

SRI LANKA TEA BOARD OFFICIAL CERTIFICATION FOR QUALITY ASSUARANCE FOR FOOD SAFETY AND GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICES OF TEA

RULES AND PROCEDURE FOR APPLICANTS

Sri Lanka Tea Board (SLTB) is empowered by Act of Parliament No. 14 of 1975 to regulate and monitor the procedures of quality assurance of tea where applicable, and to inspect, examine and certify the quality of final product of tea packed and ready for dispatch. Under this scheme, SLTB may take action on client's request and disperse expertise according to a pre-scheduled plan and audit using the applicable standards. Such standards includes: ISO 3720: 2011: Black tea- Definition and basic requirements; ISO 11287: 2011: Green tea - Definition and basic requirements; SLS 1315: Part 2: 2007 – Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for Processing of Black Tea; SLS 1315: Part 3: 2009 – Good Hygienic Practice (GHP) for Storage, Blending, Packaging and Transport of Tea; SLS 143:1999-Code of practice for general principles of food hygiene; SLS ISO 22000: 2005: Food safety management systems – Requirements for any organization in the food chain and Sri Lanka Tea Board Standards/ Guidelines for tea: 2010. The criterion described in this certification scheme is to provide an internationally recognized third party quality assurance certificate for processed tea in Sri Lanka.

This certification is made on requests originating from tea exporters in Sri Lanka, or may or may not be a result of a tea buyer's request. This should not be considered under Tea Board regulations. Under this scheme, SLTB involvement in third party certification for good manufacturing practices of final product of tea packed and ready for dispatch will be conducted through assessment of a process blending, packing and warehouse storage places followed by final product evaluation using sensory analysis and scientific examination guided by national and/or international standards for tea. The annual surveillance audits up to the renewal of certification may gain confidence in consumers of processed tea in Sri Lanka, another value addition for Sri Lankan tea in global competitive market.

1.0 ELIGIBILITY FOR THE CERTIFICATION SCHEME

- 1.1 Any applicant/ manufacturer/ processor who is interested in obtaining the SLTB certification for quality assurance of tea should have a valid registration as a Tea Exporter under the Act No. 16 of 1959: Tea (Tax and Control of Export) and its subsequent amendments.

2.0 REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION

- 2.1 Any applicant/ manufacturer/ processor should comply to the requirements above 1.1, shall make a request in writing to the Director General, Sri Lanka Tea Board, No. 574, Galle Road, Colombo 03
- 2.2 The Director General SLTB shall have the power to either accept or reject the request of the Tea Exporter, by giving legitimate reasons for rejection and an acknowledgment for accepted applications.

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- 2.3 All acknowledged applicants will then be requested to provide necessary information using a prescribed application form obtain from the Tea Commissioner, Sri Lanka Tea Board, No. 574, Galle Road, Colombo 03 during working hours by making a payment of Rs. 2500.00. Duly completed application/s should be handed over to the Tea Commissioner with required documents for further action.
- 2.4 Applicants having more than one manufacturing/processing unit located at different places and separately managed shall submit separate applications for each establishment.
- 2.5 The Technical Committee appointed by SLTB will evaluate the application/s and will officially inform the exporter, the date for site inspection, audit schedule/ plan, members of the audit team, terms and conditions of the proposed task and the details of payment as described in the Annexure I, according to the SLTB certification requirement by tax invoice.
- 2.6 No action will be taken on applications for which a processing fee has not been paid as stipulated in 2.5 above.
- 2.7 Applications shall be evaluated and site inspections done when the applicant confirms that the site is ready for inspection for whole set of processing steps including storing, blending, value addition, packaging and dispatch of tea. After performing the site inspection audit, the 'Technical sub Committee/ audit team' recommendation will be submitted to the 'Technical Committee' according to the certification scheme. The 'Technical Committee' comprising of SLTB officials and the recommendation for the SLTB quality assurance certification will be forwarded to the 'Chairman - Technical Committee' for necessary approval and followed by awarding the certificate.

