

# Quality is the magic word

To improve Tea exports, the magic word is obviously “Quality”. India went into the more production syndrome and forgot quality says **Mr. Vikram Vohra, Director, Vohra Tea & Industries (P) Ltd.**

**1) Kindly brief about the inception and history of Vohra Tea & Industries Pvt. Ltd. How has the 38-year long experience of Mr. C. M. Vohra in the tea industry helped in moulding the company into its present form?**

“VOHRA TEA” is manufactured in a modern factory, maintaining excellent standards. It is situated in the world famous “Quality Zone” of Upper Assam, on the very foothills, where tea was first discovered by the pioneers in India, in its natural elements. Vohra Tea is manufactured by a family of planters, who take pride in producing tea out of quality clones, selected and planted by them, now manufactured by them to produce the “Cup That Cheers”.

The Vohra Tea Group was founded by Mr. C. M. Vohra in 1987 in the state of Assam. Mr. C. M. Vohra's 38 years' experience in the Tea Industry has been able to make Vohra Tea a satisfaction so rare, a tea so fine. Mr. C. M. Vohra started his own garden at Shantipur T.E in Sibsagar District, which he planted out from 1982 to 1987 and then built his Factory.

**2) Vohra Tea offers tea in a wide range of packaging for the various categories of consumers. Which type of packaging according to you is the best suited for the Indian tea industry? To which category do majority of Indian tea consumers belong?**

According to me, initially, the Indian consumer preferred the low cost poly-pouches and Black CTC Tea. But now some of the Indian consumers prefer better packaging material and are ready to pay the cost for re-useable packaging like Jars. The Indian consumer still supports CTC Teas, and has little interest for Orthodox Teas. The Tea Bag is slow in gaining ground as opposed to loose Tea for tea brewing in the more affluent consumer segment, and such Tea is finding good outlets in the big consumer stores. The majority of the Tea consumers in India however still prefer the low cost poly pouches and packet sizes have come down to 50 gms or even 10 gms for the rural market. The most popular packet would be the 100 gms poly-pouch.

**3) When were Jade Green Tea and other green teas launched in the Indian market? How have the Indian consumers received the product? Has there been considerable increase in green tea consumption among Indians?**

Green Tea packets were pioneered by Vohra Tea in 1996 and launched first in the North East

and in South India through Vohra Tea's Bangalore Office. Green Tea is the segment, which is invoking a special interest amongst the educated populace, which has been reading the Health benefits of Green Tea. Backed by International awareness of the benefits of green tea, Vohra Tea and its sister concern Vohra Packaging in Bangalore have many different packets for its green tea. JADE GREEN TEA, now packed by Vohra Packaging is gaining ground both in the domestic Market, as well as export market.

**4) What is your opinion about the awareness of health benefits of green tea among Indian consumers?**

The Tea Board needs to spend more money for Research in Medical Institutes and come out with some hard facts on the benefits of green tea. Vohra Tea on its own expense sponsored a 3-month research in Dibrugarh Medical College, on 30 patients and the results were very encouraging. The findings could not be published, as the sample base was too small. However, lowering of Blood Pressure, and reduction of Cholesterol levels were found to go down by an intake of 3 to 4 cups of green tea per day. The Tea Board when contacted with the results advised C.M.Vohra, that it was busy in promoting Tea Drinking in General for Export, and was busy in promoting Black Tea, which forms the bulk of Indian Tea Production. I feel that something needs to be done here.

**5) Is Vohra tea involved in tea exporting? Which are your major export destinations?**

Vohra Tea has exported directly to Germany and Japan in the early 1990s. Currently it is exporting through Merchant Exporters in Kolkata, and directly through its sister concern Vohra Packaging.

**6) What are the steps taken by your company to maintain quality standards? What are the residual limits maintained for different pesticides?**

The Company is maintaining quality standards with Mr. C.M.Vohra 's personal presence at the Factory, as he resides on the garden and factory itself. However, the Company is planning to register with ISO and HASP in the near future. The garden is using only approved chemicals, pesticides and weedicides, as listed from time to time by the Tea Board and the Tocklai Research Centre.

**7) Indian tea exports have seen a decline in the recent past. What efforts according to you can the industry take to prevent fall in exports of Indian tea?**

To improve Tea Exports, the magic word is obviously "Quality". India went into the more production syndrome and forgot quality. I suggest that the system be reversed by reducing the unpruned percentage of Tea and by increasing the percentage of "Pruned Teas".

**8) Kindly brief us about the cost of production of tea in Assam. What is the percentage of share of social costs in the total cost of production of tea of your company?**

The Cost of production in Assam is about Rs. 65/- to Rs.70/- per kg and the social cost burden is about 15 % of this cost.

**9) Blending is believed to give the best characteristics of many teas in one product to the consumer. In this context what is your opinion about Vohra teas' 'Single Factory Product's preference among consumers?**

Blending is a better concept than a “ Single factory concept” and Vohra Tea hopes to overcome this problem through better blending methods by VOHRA PACKAGING.

**10) What are the future plans that have been charted out for the company?**

Our future plans are based on one single word “ SURVIVAL”. The scene in the Indian Tea Industry is known to all and our survival is at stake. We need to innovate new methods of marketing our products by targeting the right teas to the right market, innovating packets for export and by controlling costs. The Central Government needs to be more focused on the problems being faced by the Tea Industry. The awareness and health benefits of green tea need to be tackled properly. Smaller players like our Company headed by Planters of our experience need to be heard out in forums and invited, which is not happening.

**Source: Foretell Business Solutions Pvt. Ltd.**