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TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4" – "*THE COST OF A CUPPA*"

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REPORTER:	Jane Deith
PRODUCER:	Sally Chesworth
EDITOR:	David Ross

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THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

“FILE ON 4”

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#### ACTUALITY OF KETTLE BOILING

DEITH: Having a cuppa is part of the rhythm of our lives. We drink 165 million cups a day. Britain runs on tea, from everyday builders to the luxury black teas of Assam.

#### ACTUALITY IN TEA ESTATE

DEITH: This part of North Eastern India is home to some of the most famous tea estates in the world, supplying brands from Tata, who make Tetley, to Twinings; from Taylors, who own Yorkshire Tea; to Fortnum & Mason. The men and women who live and work on these estates can't afford to buy that tea though. They earn just over £1 a day. Tonight I'm travelling through Assam, going deep inside the closed world of the tea plantations, where life has barely changed in 150 years.

#### SIGNATURE TUNE

#### ACTUALITY OF PLUCKING LEAVES

DEITH: Okay, Marmony, show me. So she's doing it two-handed. You just do it with a nice little flick of the wrist. Like this? Like that... yeah? Good?

BOOMIS: Good, good.

DEITH: Marmony Boomis is plucking young, green leaves, working her way down a row of tea bushes. They stretch to the horizon, dotted with women in bright dresses, picking fast while the sun shines, occasionally reaching a patch of shade under the trees planted at intervals in the field.

You've already got two handfuls. I've only got one, so you have to be ambidextrous.

Marmony makes it look easy, but it's not. She has to pick 24 kilograms – think two suitcases – to earn her daily wage of 115 rupees, about £1.13 pence. It's less than the minimum wage.

But the estates – called tea gardens - run on a colonial system of wages in kind. So the company gives your family a home on what are called labour lines, and subsidised rations like wheat. And the gardens are like small towns really. A single labour line might be home to hundreds of people. Thousands can live on an estate.

Shall I put this in your bag? Is this ok? I've added a small amount to her bag. Shukria, durnabad.

I'm starting my journey at two neighbouring tea gardens, whose names you might know if you have expensive taste in tea – Doomur Dullung and Hajua. They're owned by Assam Company Limited, and they both supply British brands.

I've got two boxes of tea here. The first one is Fortnum & Mason Doomor Dullung and it costs – wait for it - £7.50 for 50 grams. And the other one that I've got is Taylors of Harrogate. Now they own Yorkshire Tea, but this tin is their Special Rare Assam leaf tea from the Hajua estate. It says it's made with the freshest golden leaf tips for a rich malty flavour. And on the gold packet inside it says, 'The finest ethically sourced teas from around the world'.

That afternoon, when picking had finished for the day, we visited Doomur Dullung. Indian law allows public access to the labour lines, but we'd been told often tea garden managers throw people out, so we went when it was dark.

ACTUALITY AT TEA GARDEN

DEITH: My guide is Mohesh Ghatawar. In his twenties, always smiling, his great grandfather was brought to Assam by the British, to be a tea worker. We're on a narrow muddy path decorated by fireflies. It is quite difficult to see unless you have a torch, but I do, but most people are using the lights from their mobile phones. Just mind the mud Sally.

#### ACTUALITY OF INTRODUCTION TO NAVIN MYAK

DEITH: Navin Myak is five foot nothing in his bare feet. It's like sitting beside a child. His tiny chest is fighting for breath. Tuberculosis, a disease of the poor and the weak.

Navin is saying that we can go and have a look inside his room. Just stepping past the candle, it is a room I'd say about 3 metres by 3 metres square. There are windows, but they are boarded up at the moment with wood, and some bedding is hanging on a piece of string from wall to wall. There's a basket with some cooking utensils and a bare floor. There's obviously a problem with the roof, because there is some sacking been woven through some of the rafters.

NIKE (VIA INTERPRETER): Leaking of water, you know, from the roof. Entire roof is like this. See my situation? Everywhere is water and water.

