

Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct for the German Tea & Herbal Infusions Association

Adopted at the General Assembly held on 7th April, 2022 in Bremen

I. Preamble

The German Tea & Herbal Infusions Association (Deutscher Tee & Kräutertee Verband e.V.) was established in 2020 to represent the interests of the German tea industry, following the merger of the German Tea Association and the German Herbal Infusions Association (WKF).

Previously, these interests had been represented by the German Tea Association, established over a century ago and the German Herbal Infusions Association (WKF), which had existed for over 20 years.

The German tea industry is characterised by medium-sized family businesses that uphold sustainable and traditional values.

Its member companies specialise in various areas, including the import, production, blending, packaging and/or marketing of tea (*Camellia sinensis* Linnaeus, O. Kuntze) as well as all categories and forms of herbal and fruit infusions.

Together, the Association and its members are committed to gender equality, preserving and realising human rights, respect for human dignity, protecting the natural environment and promoting healthy nutrition.

Through sustainable economic activity at all levels, it is important to ensure appropriate living and working conditions for all parties involved throughout the supply chain. Ongoing efforts should be made to improve social, economic and ecological circumstances and thereby ensure the long-term availability of safe raw materials.

With the existing challenges in mind, the Association and its members decided to adopt the current Code of Conduct.

II. Code

The member companies produce and supply a very wide range of high-quality products.

Underpinning their approach to business is a determination and commitment to do so in strict compliance with applicable laws and with integrity and honesty at all times.

They have adopted a quality code and pursuant to the current Code of Conduct, have also committed themselves to promoting efforts to uphold principles relating to human and employment rights, environmental protection and compliance with internationally recognised standards.

Compliance with the current Code of Conduct also depends on the suppliers to the member companies adhering to the same principles. Supply agreements concluded by members of the Association should include an obligation to comply with this code or equivalent regulation.

The member companies expect socially fair and sustainable behaviour from business partners within the value chain.

All participants are obliged to implement and comply with national and supranational laws and regulations.

In the event of any contentious circumstances, regulations should be applied that are optimal for people and the environment and in social matters, the regulations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The current Code is based on:

- the UN Declaration of Human Rights,
- the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child,
- the Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The member companies also explicitly set out the following:

1. Compliance with the valid laws of sovereign states

The Association and its members acknowledge the valid laws and regulations of sovereign states. All possible efforts shall be made to enforce compliance with the same throughout the supply chain.

This includes minimum standards governing freedom of assembly, collective bargaining, organisation of employee representation, minimum wages, working hours regulations, prevention of discrimination and occupational health and safety.

2. Business integrity

No unfair methods shall be used in the business practices of the signatories and their employees.

The signatories may not demand or accept benefits or other advantages from third parties in connection with their activities for themselves or others, nor may they grant third parties any inappropriate advantages. The signatories shall refrain from concluding any agreements that would constitute a restriction of free competition.

The signatories shall not conclude any agreements that would ultimately hinder free competition.

3. Working conditions

3.1 Compensation

The wages and social benefits paid to employees must comply with the applicable laws, binding collective agreements and individual contracts, as well as statutory minimum wage regulations and should be suitable to meet the basic needs of the workers.

3.2 Child labour

The use of exploitative child labour throughout the entire value chain, from cultivation to the point of sale, is strictly prohibited. The scope includes any activities imposed on children that could expose them to mental, physical, social, or moral risk or harm and conflict with their educational needs. All minimum requirements according to ILO 138 and 182 must be met.

3.3 Forced labour

There must be no exploitation of forced labour or workers compelled under pressure, nor any profit made from any such exploitation. Imposing physical punishment, depriving persons of their liberty, threatening violence, or engaging in any other forms of harassment or abuse as a means of imposing discipline or control are prohibited.

The deployment of workers within the scope of an official reintegration program for prisoners is not deemed to constitute a violation of the Code.

3.4 Occupational health and safety

Every supplier within the value chain must ensure their employees have safe and healthy working conditions and regulate, for example, the handling of dangerous substances, fire safety measures and machine safety.

As minimum requirements, suppliers must also provide clean drinking water, adequate sanitary facilities and access to medical care.

4. Environment

The signatories support and promote sustainable and responsible operational and cultivation methods.

The methods adopted to use agriculture, manage energy resources, treat wastewater and manage waste must meet or exceed legal requirements.

This particularly concerns the protection of water, soil, plant diversity and animals and thus a responsible and minimal use of plant protection and fertilising agents in cultivation.

5. Commitment and enforcement

The following signatories hereby commit to cooperate in the spirit of this Code:

- The signing member companies,
- The suppliers of the member companies, and
- Those supporting the goals of this Code.

The signing member companies commit to making this Code contractually binding, monitoring compliance with the same and providing assistance in the event of any deficiencies.

All suppliers should be obligated to comply with the regulations of this Code. They should impose the obligations incumbent on them under this Code of Conduct on their suppliers by signing the current Code of Conduct or in any another appropriate way.

This Code represents a standard that can be further refined as required by each individual company. Company standards that go beyond the scope of this Code in all areas can replace it. More stringent standards must be met and adhered to where required by laws, international and national regulations.

This Code shall not compete with other national or international codes. Provided the objectives are comparable and the effectiveness is higher, a more effective form of cooperation is sought.

Each signing member company remains responsible for implementing this Code and all related communication thereto.

6. Consequences of non-compliance

If any member company is found to be repeatedly in breach of its obligations under this Code to a significant extent, it shall be removed from the list of signatories published by the Association.
