Abstract

The recent trend in Indian Tea industry depicts a disturbing decline in terms of price, and quantity of export. Substantial increase in labour wages, garden operating expenses, statutory liabilities and general inflation have considerably eroded profit margins for the gardens.

In the context of present crisis of Tea Industry, the only answer to enhance demand, stabilize growth and maintain it, is “Relentless Improvement in Tea Quality” along with “Never ending reduction in unnecessary cost”. In other words: - Continuous Improvement (CI) in every sub-system of Tea Industry is a must for its survival.

This thesis makes an attempt to identify and present an analysis of the factors affecting Quality of tea by classifying the factors into garden controllable and garden uncontrollable factors. The thesis also describes some of the key areas of production process where continuous improvement is needed for sustained growth of tea industry of Assam by implementing the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM).

The unique aspects of the thesis include development of an assessment tool for total quality culture prevailing in a tea garden, which helps the management in initializing the TQM/CI process. The operational framework for the implementation of TQM in the system is arrived at, by the quantitative assessment of quality level of different subsystems, to set up the CI/TQM. In addition, an Information System named “Tea Information System (TIS)”, which incorporates the assessment tool and provides information on – Assam and Indian Tea Industry, tea manufacturing process, tea facts, different grades of tea, the culture of tea tribes of Assam, tea vocabulary, standards in tea along with a well covered tea directory covering 498 companies and 722 tea gardens has been developed as a knowledge base for tea plantation and in quality planning to assist the tea management professionals.

Key words: Total Quality Management, Continuous Improvement, Tea Quality, Quality Culture, Total Quality Management Indicator, Performance Indicator