



*For immediate release*

## **CEO, FSSAI Engages in Discussion with Tea Growers and Planters in Assam to Ensure Safety and Quality of Tea Production**

### **Press Release**

**Kellyden, Assam, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2024:** In a significant move towards ensuring the safety and quality of tea production, Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao, CEO of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), addressed a gathering of Tea Growers and Tea Planters during an interactive session held on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 in Kellyden, Assam. The event saw active participation from key stakeholders including officials from FSSAI, the Tea Board, Tea Research Institute, tea planters, tea processors, industry associations and Food and Drug Department of the State.

The focal point of the discussion was enhancing traceability and testing measures for raw materials, emphasizing the need for screening of every batch for pesticide residues and adherence to Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) of pesticides usage as prescribed in the Food Safety and Standards Regulations of 2011 (FSSR). Shri Rao emphasised the importance of adopting bio-pesticides and encouraged collaboration with the Tea Board for joint inspection, sampling and testing processes.

During the session, the Tea Board stressed on the significance of awareness campaigns among planters to educate them about the maintenance of a harvesting gap to ensure safe agricultural practices. Planters raised concerns about the use of unauthorized pesticides in tea cultivation and urged the State Government to impose a ban on such substances. Processors advocated for the provision of rapid testing kits at the farm gate level to streamline pesticide testing. Scientific Panel members engaged in detailed deliberations on specific pesticides, monitoring procedures and the prevention of off-label use.

Notably, FSSAI is extending financial assistance to Assam for the upgrading of laboratories dedicated to pesticide testing. The need for regular interaction with all stakeholders and the formulation of a time-bound action plan to guarantee the availability of safe tea to consumers was also stressed upon during the meeting.

The event also featured key speakers such as Shri Amardeep Singh Bhatia, IAS, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce & Industry (DoC&I) and Chairman of the Tea Board, India; Shri Saurav Pahari, IAS, Deputy Chairman, Tea Board, Kolkata; Ms. Inoshi Sharma, Executive Director, FSSAI and other senior officials from FSSAI, scientific panel members and representatives from various industry associations.

The collaborative efforts of all stakeholders provided a platform for the exchange of insights and promoted safe, sustainable and quality-driven tea production in the country.