

# International Tea Farms Alliance

Introduction & Invitation  
2011.02.28

Tea farmers  
empowering  
tea farmers.

# Our dream...

“To bring truly premium tea to the people of the world.”

With this kind of passion, even a small tea farm is a global tea farm.

But as we all know, reality is not quite as simple. What is important in the distribution industry is scale and price. Consumers, even if they wanted to, currently have no way of knowing what kind of tea leaves are on the shelves of supermarkets.

As farmers we want to tell people the truth, but our voices seem to fade in the wind as it travels the seas and never reaches the ears of tea lovers. A gap between farmers and consumers that remains forever no matter how much we try to fill it.

As farmers we want to pour our hearts into cultivating the best tea leaves, and that is why our scale is small. If creating economies of scale requires sacrificing quality, that is a sacrifice we cannot make.

Until now, farmers like ourselves have been all but invisible in the industry, in the marketplace, and among consumers. It is time to take center stage.

# ..is now possible

## **What was impossible is now possible**

The Internet revolution in at end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made it possible for small farms and farmers to reach out to the world even as we live in the countryside, away from consumers.

## **Together we can be heard**

And today, the Web 2.0 revolution, the social, interactive nature of today's web technology will help us to transform from single candles flickering in the dark into a bright signal fire, lighting the world with the truths behind quality tea and our passion for creating it.

## **Now is the time to act**

And there will be some who do not welcome our new voice, but markets around the world are calling for us. Those who truly love tea, those café and specialty tea company owners, even brokers, who realize the importance and benefits of partnering with us—they are looking for us.

# The world awaits the ITFA

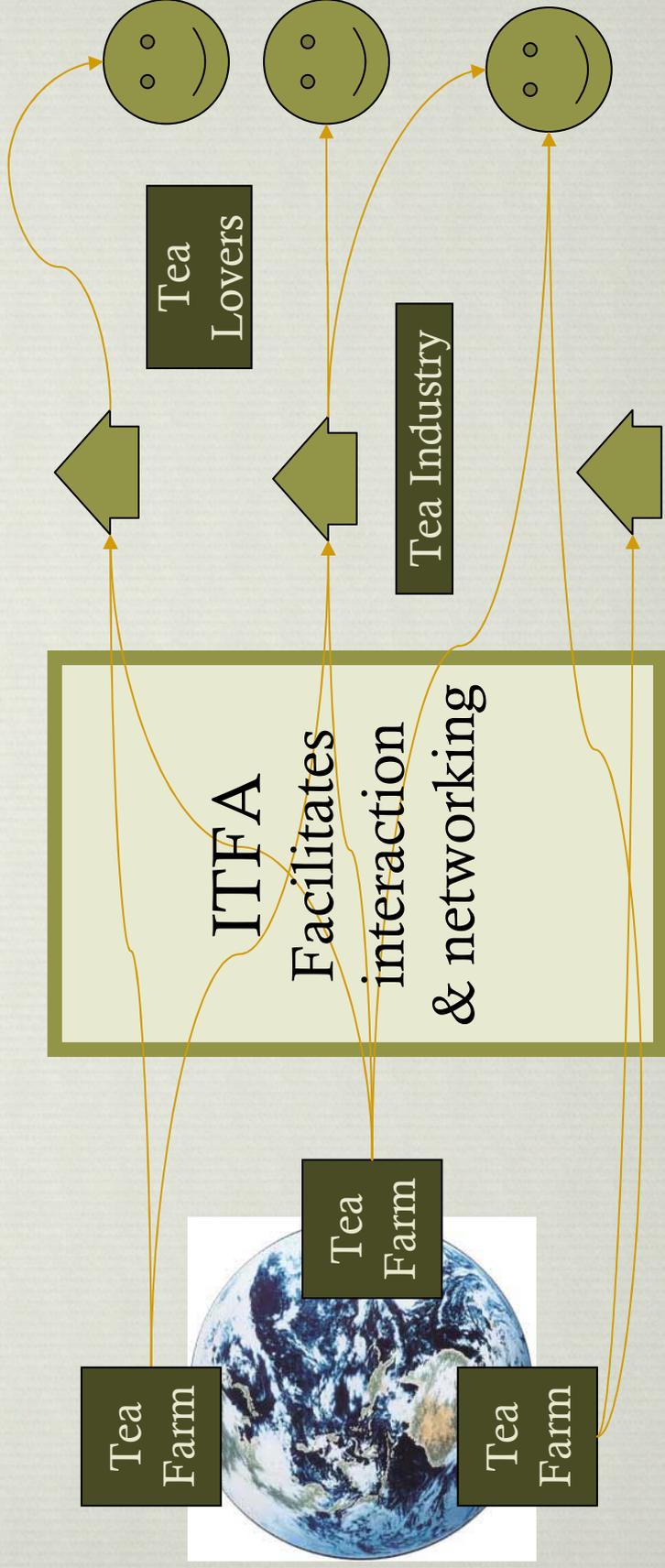
As a global network of tea farmers dedicated to and passionate about growing the highest quality tea, we will pool our resources to make ourselves known to the industry, to reach out to tea lovers around the world.