DEITH: That's Navin's brother, Myner Nike, who looks after him. He had TB too, but recovered and works picking tea, but he can't afford to fix the roof. That is the estate's job. In 1951, India passed a law to protect tea workers. It's the Plantation Labour Act and it says tea garden owners must provide and maintain adequate accommodation. Now you can argue that many millions of Indians live in dismal housing or slums, and that's true, but the point is the law says that proper housing is part of tea workers' pay – they've earned it. They've also earned drinking water and clean and sanitary latrines – or toilets.

#### ACTUALITY IN GARDEN

MOTHER: [Unclear]

DEITH: That's Myner Nike's mother, Lakimani, talking. She is saying that she has to go into the garden to relieve herself. They haven't had a toilet for 36 years. She says the company built them a temporary one, but two cows started fighting in the garden and knocked it over. She says since then she's been asking the company for a new toilet and they say yes, yes, we'll build you one, but it just hasn't happened. We feel our way to other houses on the labour line. We're drawing quite a crowd and Kalpana asks how many other people have problems with their rooves.

#### ACTUALITY OF PEOPLE TALKING

WOMAN: All our houses are leaking by rainwater.

DEITH: At this point a man comes up who says he is the chowkidar - a kind of watchman; he keeps the labour line in line. It's also his job to pass his neighbours' requests for repairs to management. But his roof leaks too and he doesn't have a proper toilet or access to clean water either. His baby son was in hospital with diarrhoea. Now his wife has been admitted with the same thing. He blames the company for making them sick.

PAKNIAC: We don't have toilets, so we are temporary built sometimes, we build with leaves from our own, not from the company. There is no septic tank, there is no drainage also. If company will provide our proper toilet and drinking facilities, our family are not going to hospital.

DEITH: Tea from this estate is some of the most expensive to buy in the world. It sells for many, many pounds. I've got the box out of my rucksack, because I thought it might be useful to show Myner Nike the tea.

GHATAWAR: Yes. This is from Doomur Dullung.

DEITH: So we've got the Taylors of Harrogate here and Fortnum and Mason, which is a very posh shop in Piccadilly in London. This is 50 grams, Myner Nike, 50 grams. How much do you think you would pay in rupees? Have a guess.

NIKE (VIA INTERPRETER): Five rupees or ten rupees.

DEITH: Five rupees or ten rupees? So, Myner Nike, we paid £7.50 for this, which is how many rupees?

NIKE (VIA INTERPRETER): 700 rupees.

DEITH: 700 rupees. He's not saying anything.

KALPANA: He is shocked actually.

DEITH: How many days would they have to work to earn enough to buy this pack of tea?

GHATAWAR: He working in the garden for seven days to buy this.

DEITH: And Mohesh, are you surprised by what we've shown you?

GHATAWAR: I am also surprised. I am also surprised today, because I don't know ever this amount.

DEITH: And what do you think about it?

GHATAWAR: Actually I am surprised most because the company cheats us.

DEITH: Mohesh Ghatawar is an impeccably polite but steadfast thorn in the tea company's side. His wife plucks tea. He's a tutor and is active in the All Adivasi Students Association of Assam, many of whom were born in the tea gardens, like him. He sees it as his mission to get workers decent homes and a fair wage.

GHATAWAR (VIA INTERPRETER): We are always demanding to raise their daily wage, but the company says if we increase your wage, the company will close. Now we saw this packet we will raise our voice to the company.

DEITH: Doomur Dullung is marketed as a premium tea by Fortnum and Mason, but on the labour lines I saw at least, the workers who grow the tea are living in housing that leaves them wet, sick and suffering the indignity of going to the toilet in the fields. But I've been doing some online research and I've discovered that Doomur Dullung has two more upmarket buyers. The Harrods website sells its black loose leaf tea for £25 for 125 grams (more expensive even than Fortnum and Mason). Twinings sells Doomur Dullung at £30 for 125 grams. I've seen how some on Doomur Dullung are forced to live. Tomorrow I'm going back to see what it's like to work there.

#### ACTUALITY OF SHOUTING, RAIN, COCK CROWING

DEITH: It's absolutely bucketing it down today. I'm watching a group of women wearing plastic ponchos and with special adapted hands-free umbrellas perched on their heads so their hands are free for their work. Picking tea in the sun is hard work, picking tea in the rain is miserable.