3.0 SITE INSPECTION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PACKED TEA

- 3.1 The site inspection will be carried out on mutually agreed dates between the applicant and the SLTB.
- 3.2 The Technical Sub Committee appointed by SLTB will conduct audit inspection following the international auditing protocol to inspect, examine and evaluate the applicant's quality assurance capabilities and draw representative tea samples on random basis.
- 3.3 During the audit, conformity for requirements laid down in the check list will be evaluated throughout the process chain mainly from raw materials, blending, packaging, storage and loading using controlled documents, records, reports and other related documents. Where necessary witnessing of specific tasks (eg. blending, monitoring practices of tea quality etc..) shall be undertaken by the Technical Sub Committee. All non-conforming results and information against the audit check list would be informed at the site and un-corrected non-conformities will be given a stipulated period of time for necessary corrective action. The unattended action during the time frame will be treated as a disqualification and will not be liable for any reimbursement of the money paid.

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- 3.4 The drawn triplicate samples (approx 200g each) are subject to evaluation for quality by organoleptic sensory assessment, physical examination, microbiological analysis, chemical analysis, relevant pesticide residues and other contaminant adulterant analysis at the Analytical Laboratory of Tea Board.
- 3.5 A detailed report of the site assessment, sensory quality assessment report and the laboratory analysis report of the tea samples accompanied with the recommendation status of the applicant will be submitted to the Chairman – Technical Committee, for final action.

4.0 AWARDING OF CERTIFICATION

- 4.1 After evaluating the complete assessment of Technical Sub Committee, the Chairman – Technical Committee shall be informed the respective client/ applicant about the certification status in writing.
- 4.2 Before awarding the certificate the applicant is expected to sign an agreement with SLTB (Ref.: SLTB/QAC-13/2015) which includes conditions related to certification requirements, and shall agree with SLTB on a surveillance inspection audit with pre-determined time schedule not more than twelve months' time interval.
- 4.3 Upon approval by SLTB for tea quality assurance, a certificate along with permit condition will be issued to the client/ applicant by the SLTB which is valid for three (03) years subject to annual surveillance audits in compliance with the requirements of the SLTB tea quality certification scheme.
- 4.4 If any deviation or changes against the information listed in the first application are made within the prescribed three (03) year period, such changes shall be communicated immediately to SLTB by the certificate holder.
- 4.5 Tea samples will be drawn during the initial audit and each surveillance audit and tests will be done for the relevant parameters as mentioned herein section 3.4, by SLTB. Failure of the results in tested parameters may require a special inspection by SLTB and followed by respective corrective actions by the certificate holder as advised by the certificate provider, SLTB. If requested for re-sampling by the applicant base on the results of the first sample, it is compulsory to bear the total cost of testing fees by the applicant.
- 4.6 In addition, SLTB is intend to make surprise visits to the premises of certificate holder in connection with this certification program, in case where complain, petition or written request made by any third party including the health authorities in the tea importing country and representatives of foreign tea buyers.

5.0 RENEWAL - OF THE CERTIFICATION

- 5.1 Tea quality assurance certificate shall be renewed every three (03) years from the date of issue of the Certificate.

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5.2 At the renewal, certificate holder is liable to provide all necessary information as in the case of the first application, and the decision for the renewal will be done based on the site inspection audit.

6.0 FEES

6.1 The fees payable by the applicant in connection with this certification scheme, shall be determined by the SLTB and be revised from time to time considering the prevailing situation. The current fee structure is described in the Annexure I.

6.2 Any fee enrolled under this certification procedure if paid, is non-refundable and non-transferable.

7.0 COMPLAINTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS

7.1 Any complaint/s shall be addressed to the Chairman, Sri Lanka Tea Board, No. 574, Galle Road, Colombo 04 in a sealed envelope mentioned on top left hand corner; 'Confidential – Tea Quality Assurance Certification'.

