



Certified Elephant Friendly™ Standards
A project of the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network and the University of Montana

Overview

Certified Elephant Friendly™ Tea is sourced from plantations that meet high standards for the protection of elephant habitat and water resources, reducing human-elephant conflict and mortality, and reducing barriers to elephant movement between elephant habitat areas.

Asian elephants are a wide-ranging species with an important ecological role. As mega-herbivores, elephants feed on a large variety of plants and disperse seeds throughout the forest in their droppings. Asian elephants are endangered globally, primarily due to habitat loss and human-elephant conflict related mortalities. Despite the conversion of prime elephant habitat for human settlements and agricultural uses, elephants travel along ancient movement routes. Across Asia this deeply engrained habit brings elephants in close contact with people, especially around large scale agricultural areas, i.e. tea plantations and their surrounding communities. Shrinking habitat in the region leaves elephants few options to avoid areas of expanding human development.

Asian elephants use tea plantations as rest stops as they travel between foraging areas. The tea shrub *Camellia sinensis* is native to India, but inedible by elephants. Because of the close proximity of elephants to tea-growing communities, plantation workers are highly vulnerable to human-elephant conflict. Additionally, some tea plantation management practices can increase the chance of human-elephant conflict as well as being harmful and, in some cases, deadly to elephants

Pesticides and herbicides can poison elephants when elephants drink water that contains toxic levels of chemicals or consume fertilizers or other substances not stored properly. The salts in some agrichemicals have been known to attract elephants, and some of these substances can be highly toxic if ingested. There are a number of documented cases of deaths of elephants after ingesting substances commonly used in tea production. Safe disposal of any unused chemicals and chemical residue is critical to prevent risks to elephants

Electric fencing, when amperage-dropping stock fence energizers are not used, can be especially dangerous to elephants and humans as an electrocution hazard. Deep, narrow drainage ditches can be especially difficult for juvenile elephants to traverse, and each year a number lose their lives or suffer injury due to drainage ditches. Razor wire or other deterrent fencing using sharp metal has been noted as a source of severe injury and death of elephants in an increasing number of cases. Fencing of all kinds used to keep out elephants and other wild or domestic animals can also force elephants to move into

areas of higher human activity, amplifying human-elephant conflict and contributing to the injury or loss of life of both humans and elephants.

Further, due to a lack of access to natural forage, elephants may be driven by hunger to raid crops and enter villages seeking food, putting them in direct conflict with people. If elephants are chased and harassed by people, they may exhibit aggressive behavior, which may in turn lead to elephant attacks on people or property. Male elephants in the state of *musth*, a natural state related to competition for mate selection, are particularly prone to aggressive behavior and warrant special caution as part of any human-elephant conflict reduction plan.

The ability of people to work and conduct their daily activities within elephant movement zones safely is also of great importance, as people are more likely to protect elephants and their habitat if they feel safe and there are benefits to them for doing so. In other words, not only do tea plantations apply Elephant Friendly™ practices, but they put the safety of their workforce community first and engage these communities in elephant conservation and human-elephant conflict reduction efforts that benefit the local community.

Certified Elephant Friendly™ Tea is sourced from tea plantations that take important steps toward protecting elephants, people and the natural environment from these hazards.

Understanding the Certified Elephant Friendly™ Standards

Please read each standard carefully.

Required standards refer to something that must or must not be done, or to something that is prohibited. These standards must be met before *Elephant Friendly™* certification can be granted. Unless a standard specifies that it is Recommended (see below) it is a requirement.

Some **Required** standards are additionally marked with this symbol: **C** which indicates the standard is critical to achieving the aims of *Certified Elephant Friendly™*. Failure to meet a standard marked as being critical will result in certification being denied or suspended until the standard is met.

Certification may be granted to applicants that fail to meet one or more required standards as long as these standards are not designated as “critical” (see above) AND the applicant provides a written compliance plan with acceptable actions and timelines to resolve outstanding issues.

