-compliant teas on the connectivity to quality and food safety parameters (establish a business model for higher safety levels)**

* **Sri Lanka** –Recommends establishing a scientific task force. Sri Lanka Tea Board has introduced GMP certification for tea manufacturing factories and tea warehouses to ensure food safety parameters are maintained.
* **Argentina** –Training programmes are conducted aiming at compliance with ISO 3720 and GMP, food safety, including microbiology and MRLs, environment care and social responsibility.
* **India** – Proposes further research on the following areas:
* Standardization of methodology for the estimation of theaflavin and thearubigins. More data generation is proposed to be undertaken under ISO 3720.
* Study on L theanine and its possible correlation with health beneficial properties of tea, needs to be continued.
* It is proposed to formulate a study on the correlation of different parameters responsible for maintaining the optimum quality of tea by different tea research institutes of tea producing countries. The above studies may be undertaken as an international coordinated project involving participating countries/research institutes.
* **Kenya** –All Tea Research Institutions and Universities will be requested to submit reports on the topic.
* **Japan** –ISO 3720 would be only a requirement to regulate minimum quality standard for black tea. Proposes further discussions about addition of food safety parameters to ISO 3720 at the working group.
* **Malawi** – Recommends scientific literature on positive quality attributes of ISO 3720 to be packaged and disseminated to all tea consuming countries for consumer awareness.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*Recommends use of the quality parameters related to health beneficial characteristics as a marketing tool.*

*To be discussed further*

**A closer synergy between the Working Group on Tea Trade and Quality and ISO for a combined collation of information and data**

* **Sri Lanka** – Being a member of the ISO Technical Subcommittee is supportive of this proposal and has established close coordination and sharing of scientific information.
* **Argentina** – Already works closely with IRAM Tea Sub-Committee, representative of ISO.
* **India** – Interested to take part and be the nodal point in this data generation for Caffeine, Theaflavin : Therarubigin ratio, etc. and sharing studies along with other Tea Research Institutes and tea producing countries through both the IGG/Tea Working Group on Tea Trade and Quality and under ISO/TC 34/SC 8 Tea Subcommittee ISO 3720.
* **Kenya** – Supportive of the proposal. Regularly participates at the ISO tea quality meetings.
* **Japan** – Currently collecting data to differentiate Matcha as one of the specialty teas.
* **Malawi** – Supports the initiative and recommends sharing of such information.
* **China** – Established close ties with the National Technical Committee 339 on Tea Standardization Administration of China (SAC/TC339) that represents China at the ISO meetings.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*The Chairperson of the ISO Tea Sub-Committee agreed to share information and collaborate with member countries.*

*To be discussed further.*

**Proposal to arrange a workshop among ISO 3720 compliant and non-compliant member countries**

* **Sri Lanka** – On an invitation by this WG, Chairman ISO Tea Sub-Committee made a presentation on ISO 3720 parameters and updated the WG of their work related ISO standards for Black and Green teas. This was done because of funding and other limitations of organizing a comprehensive workshop. Endorses the proposal of organizing a workshop among ISO 3720 compliant and noncompliant member countries which needs to be pursued with ISO members.
* **Argentina** - Agrees and further proposes participation from both producer and buyer countries to share information.
* **India** – Agrees to the proposal.
* **Kenya** – Agreeable with the proposal. Members to actively participate in regular ISO meetings.
* **Japan** – Would consider the opinion from the Chairman of ISO.
* **Malawi** – Recommends to pursue this workshop through ISO members. Source of funding is also important.
* **China** – Supports the proposal.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*On an invitation by this WG, Chairman ISO Tea Sub-Committee made a presentation on ISO 3720 parameters and updated the WG of their work related ISO standards for Black and Green teas at the last session held in Naivasa, Kenya. For conducting a comprehensive workshop as originally planned, funding and other requirements need to be deliberated and a decision arrived at.*

**Initiate a pragmatic program to prevail upon the governments of consumer countries, tea trade and consumers of importing countries to encourage buying teas that comply with ISO 3720 parameters or above in view of better quality and safety.**