GHATAWAR: See that girl. She is 14 years old and she is working here. First time I saw her in this garden.

DEITH: By law, shouldn't she be in school?

GHATAWAR: Yes, yes.

#### ACTUALITY OF MOHESH AND GIRL

DEITH: Mohesh shouts to the girl to come over, but she says the supervisor will be angry. As if on cue, he pulls up on his motorbike and says we need the permission of the manager to record in the garden. But when I went to the manager, Mr Shanka's office, I was told he'd left the estate. Which was a shame, because by now I had lots of questions for him. We went back to the field, but the girl had disappeared. Later



DEITH: Although the girls' work is hard, it's not dangerous. The men, however, instead of picking the tea, tend to do a lot of work spraying pesticides, with some toxic chemicals. So when I met a group of young men who work as pesticide sprayers in Doomur Dullung, I asked them about their gear.

#### ACTUALITY WITH SPRAYERS

MAN (VIA INTEPRETER): Normally I am going to the garden, I wear half pants, because it's a garden so full pants is not possible.

DEITH: So shorts?

MAN (VIA INTERPRETER): Half pants, shorts. So we are going sometimes with bare feet, sometimes in sandals.

DEITH: And a mask? Face mask?

MAN (VIA INTERPRETER): No, no mask. When I am spraying sometimes, you know, tears comes in my eyes, it is a very strong smell. Sometimes it starts in our hand, you know, there is a scar comes, a skin disease comes sometimes. We don't have any taste in our tongue, so we can't taste proper food also.

DEITH: It sounds horrible.

INTERPRETER: They have breathing problem also, they are not feeling good. They feel actually a weakness - legs, back, pain in their entire body, feeling weakness.

DEITH: Have you ever asked to have the proper equipment?

MAN (VIA INTERPRETER): We ask so many times to the company.

#### ACTUALITY OF MEN CONCURRING

INTERPRETER: All of them, they are saying that he is absolutely right.

DEITH: How many people are in the same position as him?

#### ACTUALITY - MUTTERING OF MEN

DEITH: Six, seven? Seven and none of you have the right equipment? No.

I didn't want to simply take their word for it, so they said I could see them working the next day, but the morning brought heavy rain and spraying was suspended. But not in the Assam Company's next door garden, Hajua – the estate Taylors of Harrogate buys its luxury tea from.

#### ACTUALITY AT GARDEN

DEITH: We've pulled up and about 50 yards away we can see a group of guys who look like they are spraying. Some of them have got green tanks on their backs, others have got red tanks on their backs and they are spraying the tea leaves. They're not that close to us, but I can tell you that they don't look as if they're wearing protective equipment. They look as if they are just in their ordinary t-shirts and shorts. I can't see what they've got on their feet. Our producer has just stopped a guy who is wheeling a bicycle, but with a tank of – I presume – chemicals on his back. So he's just riding along on his bike and he's got no protective equipment, so he's obviously collected the chemicals, but he's not been given any gear, because he's just wearing shorts and a t-shirt and flip-flops.

#### ACTUALITY TALKING TO MAN WITH BICYCLE

DEITH: What he's saying is that the company does give him a new mask every year, but that it tears after just a month or two. He's saying he gets breathless when he is spraying, but what can he do about it? What I'm looking at here is Hajua tea estate breaking Indian law – the Plantation Labour Act says pesticide workers must have protective clothing and equipment. Sally, my producer, has jotted down the name of the chemical they are using here, Deltamethrin, so we can look it up later.

DEITH cont: We tried to get an interview with the Assam Company to ask them about pesticide spraying and child labour, but they sent us a letter saying they were under no obligation to respond to our 'baseless and false allegations' and threatening to take legal action against the BBC.

#### ACTUALITY IN CAR

DEITH: When we got back to the guest house last night, we did go online and looked up the chemical Deltamethrin, and apparently it's a hazardous, class 2 pesticide – class 1 being the most toxic, and it said it was harmful or fatal if absorbed through the skin or inhaled. So now I'm driving to the tea town of Dibrugarh and the hospital, to ask them if they have any pesticide patients.

DAS: I'm Professor Das, AK Das. I'm the Professor and Head of Medicine, Internal Medicine, here in the Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh.