# Vision | Mission | Values

- ❖ Vision: The International Tea Farms Alliance is an organization of tea farmers from around the world who seek to interact directly with tea lovers.
- ❖ Mission: To support tea farmers as they attempt to reach out to tea lovers around the world by pooling funds and facilitating opportunities for interaction between each other as well as with distributors, retailers, and consumers.
- ❖ Values:
  - ❖ Produce high quality tea leaves in a sustainable manner
  - ❖ Promote transparency in the tea industry through honest communication

# Mission

To support tea farmers as they attempt to reach out to tea lovers around the world by pooling funds and facilitating opportunities for interaction between each other as well as with distributors, retailers, and consumers.



# From President

**I want to welcome everyone who sells tea to the ITFA!**

By participating in our effort, you will be extending your network globally, and increasing transparency within our industry. We hope to be able to answer all the questions you may have had about how tea is grown and processed.

**And I want to welcome everyone who enjoys tea to the ITFA as well!**

From the tea leaves born in the tea field, to the tea cup in your hand, you will be able to taste true tea from its source.

The ITFA, while made up of farmers, exists also for tea industry professionals, retailers, café owners, and of course, consumers—all those who love tea. I want to invite you to join us in this journey that will take us across borders, oceans, languages and cultures.

**Akihiro**  
President, Kyoto Obubu Tea Plantations  
Representative, ITFA (International Tea Farms Alliance)



# Organization Facts

- ❖ Summary
  - ❖ Non-Profit Cooperative
    - ❖ Kyoto Obubu Tea Plantations (establishment)
    - ❖ Matcha Latte Media Inc. (Website, Eng. documents, strategy consulting)
    - ❖ Currently recruiting operations staff
- ❖ History
  - ❖ Mar 2011: Launch website and promotion activities
  - ❖ Jun 2011: Participate in the World Tea Expo
- ❖ Web
  - ❖ [www.teafarms.org](http://www.teafarms.org)
  - ❖ General (open to public)  
[www.facebook.com/pages/International-Tea-Farms-Alliance/126034860800627](http://www.facebook.com/pages/International-Tea-Farms-Alliance/126034860800627)
  - ❖ Professionals (members only)  
[www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3726963](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3726963)

# Who is the ITFA for?

- ❖ Small tea farmers
- ❖ The tea loving public
- ❖ Retail business owners
- ❖ Specialty tea shop & café owners
- ❖ Professionals involved in the tea industry

# Activities

For farmers

For industry & individuals

# Activities

(tea farm oriented)

- ❖ Certification
  - ❖ Compliance with child labor laws, minimum wage guarantee, etc.
  - ❖ Safety compliance: residual pesticide level testing, etc.
  - ❖ Environmental policies
- ❖ Exchange study system, technical specialist dispatching
- ❖ Introducing staff, volunteers
- ❖ Micro-financing, grants
- ❖ Translation / PR support
  - ❖ Website creation, package design, printing
  - ❖ Tea tour introduction
- ❖ Support from your fellow farmers in any way possible.

# Activities

(industry, individuals oriented)

- ❖ Marketing/PR activity
  - ❖ Web marketing of member farms and supporting retailers and other businesses
  - ❖ Participation in expos, conferences, etc.
- ❖ Referrals & Interaction
  - ❖ Referrals between farmers and retailers, suppliers, etc.
  - ❖ Email/online community based interaction between farmers, and between farmers and industry persons, individual tea lovers
- ❖ Sales
  - ❖ Export support (customs quarantine)
  - ❖ Shipment of samples
  - ❖ Sales support in various language (via email)
- ❖ Education
  - ❖ Gather info from farmers about farming techniques in different regions
  - ❖ Gather info about consumer markets, marketing, etc.

# Benefits

Farmers, Industry, Individuals

# Benefits for Farmers

- ❖ International Marketing & Branding
  - ❖ International network of tea farmers
  - ❖ Web marketing in various languages (starting w/Japanese & English)
    - ❖ Study exchange system
  - ❖ Samples shipping
    - ❖ Exchange cultivation & processing technical knowledge
  - ❖ Tea tour referrals
    - ❖ Translation support
  - ❖ Email, phone based sales representation
    - ❖ Micro-finance and grant support
- ❖ Referrals
  - ❖ Referrals from potential customers (retailers, buyers, individuals)
    - ❖ Certification
      - ❖ Based on ITFA criteria, farmers will be certified for their compliance with various safety and ethics guidelines
  - ❖ Volunteers, employees, contractors
    - ❖ ITFA Criteria (under consideration)
  - ❖ Investors
    - ❖ Safety: residual pesticide test
    - ❖ Ethics: Child labor compliance, minimum wage compliance, social responsibility, environmental policy
- ❖ Cost effective participation in international trade shows, etc.
  - ❖ ITFA will rent booths at expos and trade shows so farmers can split the cost of participation

