

National Conference on “Production, Employment and Marketing of Plantation Crops in India”

Organised by

Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD), Guwahati

National Research Programme on Plantation Development (NRPPD) CDS, Kerala

Department of Geography, Sikkim University

Venue: Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, Assam

Date: 3–4 November 2025

Inaugural session on 2nd November afternoon

Background and Objectives

The National Conference on Production, Employment and Marketing of Plantation Crops in India was jointly organised by the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD), Guwahati, the National Research Programme on Plantation Development (NRPPD), Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Kerala, and the Department of Geography, Sikkim University during 3–4 November 2025 at OKDISCD, Guwahati.

The conference aimed to bring plantation studies to the forefront of academic and policy discourse by fostering interdisciplinary dialogue on key issues related to plantation crops such as tea, coffee, rubber, spices, and cashew. Special emphasis was placed on production systems, labour and employment relations, market dynamics, trade, sustainability, and the challenges faced by smallholders, particularly in the North-Eastern region of India.

Inaugural Session

The conference commenced with an inaugural session on 2nd November 2025, welcoming participants from across India. The session opened with a welcome address by Prof. Saswati Chowdhury (Director, OKDISCD), followed by the concept note presented by Prof. Vinoj Abraham (Ministry of Commerce Chair, Professor and National Coordinator, NRPPD, CDS), who outlined the relevance of plantation crops in India's agrarian economy and the need for renewed research attention in the context of climate change, labour transitions, and global market integration.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Deepak Kumar Mishra (Professor, JNU), who highlighted the structural challenges confronting plantation economies and underlined the importance of evidence-based policy interventions. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by the programme coordinators.

Academic Sessions and Special Lectures

The conference featured special lectures, panel discussions, and five technical sessions, providing a rich platform for scholarly exchange.

A special lecture by Prof. B. S. Butola (Retd. Professor, JNU) examined the nature of post-colonial states and the organisation of plantation economies under neoliberalism, offering a critical political economy perspective. This was followed by a panel discussion on "Green Leaf Pricing in the Smallholder Tea Sector in India and North-East States" was moderated by Dr. Abdul Hannan (Associate Professor, Sikkim University) included the President, Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations, and representatives from the All Assam Small Tea Growers Association, Tripura Small Tea Growers Association, and Arunachal/Bodoland Small Tea Growers Associations. The discussion highlighted persistent pricing asymmetries, institutional gaps, and the need for collective bargaining mechanisms. Subsequent sessions included paper presentations on diverse themes such as climate change adaptation by small tea growers, labour informality and casualisation, livelihood challenges of plantation workers, and land and resource conflicts in plantation regions. Empirical studies drawing on farm-level data, household surveys, and case studies enriched the discussions.

Dedicated sessions addressed international trade, competitiveness, and value chains of plantation commodities. Papers analysed India's export performance in tea, coffee, spices, and cashew, comparative advantage vis-à-vis ASEAN economies, import rejections in international markets, and shifts from demand-led to competitiveness-driven trade regimes. These discussions underscored the growing importance of quality standards, market diversification, and institutional support for sustaining India's position in global plantation commodity markets.

Several papers focused on labour relations, migration, gender, and trade unionism in plantation regions, particularly in Assam, North Bengal, Dooars, Tripura, and Darjeeling. Presentations highlighted the precarious living conditions of plantation workers, changing employment structures, and the socio-economic vulnerabilities faced by women labourers. The role of cooperatives, Fair Trade initiatives, and governance mechanisms was critically examined.

Concluding Session and Outcomes

The valedictory session featured a concluding lecture by Prof. Vinoj Abraham, who synthesised the key insights from the conference and emphasised the urgency of integrating plantation studies into mainstream development research. The rapporteurs' report, presented by Dr. Arunima Deka and Dr. Nitish Gogoi, summarised the major deliberations and policy implications emerging from the sessions.

The conference concluded with the release of a Press Note, highlighting the need for inclusive policies, strengthened institutions for smallholders and workers, region-specific strategies for the North-East, and enhanced collaboration between academia, industry, and policymakers.

