

## **Tough Year Ahead For State Tea Industry: NETA**

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(14 Jun) GUWAHATI, June 13 -- North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) chairman Bidyananda Barkakoty today sounded an alarm for the tea industry of the State, while addressing the inaugural session of the two-day Buyers-Sellers Meet 2015 organised by his organisation at Golaghat. He said the financial year 2015-16 would be a very challenging year for the State's tea industry. Citing the factors responsible for this grim situation, Barkakoty said while the wages and input costs had gone up, price realisation was less compared to last year. Wages had gone up which would have an impact of increased cost of Rs 13 on each kilogram of made tea. There would be another rise in the cost of Rs 9 per kg of made tea due to increase in input costs (fertiliser, coal/gas, electricity, packing material, interest costs etc). The adversity got compounded by the fact that the average price of tea was lower by Rs 15 per kg at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) compared to the corresponding period of last year. Moreover, the out-lot percentage at 37 per cent was rather alarming.

A combination of the above might put the industry in the red, said the NETA chairman. Elaborating, he said the daily cash wage of tea garden workers increased from Rs.94 to Rs.115 with effect from January 1, 2015. This increase in wage had raised the labour cost in the gardens by over 20 per cent. Wages account for 50 per cent of input costs and therefore the cost of production has gone up significantly. The meet was also addressed by president of Western India Tea Dealers Association and CMD of Wagh Bakri Tea Group Piyush Desai. Vice chairman Tea Research Association Prabhat K Bezboruah, executive director in-charge Tea Board Dipankar Mukherjee, secretary, tea traders' apex body FAITTA Chetan Patel, all past chairmen of NETA, vice chairman of NETA DP Khetan, NETA secretary Fazlur Rahman and members of NETA's sister associations, planters, NETA members, among others, attended the function. Barkakoty informed that more than 60 tea estates/factories are expected to take part in the tea-tasting session tomorrow. This session will be followed by an interactive meet. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [htsyndication@hindustantimes.com](mailto:htsyndication@hindustantimes.com) Assam Tribune.