* **Sri Lanka** – Agrees that decision of consumer countries to fall in line with this proposal is of paramount importance for this to succeed.
* **Argentina** – Most importing countries requires ISO 3720 and other standards that includes food safety and sustainability.
* **India** –This program can be initiated along with the awareness program between both the producer and consumer countries to maintain minimum quality standards of tea from a marketing point of view and in order to meet the need/requirement of consumers.
* **Kenya** –Public Private Partnership rather than a legal enforcement. Consumer awareness programs are more effective and proposes to engage consumer associations in a partnership with Tea for Health on ISO 3720.
* **Japan** – ISO 3720 is the minimum quality standard of black tea for producing countries to ensure its quality gives consumer confidence.
* **Malawi** –Proposes measures to be taken by producing/exporting countries to ensure that all teas exported conform to ISO 3720.
* **China** –Agrees with other teas except “Congou black tea and Souchong black tea”.

**Identifying donor funding/technical assistance for countries requiring support in the implementation of ISO 3720 minimum quality standard.**

* **Sri Lanka** –Supports the proposal and highlights the need to identify the countries which really requires such assistance.
* **Argentina** – No progress has been made on this issue
* **India** –We may request FAO for funding this activity for the countries requiring support for implementation of ISO 3720 minimum quality standards.
* **Kenya** –With financial support is willing to help African Countries through training to achieve ISO 3720, as these countries mostly export through Mombasa Auction.
* **Japan** – No comments.
* **Malawi** –Supports the initiative and recognizes Zimbabwe and Mozambique as countries that require such assistance.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*To consult FAO /CFC on funding sources. To be discussed further.*

**The Working Group recognizes the establishment of a minimum quality standard for green tea and the significant growth in the production and demand for green tea globally and therefore proposes to recommend the introduction of a self-regulating code of conduct conforming to ISO 11287 minimum quality standards for green tea manufacturing**.

* **Sri Lanka** –Agreeable with the proposal and suggest that major Green Tea producing countries take the lead role. The ISO Technical sub-committee confirmed that standards had already been published and was working on improving the analytical methodology.
* **Argentina** –Produces in small quantity but adheres to CAA which is similar to ISO 11287. However, there is no mandatory national standard IRAM 20670:2014 corresponding to the ISO 11287:2011.
* **India** – There is a need to generate more data on different bio chemical parameters for green tea. All interested tea producing countries/research institutes may be advised to take part in this activity through an internationally coordinated project mode. This will help to develop the standards and harmonize the same between countries.
* **Kenya** –Supports the proposal and wishes to be included in the WG
* **China** –Minimum Quality Standard for green tea in compliance with 11287/2011”GB/T 14456.1 Green Tea-Part 1 :essential requirements” is currently being revised by the National Technical Committee 339 on Tea of Standardization Administration of China (SAC/TC339).
* **Malawi** –Suggests further scientific research to authenticate these claims and the results will assist in deciding the way forward.
* **Japan** –Agrees with the decision of the ISO technical committee. Tencha (Matcha) and Gyokuro have minimum 8 percent mass fraction total polyphenols and minimum 5 percent mass fraction total catechins which were added to the requirements of green tea (ISO 11287), so green teas produced in Japan widely comply with ISO 11287.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*The WG recognized the need to establish a minimum quality standard and proposed the introduction of a self-regulating code of conduct conforming to ISO 11287. The ISO Technical Committee confirmed that standards had already been published and was working on improving the analytical methodology.*

*ISO Technical Committee confirms that they are in the process of collecting data for Green Tea and in the process of harmonizing quality standards.*