Recommended standards say that something “should” be done. These standards are highlighted as **Recommended** alongside the heading and reflect the aims and principles of the *Certified Elephant Friendly™* program but are not mandatory in order for certification to be granted.

Scope of the Standards

These standards apply to the certification of agricultural facilities growing tea, defined as *Camellia sinensis*, and Asian elephants, *Elephas maximus*, in India.

Future adaptation of these standards to other types of agricultural is possible.

About the University of Montana and its Broader Impacts Group

University of Montana is home to the top-ranked Wildlife Biology Program in North America, and its broader impact focus centers on the conservation of species and their habitat. A vibrant part of the Office of Research and Creative Scholarship, the Broader Impacts Group (BIG) harnesses the university's transformative research in order to address global challenges through a wide range of innovative approaches and partnerships. Collaborating to develop and implement the Elephant Friendly™ certification program with the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network and a broad range of expert advisors, the University of Montana aims to create a model program in which science, agriculture, and incentives for business enterprises can intersect to address the root causes of the decline of a globally endangered species, the Asian elephant.

About the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network

Established in 2009, the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN) harnesses the power of enterprise to provide incentives for biodiversity protection around the world, and offers economic opportunity to people whose basic needs have put them in conflict with wildlife. Our mission is to protect wildlife in wild places by certifying enterprises that assure people and nature coexist and thrive. Our goals are to: a) conserve threatened wildlife while contributing to the economic vitality of communities; b) set the global standard for Wildlife Friendly™ enterprise and assist members in reaching new and dynamic markets; and c) link Wildlife Friendly™ products and services to consumers, enabling powerful brands to differentiate themselves in a crowded and increasingly values-driven marketplace.

WFEN uses certification as a voluntary tool for conservation enterprise through state-of-the-field best practice standards to safeguard vulnerable and endangered species, including: Certified Wildlife Friendly®, Certified Predator Friendly®, Certified Gorilla Friendly™, Certified Elephant Friendly™, Certified Jaguar Friendly™ and Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™. These standards are built on a foundation of knowledge from the world's top experts for each species, sector, and region to ensure that a) key species are protected for net positive impact and b) local communities are actively involved and benefitting from the presence of thriving populations of wildlife.

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1. Participation in the *Certified Elephant Friendly™* Program

1.0 Regulations

See also Section 5 below on labor.

- C** 1.0.1 Certified tea plantations must ensure they meet all relevant regulations including, but not limited to:
- Tea Marketing (Control) Order
 - Tea Waste (Control) Order
 - Environmental clearances (for tea processing)

1.1 Mapping the plantation

1.1.1 There must be a detailed map and GPS location of the tea plantation site. The map must include the following:

- Perimeter boundaries
- Fence lines
- Roads and other infrastructure
- Tea growing zones
- Water bodies
- Employee housing and other employee facilities
- Forested areas (if applicable)
- Crop fields (if applicable)

1.1.2 Certified tea plantations must provide information to the local Forest Department regarding any known elephant movement patterns based on the map required by 1.1.1.

2. Elephant and other wildlife conservation

2.0 Monitoring elephants

- C** 2.0.1 Official surveys by the Forest Department for monitoring of elephant population must take place in the region where the certified tea plantation is located.

Note: The purpose of this criteria is to ensure there are wild elephants in the ecosystem surrounding the tea plantation, as an operation cannot be Certified Elephant Friendly in the absence of elephants. Tea plantation personnel may assist with collection of data (e.g. setting up remote cameras, etc.), but the monitoring protocols should be those officially recognized by the relevant authority.

2.1 Reducing human/elephant conflict

2.1.1 There must be a written plan for human-elephant conflict management. This must include:

2.1.1.1 A site map (this can be part of the map developed for standard 1.1.1)

2.1.1.2 A list of any provisions the site provides to allow unrestricted and safe passage of elephants.

2.1.1.3 Employee guidelines for reducing human-elephant conflict and supporting safety for elephants and people within the tea plantation boundaries.

