



Media Relations

Unilever N.V. Weena 455 3013 AL Rotterdam
Tel: +31(0)10 217 4844 (na 17.30 +31(0)10 217 4000)
E-mail: mediarelations.rotterdam@unilever.com Web: www.unilever.com

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Unilever Commissions Research in India on the Feasibility of Non-Pesticide Methods of Plant Protection for Tea Crops

London & Rotterdam – 4th August, 2014 – As part of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, Unilever has committed that by 2020 all its agricultural raw materials will be produced using sustainable crop practices.

This is why today, Unilever has announced that it will be initiating a major scientific research study to evaluate the environmental and economic feasibility of applying biological or non-pesticide methods for plant protection of tea crops in India.

This follows on from our recently updated guidance document called “Unilever Guidelines on the Use of Pesticides in Sustainable Tea Sourcing¹.” These Guidelines - which were published in March 2014 – set out our commitment to raising standards in tea production by reducing or eliminating pesticides in tea growing, in partnership with our suppliers and farmers.

However, Unilever recognises that progress can best be made by demonstrating, through collaborative scientific research, what can be achieved on the ground.

Unilever has therefore chosen to commission CABI to conduct this research project. CABI is an inter-governmental, not-for-profit organisation focused on improving people’s lives by applying scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment.

In the coming weeks, CABI will review existing practices of crop protection and the limitations of current techniques in India. In cooperation with the Tea Board of India, the Tea Research Institutes and key industry partners, CABI will then design protocols for pilot field-trials aimed at investigating novel approaches for biological, non-pesticide management of pests aiming at a holistic rejuvenation of the eco system. These field-trials will be run in partnership with the Tea Board and tea growers on selected estates and will commence during the next growing season.

The Tea Board of India is already pioneering work in this area through “Trustea” and more recently with the launch of a new Plant Protection Code (PPC). Unilever have supported and participated actively in both these initiatives.

¹ http://www.unilever.com/images/Unilever_Guidelines_on_Use_of_Pesticides_in_Sustainable_Tea_Sourcing_2014_tcm13-388339.pdf

We believe that results of this Unilever funded research will provide a firm foundation for the industry, government and tea growers to define a clear roadmap for the short and medium term.

The data and recommendations, which will be made public, will also guide Indian Industry and Unilever's next steps. We look forward to working with CABI and collaborating with the Tea Board of India as well as the wider tea industry to raise the bar on biological methods of plant protection.

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Unilever Media contacts:

Prasad Pradhan +91-22-39832429 or prasad.pradhan@unilever.com

Marc Potma +31 (0) 6 1137 5464 or mediarelations.rotterdam@unilever.com

About Unilever's Guidelines on Use of Pesticides in Sustainable Tea Sourcing 2014:

[Unilever's Guidelines on Use of Pesticides in Sustainable Tea Sourcing](#) is designed to drive market transformation by working with key suppliers and the industry to eliminate or reduce the use of pesticides in tea production as far as reasonably practicable. Under the Sustainable Agriculture Code, we are working with suppliers and farmers to minimise their use. To deliver our ambition we are working with our suppliers and with the tea industry in general to eliminate a number of pesticides from our entire tea value chain by the end of 2014 including WHO Class 1a or Class 1b pesticides. Our ambition is the elimination of WHO Class II pesticides from tea production for Unilever by 2020. We are proactively engaging with our suppliers, pesticide manufacturers and national governments or regulatory agencies, as appropriate, to achieve this ambition as it will not be possible without their close cooperation.

About Unilever

Unilever is one of the world's leading suppliers of Food, Home and Personal Care products with sales in over 190 countries. We work with 174,000 colleagues around the world and generated annual sales of €49.8 billion in 2013. Over half of our company's footprint is in the faster growing developing and emerging markets (57% in 2013). Working to create a better future every day, we help people feel good, look good and get more out of life. Our portfolio includes some of the world's best known brands, 14 of which - Knorr, Persil / Omo, Dove, Sunsilk, Hellmann's, Surf, Lipton, Rexona / Sure, Wall's ice cream, Lux, Flora / Becel, Rama / Blue Band, Magnum and Axe / Lynx - now generate a turnover of €1 billion or more.

Our ambition is to double the size of our business, whilst reducing our overall environmental footprint (including sourcing, consumer use and disposal) and increasing our positive social impact. We are committed to helping more than a billion people take action to improve their health and well-being, sourcing all our agricultural raw materials sustainably by 2020, and decoupling our growth from our environmental impact. Supporting our three big goals, we have defined nine commitments, underpinned by targets encompassing social, environmental and economic areas. See more on the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan at www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/.

Unilever has been recognised in the Dow Jones Sustainability World Indexes for 14 consecutive years. We are included in the FTSE4Good Index Series and attained a top environmental score of 5, leading to inclusion in the FTSE4Good Environmental Leaders Europe 40 Index. Unilever has been named sector leader of the CDP's Forests programme for three consecutive years, and in 2014 led the list of Global Corporate Sustainability Leaders in the GlobeScan/SustainAbility annual survey - for the fourth year running. Unilever was named LinkedIn's third most sought-after employer worldwide in 2013.

For more information about Unilever and its brands, please visit www.unilever.com.

About CABI

CABI is a not-for-profit international organisation that improves people's lives worldwide by providing information and applying scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment. Working at the intersection of international development, publishing and science, CABI helps address issues of global concern, such as food security. We do this by improving crop yields, combating threats to agriculture from pests and diseases, protecting biodiversity, safeguarding the environment, and improving access to agricultural and environmental scientific knowledge. Our mission and direction are driven by our 48 member countries.

For more information go to www.cabi.org