**The Group discussed the need for defining a uniformed global sustainability standard governing the tea value chain**

* **Sri Lanka** –Supports the proposal and currently strictly follows Good Agricultural practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Food safety regulations. Requires consultation with consumer countries.
* **Argentina** –Supports the actions that lead to global standardization of compliance with the ISO 3720 standard and proposes to fulfill international certification requirements that support social, economic and environmental criteria, good agricultural practices, management and traceability systems.
* **India** – Implementation of ISO 3720 will certainly help to define and maintain uniform global sustainability standard governing the tea value chain.
* **Kenya** –Supports the proposal as a sustainable tea industry is beneficial to all. Kenya is willing to serve in the committee. Alternatively the Climate Change WG can include the item in the agenda.
* **Japan** –ISO3720 defines minimum quality standard of black tea; it is impossible to explain about value of black tea by only ISO3720.
* **Malawi** –Proposes that the additional parameters should come from the consumer countries and it is suggested these parameters should assist in promoting the health benefits of tea.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*Emphasizes the implementation of ISO 3720 first and proposes to include other parameters related to food safety in consultation with consumer countries.*

**The Group suggested to add a “Promotion” element as tea education, promotional events and even Tea competition are getting more and more popular and are incorporated in communication strategies to educate and promote tea**

* **Sri Lanka** –Sri Lanka Tea Board jointly with Colombo Tea Traders’ Association and other stakeholders conduct various promotional activities to encourage tea drinking culture among the younger generation, conducting educational fairs in tea growing areas, conducting ‘Estate of the year’ competitions. Also hosting Colombo Tea Convention and CRT Expo 2017 the international forum that includes trade exhibition, seminars and tea convention to coincide with the 150 years anniversary of the Sri Lanka Tea Industry
* **Argentina** – Institutes are established to educate on various topics relating to tea: manufacturing, analysis, tea ceremonies, tea tasting sessions, gourmet teas and culinary proposals at restaurants and hotels with food pairing, tea tourism etc.

In addition, the Ministry of Agro Industry has supported the tea value chain of Argentina through social media campaigns.

* **India** – Health beneficial properties of tea along with bio chemical parameters related to quality can be considered jointly to promote tea internationally. A large number of projects on Tea and Health funded by National Tea Research Foundation (NTRF), and Tea Board are being continued to promote the health benefits of Indian Black Tea.

The Golden Leaf India Awards (TGLIA) - A classic public – private initiative by Tea Board of India and the TRI has generated much enthusiasm.

Work shop for small tea growers was held through Krishi Vigyan Kendra and several seminars (10 nos.) on tea and health were organized for disseminating information on health benefits of tea during the last one year.

* **Kenya** – Currently holds annual Tea Classes Competition, Climate Change Innovation Awards and Tea Packers Competition and Tea Recipe Competition as promotional events.
* **Japan** –Nihon-cha (Japanese tea) instructor system has been established since 1999 and certified about 4,000 people. Tea competitions to evaluate the quality of tea and the value of tea commodity such as packaging, concept and cost performance have been held in Japan so far. In addition to these competitions, a new tea competition called “Nihon-cha AWARD” which consists of not only specialist evaluation but also consumer evaluation has been launched since 2014 in order to increase the consumption of Japanese green tea in domestic market. Japan Tea Association brings up Tea instructors especially for black tea based on the training curriculum, and certified about 1,800 tea instructors as of March in 2016. The World Green Tea Association hosts ‘The World Green Tea Contest’. In this contest, both the quality and the package are examined, and such a contest is important for enhancing the merchantability of tea.
* **Malawi** – The Tea Association of Malawi organized a Malawi Tea Day on 3rd June, 2017. The theme was “Malawi Tea for Health and Quality Life”. It was well attended and covered by both the print and TV media.
* **China** – 8-12 Training courses on Tea Taster/Tea art specialist by China Tea Society, International China Tea Competition.

***Way forward:***

*Suggestion emanating from 22nd session in Naivasa, Kenya:*

*Member countries agree to focus on health aspects of tea and to conduct regular promotional activities and suggested FAO funding for generic campaign globally.*

*To be discussed further.*

**Proposal to have an International Tea Day.  The procedures and modalities would have to be worked out.  The consumer member countries strongly supported the proposal and the Focal Point for Communication (Canada) would coordinate this initiative with the Secretariat.**

* All member countries agreed to have an International Tea Day as recommended at the intersessional meeting in October 2016. India had already submitted the proposal to its Ministry of Commerce and Industry and a communication from the Government of India was sent to FAO for its consideration.

1. Submitted by Sri Lanka. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)