

GUEST EDITORIAL

China is the largest tea-producing country in the world. It is the first country in the world that discovered and used tea plants. According to the historical records, as early as in Chinese Han Dynasty (59 BC), there was a writing record about tea marketing. Since the founding of new China, tea production has developed quickly. In 1950, China only had 169,500 hectares of tea gardens but upto the year of 2011, the tea-producing acreage increased to about 2.21 million hectares, 12 times larger than that in 1950. The tea production in 2011 was around 15,50,000 tons, 23.9 times higher than that in 1950. The tea export also increased continuously in the past 60 years. The total tea exports were 343,000 tons in 2011.

China has a long history of tea production. Presently, it produces six types of tea to match different people who have their own living customs and consumption demands. These six types of tea are *Black tea*, *Green tea*, *Oolong tea*, *Dark tea* (compressed tea), *White tea* and *Yellow tea*. The former 4 types of tea are the main tea kinds in China and account for 97% of the total tea production in China. In this *Special Issue of Tea in China*, five scientists were invited to write the papers introducing the different types of tea in China.

China had a fast development in production, consumption and exports of tea. Amongst other R&D technologies, a rich and varied germplasm and cultivars have played a significant role on the development of the Chinese tea industry. For example some elite cultivates such as Anji Baicha, Longjing 43 have created a high economic output value in Chinese tea industry.

The other important factor influencing the development of the Chinese tea industry has been the enhancement of Deep Manufacture of Tea that dealt with the extraction and utilization of tea components. For the purpose of understanding this major influence in the development of Chinese tea industry, a paper was invited on the “Development of Premium Teas in China” which is included in the section “Technologies that Shaped the Tea Industry” in this issue. It tells us how the diversified tea products had an impact on the growth of Chinese tea industry. As result the output value of this second industry of tea which includes the ready-to-drink teas and the extraction of tea bio-active molecules like polyphenols and theanine, etc., has surpassed the output value of the first industry, i.e. traditional tea growing and marketing tea for consumption as beverage.

I look forward to the sustained development of Chinese tea industry and trust that more varied and colourful value-added tea products will be developed and produced in the future years in China.

GUEST EDITOR

Chen Zongmao

*Academecian of Chinese Academy of Engineering
Professor, Tea Research Institute,
Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences*