

## AV Thomas' story

Indian tea farmer AV Thomas is a model farmer – and that's official! He is passing on his farming expertise to neighbouring tea farmers in Kerala, ensuring quality in the Fairtrade tea sold through the Sahyadri Farmers Consortium.



Thomas has been farming for 30 years and knows some of the best ways to produce excellent tea without using pesticides or chemicals. Every morning and evening he walks to neighbouring farms, some of them so remote they cannot be reached by vehicles.

"I've been a model farmer for five years," he said. "The quality of the green leaf is important so I inspect that. I encourage the farmers to stick to the plucking interval of eight to 10 days. If the bushes are not plucked in that interval the leaf gets hard and is not good. I am also involved in meetings and am happy to do this."

As well as receiving a fair price, farmers selling tea to Sahyadri have access to credit loans, with repayments made directly from their weekly payments for the tea.

"Without this we could not get a loan easily," Thomas said, "and since we are working as a group we get a better rate."

Thomas and his wife, Mary Kutty, have three children. Their son, Bobby works on the farm, but hostel fees for their daughter at university and school fees for their younger son, Renny, mean it is an expensive time for them.

"I have taken a loan for educating my children," Thomas said. "They have a thirst for education so I plan to help them to be educated."

Thomas has also used the loan to buy a cow, Mani Kitty, to provide milk – and also dung which is combined with natural ingredients, such as eggshell and dandelion, then put into a cow pat pit to produce natural manure for the farm.

He is very pleased that Traidcraft's new blend of Indian Ocean tea includes tea from Sahyadri.

"We can ensure that the best tea is given from the farmers," he said. "It will be a great help if you buy the tea since we are using the Fairtrade premium to help develop our farming communities."

### About Sahyadri Farmers Consortium

Based in Peermade, a small town in the mountains of Kerala, the Sahyadri Tea Farmers Consortium is Traidcraft's newest tea supplier.

Small-scale farmers in the area grow tea which is processed in their own modern factory. Model farmers share knowledge with their neighbours on how to produce quality tea without pesticides or chemicals.

A women's development wing has also been established which helps identify projects to be funded by the Fairtrade premium.

### Buy tea from Sahyadri

Help model farmers like A V Thomas by [buying Traidcraft's Indian Ocean Tea from our webstore](#).

Want to visit this producer group?

- [Take our Meet the People tour to South India and see the benefits of fair trade firsthand.](#)