National Conference, 2-4 November 2025: IIE Guwahati

National Conference		Production Employment and Marketing of Plantation Crops in India
Day 1	02.11.2025	Arrival of Guests and Participants
Inaugural Session	3.45-5.00 PM	Welcome Note: Prof. Saswati Chowdhury Concept Note: Prof. Vinoj Abraham Keynote: Prof. Deepak Kumar Mishra Labour under Contemporary Capitalism: Reimagining Futures for Plantation Labour in Assam Vote of Thanks: Dr. Rajdeep Singha/Dr. Abdul Hannan
Day 2	03.11.2025	Venue: IIE Seminar Hall
Special Lecture	9.30-10.30 AM	Prof. B. S. Butola Nature of Post Colonial States and Organisation of Plantation Economies under Neoliberalism Discussant: Prof. Deepak Kumar Mishra
Break	10.30-11.00 AM	Tea
Panel Discussion	11.00-1.00 PM	Moderator: Dr. Abdul Hannan/Dr. Rajdeep Singha Green Leaf Pricing in Smallholder Tea Sector in North-East States
<i>Speaker-1</i>	B.G. Chakraborty	President, Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations
<i>Speaker-2</i>	Krishna P. Sarma	Secretary, All Assam Small Tea Growers Association Jorhat Assam
<i>Speaker-3</i>	Prasanta K. Saha	Managing Partner, Basumati Khudra Cha Utpadok Swanirbhor Welfare Society Agartala
<i>Speaker-4</i>	Bijit Basumatari	All Bodoland Small Tea Growers Association Kokrajhar Assam
Break	1.00-2.00 PM	Lunch
Special Lecture	2.00-3.00 PM	Prof. P K Vishwanathan The Decline of Smallholder Capitalism: An assessment of Implications Poly-crisis in India's Plantation Agriculture Discussant: Prof. Indraneel Bhowmik
Break	3.00-3.30 PM	Tea
Session I	3.30-5.10 PM	Chair: Prof. Kalyan Das Rapporteur: Dr. Arunima Deka/Dr. Nitish Gogoi
<i>Paper-1</i>	Atreyee Saikia	Emerging Popularity of Tea and Rubber Plantations among the Boros: A Strategy of Negotiating Land Conflict and Resource Crisis
<i>Paper-2</i>	Panchi Haloi	Adaptations to Climate Change by the Small Tea Growers of Assam: An Empirical Study using Farm Level Data
<i>Paper-3</i>	Sultana Begum & ors.	The Socio-Economic Paradox: An Analysis of Livelihood Challenges Facing Tea-Garden Workers in Lakhmipur, Assam
<i>Paper-4</i>	Rishiraj Sinha	From captivity to Casualisation: Employment structure and Informality in a Workers' Cooperative Tea Estate in

		Tripura
<i>Paper-5</i>	Zeba Tabassum	Navigating Tea Garden Policies: Harnessing Opportunities and challenges
Day 3	04.11.2025	Venue: IIE Seminar Hall
Session II	9.30-11.10 AM	Chair: Prof. Indraneel Bhowmik Rapporteur: Dr. Arunima Deka/Dr. Nitish Gogoi
<i>Paper-6</i>	Sachu Sara	Import rejections of Indian beverage and spice commodities in international market
<i>Paper-7</i>	M Umanath	Tea or Coffee: The Choice of Indian Households
<i>Paper-8</i>	A Yazhini	Cashew Nut Trade Dynamics: Comparative Advantage of India and Vietnam
<i>Paper-9</i>	Anil Varma	An Ex-post Analysis of Export Performance and dynamics of Comparative advantage of Major Plantation Crops from India to ASEAN Economies During 2001-2024
<i>Paper-10</i>	B J Giridhar	From Demand-Led to Competitiveness-Driven: A Decomposition Analysis of India's Coffee Trade
Break	11.10-11.30 PM	Tea
Session III	11.30-1.10 PM	Chair: Prof. Balbir Singh Butola Rapporteur: Dr. Arunima Deka/Dr. Nitish Gogoi
<i>Paper-11</i>	Tara Nair & Ananya Iyer	Labour, Livelihoods and Migration: Tea Workers Households in North Bengal and the Crisis of Survival
<i>Paper-12</i>	Priyanka Datta	Women Labourers & Trade Union Activism in the Tea Plantations of North Bengal: An Ethnographic Exploration
<i>Paper-13</i>	Radali Rajbanshi & others	Measuring Social and Spatial Disparity: Resources, Livelihoods and Governance in Tea plantation villages of Dooars region.
<i>Paper-14</i>	Phup Kesang Bhutia	A critical analysis of Fair Trade with insights from Darjeeling tea plantations
<i>Paper-15</i>	Kapil Tamang	Capital, Labour, and the Politics of Tea: Rethinking Value Chains in Postcolonial India
Break	1.10 to 1.50 PM	Lunch
Special Lecture	1.50- 2.50 PM	Prof. Indraneel Bhowmik The Natural Rubber Economy of the North-East India: Emerging Issues Discussant: Dr. Rajdeep Singha
Session IV	2.50-4.10 PM	Chair: Prof. Vinoj Abraham/Dr. Rajdeep Singha Rapporteur: Dr. Arunima Deka/Dr. Nitish Gogoi
<i>Paper-16</i>	Manika Mallick & others.	Economic and Environmental Sustainability of Small Tea Growers in the Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal
<i>Paper-17</i>	Rajib Sutradhar	Spice farmers and FPOs in Sikkim
<i>Paper-18</i>	Vanlalrema Kuki	Scheduled Tribes Strategies of Rubber Cultivation in Southern Tripura: An Insight

<i>Paper-19</i>	Padip Chauhan	Contractual Dualism and Informalisation of Tripura's Rubber Plantation Workers
Break	4.10-4.30 PM	Tea
Concluding Session	4.30-5.30 PM	
Valedictory Lecture	4.30-5.00 PM	Prof. Vinoj Abraham Ministry of Commerce Chair, NRPPD
Rapporteurs Report:		Arunima Deka & Nitish Gogoi
Press Release & Guwahati Declaration: Programme Coordinators		Prof. Vinoj Abraham/Dr. Rajdeep Singha/Dr. Abdul Hannan
Certificate Distribution		Prof. Saswati Chowdhury, Director (I/c) OKDISCD
Vote of Thanks		Faculty of OKDISCD





