

## Business and Human Rights Resource Centre: Tea Estates

### Unilever response 20 February 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to reports of alleged labour and human rights abuses of workers in the tea supply chain. These issues are deeply concerning and must be addressed to prevent their re-occurrence.

In India, of the 22 tea estates named, we sourced from nine\* during 2022. We raised the issues at the Appeejay tea estates (some of which have since changed ownership) and understand that these issues have now been resolved. We were also aware of the accident at the Lepetkata estate and raised this with the producer, receiving confirmation of what action had been taken to address this and prevent further occurrences.

We were not aware of the remaining cases. As these are not direct Unilever suppliers, we are engaging with both our direct supplier and the relevant tea producers.

In Sri Lanka, according to our records, during 2022 we sourced from the following companies listed in your correspondence: Bogawantalawa; Elpitiya; Hatton; Hapugastenne; Kelani; Kotagala; Madulsima and Maskeliya; but not from the estates mentioned.

We are working to do more to proactively monitor and engage with our tier two (non-direct) suppliers on responsible business, this is where many of the still endemic issues in the tea supply chain exist. Cross-industry work remains critical, including through organisations such as the Ethical Tea Partnership while issues such as the earning of at least a living wage or income in global supply chains (which have made a commitment on) are also critical to help improve working conditions and raise living standards overall.

We believe tea certification provides a foundation for responsible sourcing to ensure that fundamental human rights, including labour rights requirements, are met and will continue to support the increased certification of our supply base. In 2022, 74% of our tea was sourced from sustainable sources (combination of Rainforest Alliance and trustea certified sources). HUL is one of the co-founders of trustea – The India Sustainable Tea Program. We do recognise, however, that it is

important that other ways of meaningfully and inclusively monitoring working conditions including better engagement with workers and stronger worker and management dialogue are effectively implemented.

We will be updating our global tea supplier list before the end of the first quarter of this year.

*\*The nine estates we source from are: Limbuguri Tea Estate (Assam); Napuk, Jaboka, Muttrapore and Kharjan estates in Assam; Baradighi Tea Garden in West Bengal; At Fatemabad Tea Garden in Assam; Hirajuli Tea Estate in Assam; Lepetkata Tea Estate in Assam.*

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