# Benefits for the Industry

- ❖ Referrals to ITFA certified tea farms
- ❖ Create plans to interact with tea farmers
- ❖ Web marketing
- ❖ Free samples from farmers (6 times per year?)
- ❖ Certification
  - ❖ Based on ITFA criteria, farmers will be certified for their compliance with various safety and ethics guidelines
- ❖ ITFA Criteria (under consideration)
  - ❖ Safety: residual pesticide test
  - ❖ Ethics: Child labor compliance, minimum wage compliance, social responsibility, environmental policy

# Benefits for Individuals

- ❖ Free samples from farmers (6 times per year?)
- ❖ Opportunity to meet and interact with farmers
- ❖ Become an active member of the effort to support the culture of tea around the world

# Membership Criteria

# Membership Criteria

- ❖ Farms
  - ❖ Compliance with the safety regulations & laws of your country
  - ❖ Confidence in the quality of your tea products
  - ❖ Willingness to provide assistance
  - ❖ Dedication to fairness and transparency
  - ❖ Willingness to work pro-actively in publishing information
  - ❖ Willingness to participate in activities contributing to society
  - ❖ Ability and willingness to ship directly to individual consumers, or willingness to eventually implement direct shipment
- ❖ Industry Supporters/Partners
  - ❖ Compliance with the safety regulations & laws of your country
  - ❖ Willingness to provide assistance
  - ❖ Dedication to fairness and transparency
  - ❖ Willingness to work pro-actively in publishing information
  - ❖ Willingness to participate in activities contributing to society
- ❖ Individuals
  - ❖ Willingness to provide assistance
  - ❖ Willingness to supporting businesses dedicated to fairness and transparency
  - ❖ Dedication to supporting small farms

# Funding & Membership Pricing

# Funding & Membership Pricing

- ❖ The organization will be applying for Japanese government grants for NPOs in addition to member's fees.
- ❖ Funds will go toward translation work, costs incurred during recruiting, and preparation of website and other marketing material.
- ❖ Farms may optionally contribute more money to participate in certain activities such as Expo attendance
- ❖ We anticipate the following categories of members:
  - ❖ Tea Farms
  - ❖ Industry Partners
  - ❖ Individual Tea Professionals
  - ❖ Individual Tea Lovers
- ❖ Pricing will be a flat US\$15 per member, with an optional \$30 upgrade for 2x amount of samples as might be needed for evaluation purposes.

# Unresolved Issues

# ITFA's Unresolved

## Issues

- ❖ As a completely new organization, the ITFA has many issues that still need to be resolved.
  - ❖ With the help of all our members, both farmers and non-farmers, we hope to discuss and find solutions to these issues. (there may be a mailing list or a web based forum where we can hold discussions.).
- ❖ Issues
    - ❖ Language barriers
    - ❖ Number of tea farms to recruit
    - ❖ Gaining recognition
    - ❖ Knowledge of customs and shipping regulations
    - ❖ Marketing know-how
    - ❖ Staffing
    - ❖ Other

# Supplement

## The ITFA does not reject standard distribution practices.

The organization's vision and mission being what it is, the question of whether or not the International Tea Farms Alliance rejects standard distribution practices and excludes existing brokers and distributors is often raised. We want to make it clear that ITFA in no way rejects standard industry distribution practices. The aim of ITFA is to create a support network for small scale tea farmers and to impress the world with the tea that these farmers produce.

Membership in ITFA itself in no way creates a parallel distribution channel. ITFA seeks to provide an alternative and more efficient means of spreading tea farm info through the web and other means to consumers, retailers, cafes, and industry professionals.

However, international distribution is possible for tea leaves only if it passes through customs and quarantine inspections at each country's customs offices. Tea farms participating in ITFA are able to give information about their tea fields and cultivation practices because they are the producers. Yet, each tea farm by itself does not have the ability to research the various regulations and criteria for cross-border shipments--international shipping of tea leaves is a difficult task.

If a tea farm currently makes use of a broker, distributor or retail network, it is still possible to continue that relationship while a member of ITFA. Participating in ITFA will only add to a member's ability to find new customers, and adding that customer to the existing network is the member's choice.

In other words, it is even possible for distributors to participate along with their tea farms in order to reach out and develop new relationships with retail partners.

The vision of the International Tea Farms Alliance is one in which farms, consumers as well as industry players participate together growing tea, distributing tea, and drinking tea with transparency and fairness.

# Partners

World Tea Expo

Tea festivals around the world (tentative)

Matcha Latte Media Inc.