2.1.2 Action must be taken to prevent non-employees from entering the tea estate to harass elephants.

2.1.3 All full time employees must review the certified site's Human-Elephant Conflict Management Plan at least annually.

2.1.4 **Recommended**

Recommendations from the Human-Elephant Conflict Management Plan should be posted for employees in illustrative form and/or in local language(s)

2.1.5 The local Forest Department, or governmental agency assigned with the role of overseeing conservation of and conflict with elephants, must be contacted in the event of on-site conflict, injured or dead elephants being found or any other problem with wild elephants within the tea plantation.

Note: The Forest Department is the government agency charged with overseeing conservation of and conflict with elephants in India.

2.1.6 Any incidence of loss of human or elephant life as a result of human-elephant conflict must be reported

- A report must be made to the Forest Department immediately.
- A WFEN incident report must be submitted to the designated Certified Elephant Friendly™ Coordinator in a timely manner.

Note: The WFEN incident report can be submitted via SMS

2.1.7 All non-lethal incidents of human-elephant conflict must be reported designated Certified Elephant Friendly™ Coordinator as part of the certification renewal process.

2.1.8 Certified tea plantations must collaborate with the Forest Department to share information on elephant movements, crop and home raids and any human injury relating to elephants.

2.1.9 **Recommended**

Certified tea plantations are encouraged to provide outreach to local communities on elephant conservation and human-elephant conflict reduction to improve outcomes beyond the boundaries of the tea plantation.

2.2 Habitat and other wildlife conservation

2.2.1 Certified tea plantations and their employees must not reduce, degrade, or otherwise negatively impact elephant habitat within the boundary of the tea plantation. The following activities are prohibited:

2.2.1.1 Firewood removal,

2.2.1.2 Livestock grazing,

2.2.1.3 Replacement of native vegetation for crop production, and/or

2.2.1.4 Illegal harvest of forest products.

2.2.2 **Recommended**

Certified tea plantations should collaborate with relevant agencies to protect and restore habitat for elephants either within tea estate boundaries or for local habitat recovery projects off site. Permanent signage should be provided noting protected area boundaries and regulations for protecting natural resources in close proximity to certified tea plantations.

2.2.3 Wildlife of any species must not be hunted or trapped within the boundary of the tea plantation. Fishing is permitted if conducted in accordance with government regulations.

Note: On a case-by-case basis, hunting of non-key species for subsistence, or cultural use may be permitted. Note also that rats and mice are not included as wildlife for the purposes of this standard.

2.2.4 Wildlife must not be held captive within the boundary of the tea plantation, except for properly regulated activities, in compliance with local and international law by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them humanely.

Note: This includes temporary captivity of protected and wildlife species e.g. for photo opportunities.

2.2.5 **Recommended**

Certified tea plantations should provide low-impact, low energy consumption fuel sources (such as sustainably grown wood within the tea plantation boundary) to full time resident tea workers so that nearby deforestation/wood removal can be minimized.

Note: In India, tea plantations situated on government revenue lands are required to supply fuel sources to their full time resident workers.

3. Infrastructure at the tea plantation

3.0 Drainage ditches, water channels, wells, ponds and other water sources.

The map and known elephant movement patterns identified in section 1.1 will identify corridors and pathways that are used by elephants. If these pathways go to or cross drainage ditches, ponds, water tanks or other water sources the following standards apply.