DEITH: Do you ever see people coming in who have dizziness, burns, those kind of things, from working with chemicals?

DAS: Five, six patients a week in our department. Not less than that. It frequently comes with numbness and weakness, weakness of the limbs, they come. Sometimes people come in a stretcher, they cannot even walk.

DEITH: A quarter of the people on Professor Das's wards are pesticides patients.

#### ACTUALITY WITH PATIENT

DEITH: Dilip Teli lies propped up in bed, connected to a drip, a blanket covering his legs – they've stopped working.  
So you suspect he probably has pesticide poisoning?

DAS: Yes, I do, and we will have to investigate. From then we will find out if the nerves are damaged or not, then we will confirm.

DEITH: Are you very worried about the weakness in your legs?  
Are you frightened?

TELI (VIA INTERPRETER): He is very optimistic that he will get well.

DEITH: Okay, I hope so too. I hope so. Thank you. Namaste.

DAS: From my perspective, I think everyone should ensure these companies, that these things should be given properly, but they are taken so lightly.

DEITH: Professor Das says that half his patients come from tea gardens, particularly with diseases like TB and malaria. He says their immune systems are weakened because they are malnourished. A 2013 study of more than a hundred plantations here found low indicators for health and nutrition. Previous research in Dibrugarh, the part of Assam we're in, found that three-quarters of women and two-thirds of men were underweight. So were 59% of pre-school children.

#### ACTUALITY WITH PATIENT

SHIRA: She is a 9 year old female child suffering from severe body energy malnutrition with vitamin A deficiency, with pneumonia.

DEITH: Registrar Dr Caroline Shira is examining a little girl, Rima Gowala, while her mother stands by her pillow.  
She is 9. She looks much younger than 9.

SHIRA: She has severe underweight, severe stunting and severe wasting.

DOCTOR: This patient came with an inability to see in the dark, night blindness and also the patient had nutritional anaemia most probably. Now the patient is all right, but still needs to gain weight.

DEITH: And you mentioned night blindness.

DOCTOR: Yes, it is a symptom of malnutrition, deficiency of vitamin A. It's one of the late stages, night blindness, these people have.

DEITH: So could she have gone blind?

DOCTOR: Yes, she could have gone blind.

DEITH: Gosh.

In the bed by the door, eight year old Lakairum has Japanese Encephalitis and malnutrition. Opposite him is Ritib, who's five and has pneumonia. And one year old girl, Sumi, is also being treated for severe malnutrition. All are tea garden children.

SHIRA: Yes, sometimes if the child comes in a very poor condition, the poor child with malnutrition and severe anaemia and sometimes that patient dies, we cannot save the child. It's difficult to make them survive.

#### ACTUALITY ON STREET

DEITH: Last year, a 100 page indictment of India's tea plantations landed with an embarrassing thud. It was a report by Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute. It had visited 17 tea gardens and discovered – quote - 'inhumane' and 'abusive' conditions. Workers living under broken rooves, in labour lines that had become networks of cesspools. The Columbia report said tea workers fall prey to the diseases of poverty – like TB and typhoid – at much higher rates than the rural poor in the villages around them. I've asked for a meeting with the head of the Indian Tea Association in Assam, Sandeep Ghosh. Mr Ghosh turns out to be as cool as his deliciously air conditioned office.

GHOSH: There may be some odd occasion which has happened, but you must take a look at the total picture and visit more than a hundred estates, because we've got 277 estates.

DEITH: And if any people don't have access to a latrine, then that is breaking Indian law, it's breaking the PLA – the Plantation Labour Act.

GHOSH: If you look at the Plantation Labour Act, definitely it is a violation. And if there are aberrations, these aberrations must be corrected.

DEITH: Can I ask you about health conditions? We saw, with our own eyes, evidence of young men spraying chemicals in shorts, t-shirts and flipflops. Again, that breaks the Plantation Labour Act.

GHOSH: I'll tell you something: the government of Assam, the tea managements have given the most modern equipment for the sprayers to wear and spray. There are masks, goggles, hand gloves. Now if the beneficiary does not do that and if he doesn't listen to the supervisor, who is at fault?

DEITH: There are men that say that they have asked for years – please can I have some protective equipment.