7.2 At each site inspection audit all applicants were being received 'Customer's feedback form' (references No: SLTB/QAC- 15/2015) during the time closing meeting. Then the client is requested send their feedback and suggestions directly to the Director General, Sri Lanka Tea Board, No. 574, Galle Road, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka within 07 days after the held audit.

8.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

All information given with the application submitted the SLTB and Technical Sub Committee during site-inspection audits shall be treated as confidential. All staff involved in tea quality certification activities under this scheme is required to sign a confidentiality agreement with the SLTB.

9.0 USE OF TEA QUALITY ASSURANCE CERTIFICATE

9.1 When tea quality certification is granted as stipulated in the above clause 4.0, the certificate holder is permitted to use the 'certified copies of the tea quality certification' as per the conditions (see 4.2) for the use of the certification.

9.2 Any symbol depicted in the SLTB – GMP certificate is not allowed to use as product certification mark whereas any format of 'whole Certificate' could be displayed as promotional tool.

10.0 MISUSE OF TEA QUALITY ASSURANCE CERTIFICATE

A Certificate holder shall not display, advertise or otherwise use the certification status and the certification document after:

- a) A lapse of validation, suspension or cancellation of certification.

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- b) Any reasons which could be expected to adversely affect the name of 'Ceylon tea' globally.
- c) Any other circumstances which adversely affect as identified by the SLTB any time.

11.0 SUSPENSION OR CANCELLATION OF TEA QUALITY ASSURANCE CERTIFICATE

11.1 Certification shall be either suspended or cancelled by the Chairman, Sri Lanka Tea Board, under the following circumstances based on the recommendation given by the Chairman – Technical Committee of this certification scheme:

- a) If any case of violation of the Sri Lanka Tea Board Law No. 14 of 1975 and its subsequent amendments, Tea Control Act No. 51 of 1957 and its subsequent amendments and related regulations, Tea (Tax and Control of Export) Act No. 16 of 1959 and its subsequent amendments which warrants the suspension / cancellation of the registration,
- b) When the presence of a risk of a health hazard is revealed in any step of processing or if any detection of inferior quality tea found during the random sampling of tea shipment/s by the SLTB officials,
- c) If surveillance audit indicates a total breakdown of the tea quality assurance process or confirms the presence of major non-conformities and actions not been taken effectively within the stipulated period provided by SLTB,
- d) Improper use of certification, certification document or certification contents and if it is not rectified to the satisfaction of the SLTB within an agreed period,
- e) Any violation/s of provisions indicated in the clause 4.0 above,
- f) When the certified applicant fails to meet financial obligations as specified by the SLTB,
- g) Failure to comply with any other requirements stipulated by the SLTB.

11.2 Any suspension shall be removed and the applicant is notified accordingly, upon the correction of conditions leading to the suspension within the specified period.

11.3 Withdrawal of the awarded certificate could be done by the certificate holder/client any time by written request giving reason/s.

11.4 In the case of either suspension or cancellation or withdrawal, the respective certificate holder/client shall refrain from further promotion of its certification.

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11.5 The suspension/ cancellation/ withdrawal shall be notified to the client by the Director General, Sri Lanka Tea Board in writing and the SLTB shall publish the notification of the termination.

12.0 APPEALS

12.1 If the certificate holder is not satisfied with the decision taken on this certification scheme, the certification holder is eligible to appeal, in writing to the Chairman, Sri Lanka Tea Board within 30 days of receipt of such decision.

12.2 The decision of the appeal committee shall be final and conclusive.

13.0 COMMUNICATION

13.1 Except in the case of appeals and unless other than mentioned directive herein, all other communications relating to clarifications/ information on this certification scheme shall be addressed to Tea Commissioner, Sri Lanka Tea Board, No. 574, Galle Road, Colombo 03.

11.6 In case of an appeal as per clause 12.0, such correspondence should be sent to Chairman, Sri Lanka Tea Board, No. 574, Galle Road, Colombo 03, by registered mail in a sealed envelope mentioned on top left hand corner; 'Appeal – Tea Quality Assurance Certification'.

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