- C** 3.0.1 Natural water sources must remain available for access by elephants.
- C** 3.0.2 Drainage ditches and other water channels must not put elephants that wish to cross or access water at risk of injury.
 - Drainage ditches and other water channels must not pose a danger of entrapment of elephants.
 - Ditches and water channels must be angled, terraced or stepped to allow elephants, including juveniles, to cross or access water safely. OR
 - Drainage ditches and other water channels must be bridged with grates, culverts, drainage pipes or similar options that are designed so that they do not trap or otherwise injure elephants and other wildlife.
- C** 3.0.3 Man-made tea garden water storage ponds, tanks or wells must be designed and managed so as not to put elephants and other wildlife at risk of injury or death.
 - Water tanks or wells must be elephant-proof to ensure elephant safety.
 - The slope of the sides of man-made ponds must allow safe entry and exit by elephants, and there must be terracing/steps on at least one side of the pond that will allow elephants of all ages to access water safely OR
 - Man-made ponds must exclude elephants such as with fencing that meets the requirements of these standards (see section 3.1 below).
- 3.0.4 **Recommended**
Certified tea plantations should collaborate with agencies and groups to secure water quality and availability for elephants beyond the borders of their plantation, with special attention to ensuring prevention of waste from the tea plantation operations and employee housing areas doesn't impact surrounding water sources.

3.1 Electricity and electric fences

Elephants are at risk of death or injury by electrocution from low-hanging electrical lines and electrified fencing that does not meet animal and human safety specifications.

- C** 3.1.1 Electrical service lines must be underground or secured at such a height to avoid contact by elephants moving through the plantation.
- C** 3.1.2 Electric fencing must not cause a risk to humans or elephants.
- 3.1.3 Only energizers specifically designed for livestock fencing must be used.

3.2 Other Fencing/Barriers

- C 3.2.1 Elephants must be able to move freely into and out of the certified tea plantation without being blocked by fences or other barriers.
- C 3.2.2 Within individual tea plantations elephant movement must not be blocked by fences or other barriers, with exceptions listed in standard 3.2.3.
- 3.2.3 When it is necessary to use fences or other barriers to protect elephants from hazards, the fence/barrier must not completely exclude elephants from foraging areas, natural water sources or corridors and pathways used by elephants.

Note: See section 1.1 for identification of corridors and pathways used by elephants.

4. Land and tea crop management

4.0 Use and storage of toxic substances

Certified Elephant Friendly™ recommends organic production of tea under this standard, and if the plantation carries current USDA organic, Indocert certification or an equivalent certification then this section will be scored automatically as compliant. For alternative organic certificates to those listed above, the applicant can submit a petition to WFEN to include their current organic certificate and may be asked to provide full organic test results. Farms moving towards organic production should indicate their plans and timelines toward receiving organic certification.

However, recognizing that the risk of accidental death to elephants is acute across the tea growing regions, the great majority of which are non-organic, we are prepared to allow certification for non-organic tea subject to the criteria below. Applicants should note that *Certified Elephant Friendly™* is undergoing further research into the impact of chemicals used in tea production on the health of the local ecosystem, and we reserve the right to require organic certification in the future should we determine that chemicals used on non-organic plantations pose a serious long term threat to workers, elephants and/or other wildlife. Certified, but non-organic tea plantations would then have a grace period to commit to convert to organic to maintain their *Elephant Friendly™* certification.

4.0.1 **Recommended**

Certified tea plantations should work towards organic certification.

4.0.2 There must be a written plan for the use and storage of chemicals. The plan must include:

4.0.2.1 A list of all synthetic chemicals used to include fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

4.0.2.2 How and where synthetic chemicals are stored.

4.0.2.3 How equipment is cleaned to remove synthetic chemical residues

4.0.2.4 How any synthetic chemical waste is disposed of.

C 4.0.3 Synthetic chemical storage must be elephant-proof.

Note: Some chemicals – such as urea – are known to be potential attractants to elephants and have been linked to elephant deaths.

- C 4.0.4 Pesticides and other hazardous chemicals must not be applied within 5 meters of any permanent water body.
- C 4.0.5 Anyone using agrochemicals on a *Certified Elephant Friendly™* tea plantation must be trained and competent to do so.

Note: Training must include the mixing, use and disposal of agrochemicals.

