

Green Consciousness

Given the vast acreage of the Nilgiris “Blue Mountain Hills”, the company views its eco-responsibilities very seriously.

Agriculture Sustainability:

In virtually all its estates, parts of the tea gardens adjoin forestland and in some cases the adjacent forests are the virgin jungle native to the Nilgiri hills. With this fragile and precious eco-system co-existing with the tea gardens, great care is taken to ensure harmful pesticides do not enter the forest soil and water. UNITEA uses only neem-based natural pesticides. Also Korakundah estate boasts of a dairy farm – manure from our own farm to our own plantations.

Water Stewardship:

All of UNITEA’s water is from natural spring sources. Water is harvested from these springs without pumping and hence protecting the water table for posterity. Rainwater harvesting is another diligent focus area.

Flora and Fauna:

In order to not disturb the environment, in certain sections of the estates, the original forests are preserved in their pristine condition, their acreage sometimes exceeding that which is covered by tea. The benefits of this are two-fold. In Korakundah for example, where much of the estate is under forest cover, these trees form a natural barrier against the harsh winds that damage the tea. The other is that the estate has become a sanctuary for wildlife! For years now, in summer when the rivers dry up across the Kerala border, the elephants head towards Korakundah. The three man-made lakes and the lush forest cover make it a perfect summer resort for elephants!

Packaging:

As we strive to be ‘green’ in all our processes, packaging is one area where we have started to make small changes that bring in a big impact to the environment and our customer. Traditionally tea has always been packed in tea chests made of plywood. At UNITEA we have switched our packaging to eco-friendly and biodegradable paper sacks.

Alternate Fuel:

Efforts have been commissioned to change traditional habits that harm the environment. Usage of firewood as the fuel source for cooking at home (estate employees) has been replaced with the usage of cooking gas. This has not only resulted in protecting the forests being felled to fuel homes, but also cooking time at home has been drastically cut down, and the bonus is the elimination of smoke from the firewood that poses a health hazard. A win-win situation for the environment, and the people.

Renewable Forests:

Renewable is the key word here. Some forests are renewable, trees can be replanted and grown to maturity in place of those that are cut down. In the UNITEA estates, forestlands are on a 20-year rotation. Trees are selectively harvested up to 20 years of age, then cut and replanted. The trees that are cut down are used for firing large chimneys during the manufacturing process.

R&D:

Performance of the Tea industry is subject to the vagaries of nature. Monsoon failure may affect production. To that end, UNITEA continues to spend time and energy in R&D to mitigate the effects of drought. Since tea is grown on slopes, the Organic content of soil is low. UNITEA has embarked on production of vermi compost to increase the water holding capacity of the soil. Further R&D activities will be carried out on a long-term basis, to understand and leverage the findings in the best possible manner.