



COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON TEA

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

Guwahati (Assam), India, 31 January–2 February 2024

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL

*Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

1. Tea is more than a drink. Tea is a culture, a tradition and a heritage that brings people together.
2. But it is also an important contributor to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.
3. Tea is an engine of growth, which generates economic value and constitutes the main source of subsistence for millions of poor families in the most vulnerable rural areas,
4. And it is an important source of export earnings for many low-income countries.
5. Its production can also have positive environmental impacts by preventing soil erosion, conserving water resources, and contributing to carbon sequestration.
6. Most importantly, smallholder tea producers constitute the backbone of the world tea sector, as they are responsible for almost 60 percent of global annual tea production.
7. However, smallholders in the tea sector are still facing significant challenges with regard to low farmgate prices, market volatility, limited extension services and market channels, and poor access to credit and technology, particularly for women.

8. Other global challenges facing the tea sector include: the impacts of the climate crisis on tea production; the need to improve productivity and sustainability; the decline in per capita tea consumption in some markets; the need to reach out to younger consumers; and a lack of market access for smallholder tea producers.
9. The solutions to these challenges, at all levels of the value chain, require:
 - i. the adoption of digital technologies;
 - ii. science and innovative approaches;
 - iii. empowering women and youth; and
 - iv. improved economic activity to the benefit of all, particularly for smallholders.
10. The role of the Intergovernmental Group on Tea (IGG) is instrumental in identifying and implementing the specific solutions needed.
11. Let us continue working together in an efficient, effective, sustainable, and coherent manner to ensure that the work of the IGG is even more concrete and impactful on the ground.
12. To effectively contribute to the transformation of global agrifood systems to be more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more sustainable,
13. For the Four Betters: Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind.
14. Thank you.