- 4.0.6 Anyone using agrochemicals on a *Certified Elephant Friendly™* tea plantation must have appropriate personal protective equipment.
- 4.0.7 Unless the certified farm is organic certified according to the introductory paragraph in section 4.0 of this document, WFEN and its partners reserve the right to conduct chemical residue testing of water, soil and/or plants to verify that they are meeting safe usage practices for chemicals and that contamination levels do not exceed internationally recommended limits for agrochemicals.

4.1 Wastes associated with tea production

- 4.1.1 Plastic and other waste associated with production of *Certified Elephant Friendly™* tea must be collected and disposed of without risk of elephants accessing the waste.

Note: Plastic and other non-biodegradable waste could include the packages tea seedlings are wrapped in, polythene bags, empty chemical bottles and other plastics. This also includes waste generated by tea plantation workers and their households. Plastics and other solid waste have been shown to be ingested by elephants and other wildlife and pose a health threat if not properly disposed of.

- 4.1.2 **Recommended**
The use of single-use and non-biodegradable plastics should be minimized throughout the operation.

4.2 Water for tea production

- 4.2.1 A farm producing *Certified Elephant Friendly™* must ensure the best use of water for crops while not depriving the community of water for other essential needs.

Note: If irrigation of crops is necessary and there is sufficient water to do so, irrigation must be managed so that water is not wasted. For example, irrigation should take place in early morning or evening when crops are not heat stressed and when evaporation is minimized.

4.3 Soil and land management

- 4.3.1 **Recommended**

Certified tea plantations should use terraces and/or plant trees, shrubs and ground cover alongside rivers, streams and other watercourses to prevent soil erosion and run-off.

4.3.2 **Recommended**

Weed management strategies should include coordination with the Forest Department to ensure weed invasions are addressed using the least toxic methods recommended by their agency.

4.3.3 **Recommended**

Native vegetation should be grown within the boundary of the tea plantation to deliver the following benefits:

- Help protect biodiversity within local ecological systems,
- Provide natural vegetation foraging opportunities for elephants along their movement paths,
- Support landscape connectivity,
- Improve carbon sequestration and mitigate the effects of climate change, and
- Encourage natural pest control for tea plants by natural predators such as bat, birds and spiders.

5. Employment on Certified tea plantations

Certified Elephant Friendly™ requires that certified tea plantations conform with best practice in the treatment of employees. If the plantation is currently certified to a global Fair Trade standard that includes rules on modern slavery and human trafficking and child labor, or is a member of the Ethical Tea Partnership they are deemed to meet the requirements of this section. Small Tea Growers (STG) and Large Tea Growers (the organized sector) must comply with guidelines provided by the government.

In all cases it is required that certified tea plantations conform with Indian labor law.

5 Labor conditions

- C** 5.0.1 There must be no illegal child labor on certified tea plantations.
- C** 5.0.2 There must be an implemented policy to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking that includes:
 - 5.0.2.1 Worker training
 - 5.0.2.2 Anti-trafficking information available to worker's families
- 5.0.3 Legal, fair wages must be paid.
- 5.0.4 Workers must not be made indebted to the tea plantation in such a way that traps them into employment.
- 5.0.5 Workers must be given at least one day per week off.

5.0.6 If workers are housed on site, they must be provided adequate clean and safe housing for themselves and their families.

C 5.0.7 Workers must have access to clean drinking water and sanitation.

5.0.8 Workers must have access to health care.

5.0.9 Workers' children must have access to at least standard local education.

5.0.10 If workers are provided with food as part of their compensation for their labor, this must be of reasonable quality and quantity and meet their customary needs.

5.0.11 If workers grow their own food this activity must be included in the overall Human-Elephant Conflict Management Plan for the tea plantation, as per section 2.1.1.

5.0.12 Any violations of the labor conditions required by law and/or within these standards must be reported to WFEN.

Note: WFEN reserves the right to terminate certification if the violations are considered serious enough, or in the case of repeated violations.

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