

## Small tea grower plea

**Jalpaiguri:** Small tea growers have demanded that the Bengal government revoke an old order and recognise small tea plantations that came up after June 30, 2001.

Around 17 years ago, the then Left Front had issued the notification, saying small tea plantations (less than 25 acres) set up till June 30, 2001 will be recognised.

"The order was issued essentially to prevent change in crop pattern in North Dinajpur, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts where small tea gardens were coming up. However, the small tea sector continued to grow and reached to such an extent that in the last fiscal, it has contributed around 55 per cent of the tea produced in Bengal," said Bijoygopal Chakraborty, the general secretary of the Jalpaiguri Zilla Ksudra Cha Chashi Samiti.

As of now, small tea plantations are spread over 1.40 lakh acres in the state.

There are around 40,000 growers who employ 50,000 workers. When the notification was issued in 2001, there were only 8,000-odd small tea cultivators in north Bengal. Of them, 3,217 were given no-objection certificates (that officially approve the use of agricultural land for tea cultivation and change in crop pattern).

"A majority of the current small tea gardens came up after the cut-off date and they do not have the recognition or NOC from the state. We want the state to revoke the earlier order and issue a fresh order so that all growers can get the certificates," said Chakraborty.

The NOC would help the growers get registration from the Tea Board of India.

"Without the NOC, the growers are not eligible to get bank loans. They can face problems in getting benefits of schemes provided by the Centre and the Tea Board," said Chakraborty, who is also the president of the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers' Associations (Cista).

**Source:** <https://www.telegraphindia.com/states/west-bengal/small-tea-grower-plea-235231>