GHOSH: I do not accept it. If a man is there and if it is not given and somebody has gone and picked up that case and shown it to the BBC, we smell a rat there.

DEITH: Well, we just found him in the hospital, to be fair.

GHOSH: That's absolutely, you are lucky. I mean it's for your news, makes a good story.

DEITH: We met girls on two estates who told us they were 14.

GHOSH: No, there are no child labour in ours, they're absolutely banned. We have had no child labour in any of our tea gardens, no.

DEITH: I did meet a girl whose name was in the register.

GHOSH: Then whoever that person is and whoever that person is in charge, they can be pulled up by the law.

DEITH: Mr Ghosh did eventually admit we had evidence of what he called 'management lapses' on some estates.

#### ACTUALITY IN CAR

DEITH: I've seen some fairly shocking conditions inside two tea gardens now, but as it stands, it's possible that those are isolated cases. However we've now been told that conditions are not good inside another estate called Moran. It looks quite smart from the road. We've been driving past it and it has a modern looking medical centre. It's owned by the biggest tea producing company in the world, McLeod Russel. Now if Doomur Dullung and Hajua have a name for luxury teas, McLeod Russel's gardens are as much about your common or garden cuppa.

#### ACTUALITY AT MCLEOD RUSSEL

DEITH: This is labour line number 1 and I can tell you it's grim. Straightaway it looks worse than what I've seen before. Lots of the homes are surrounded by murky brown water. Some of the gardens are more or less submerged. Most people are wading around barefoot.

Kalpana, we have a crowd around us, would you help us do a rough straw poll? How many people here have a home or a roof that leaks when it rains? Show their hands.

So just counting them up – one, two, three, four, five, six ... ten, most people here.

And how many people have a latrine that works?

#### ACTUALITY OF KALPANA ASKING PEOPLE

KALPANA: They don't have bathrooms, they don't have latrines, so no toilet.

DEITH: No toilet. Do you have electricity?

KALPANA: They don't have electricity at all.

DEITH: Across this line, line number 1 has no electricity?

KALPANA: No.

DEITH: I just happened to look up and noticed that there was no light bulbs. I mean, the other gardens, at least they had electricity.

What Moran has in common with Doomur Dullung and Hajua is that they all have an ethical seal of approval from the Rainforest Alliance. It works for better social, economic and environmental standards. You've probably seen their little green frog logo in the supermarket.

#### ACTUALITY IN MANAGER'S OFFICE

DEITH: The deputy manager of Moran estate, Arun Jyoti Borgohain, is very welcoming and offers me a seat in front of his generous wooden desk.

BORGOHAIN: Every year we have been developing twenty quarters, twenty latrines. It's a cost oriented thing and we have to see the costs first, because you can only do the job when your tea prices goes up and the money comes back to tea.

DEITH: It's not just about cost, it's about the law and it's about the certifications that you have. You have a Rainforest Alliance certification. So how does asking a family to use the jungle or the woods to relieve themselves meet the standards in the Rainforest Alliance and the Plantation Labour Act?

BORGOHAIN: No, that we are training up, because we have gone just to Rainforest Alliance one or two years back.

DEITH: Did they see labour line number 1?

BORGOHAIN: We have shown it to them, all the labour lines, and see, ethical at the same time, Rainforest is not a one time job. It's a continual process and improvement; it is not a one time show. Because, see, the Rainforest is your standards, they are increasing every year, see. It's not that the one time you have done it and it's finished. It's simple, because if you sell teas without this Rainforest, you cannot sell abroad, the prices come down.

DEITH: Would you be proud to show someone that drinks a cup of your tea the conditions that your workers live in? Would you be proud to show them those conditions or would you be embarrassed?

BORGOHAIN: Some places, yes, I will be embarrassed and some places, yes, proud because all the peoples are not like that. In some lines it is very poor, in some places it's good. It will take a little time for us to come up to the McLeod standard.

DEITH: I don't know what you think, but to me he didn't really have the answers. He seemed very honest about the problems in the garden, but his argument seemed to be, give me time, I'm trying but the money is tight. I tried to get out of him which brands buy his tea, but he wouldn't tell me. However, my producer, Sally, has found out. While she was recording some sounds inside the factory, the factory manager gave it away.

#### ACTUALITY INSIDE FACTORY

MANAGER: Ah, if you talk about companies from UK base, that will be Twinings, Unilever.

CHESWORTH: You mentioned Tetley. That's a big name in England.

MANAGER: Tetley also there. Tetley is also there.

CHESWORTH: How often will the big companies come to your factory and see what you do?

MANAGER: Normally I would say over the year maybe twice, thrice, depending on their schedule and what they're getting.

CHESWORTH: Will they meet the workers? Will they see where the workers live too?

MANAGER: Yes, sometimes. Not really, but yes, when they want, they do. If there's a demand and they want to see, they do have interaction with them once in a while.

DEITH: So we now know that Twinings, Unilever, who make PG Tips, and Tata – who make Tetley - all buy from Moran.

When we approached McLeod Russel about what we'd found, they said the workers were their biggest asset, but housing and improvement of living conditions is an 'ongoing exercise' – they say they're building 250 houses a year in Assam. But providing electricity remains a challenge. As for Tata Global Beverages, the makers of Tetley, they say they're committed to the fair and ethical treatment of people across their supply chain - they say they're a founder member of the Ethical Tea Partnership, which works to improve tea workers' lives. And Unilever – who make PG Tips - say they take the issues in Assam tea gardens seriously. Progress has been made, but they're working with their suppliers to achieve responsible and sustainable practices.

#### ACTUALITY ON COMPUTER

DEITH: I'm with my producer, Sally, and we're going through our long list now of the other tea brands that we've had to contact about their links with the estates that we've investigated. We've been firing off emails asking for their responses.

CHESWORTH: Yes, well, Harrods have just replied and they're saying that in the light of the BBC investigation, Harrods has taken the decision to remove any remaining tea sourced from Doomur Dullung still on its shelves while it awaits the outcome.

DEITH: That's really interesting. And Taylors of Harrogate have come back too. They're saying they're 'extremely concerned' to learn what we found –

DEITH cont: they say they're 'investigating as a matter of urgency' but that they're a business with ethical trading at their heart and they work with the Rainforest Alliance. What about Fortnum and Mason? Have we had a response from them?

CHESWORTH: Yes, well, they're saying that the welfare of workers is of the utmost importance and they're members of the Ethical Tea Partnership. Twinings are saying that too and they're saying we should speak to the ETP.

DEITH: Okay. So we did. Sarah Roberts is the Ethical Tea Partnership's Executive Director. The brands who are members put in money and experience to try to improve lives on the ground. The partnership also works with governments and charities.

ROBERTS: ETP exists because our member companies are very aware that there's multiple challenges in tea growing areas and we're very aware of the issues that are raised in the File on 4 programme. Some of the issues you raise around, for example, sanitation are huge problems across India. Our focus is on improving conditions so that ultimately everybody who is involved in producing tea, whether it's India or anywhere else, has a good life. Your report has highlighted a number of issues which we're already working on, but we are going to have to see much wider change in India for us to be totally confident about the future.

DEITH: You said, 'We know about the issues that you found' - they do seem to be endemic and they're plain to see, so how much leverage has the Ethical Tea Partnership really had?

ROBERTS: Well, the Indian industry is huge - less than 2% of production comes into the UK, for example, so our members' influence in India is relatively limited, but they choose to put that influence to good use through the ETP. Nobody is underestimating what else has to happen, but I do think that things will continue to improve.

DEITH: If the Ethical Tea Partnership is saying British brands have precious little influence over conditions in tea gardens, how come many of their tins and

DEITH cont: packets of tea sport the Rainforest Alliance ethical stamp – the little green frog? I sat down with Edward Millard, Rainforest Alliance’s Director of Strategic Partnerships.

MILLARD: Well, let me say that we very much welcome and acknowledge the fact that you are making this kind of investigation, because we do, as you know, certify a large number of farms in India and clearly an auditing process, because it rests on an annual inspection, is not going to be perfect in being able to be permanently vigilant. The issue of housing is a systemic problem in Assam, where you were visiting, and we recognise that there needs to be a really serious and long term upgrading of housing conditions.

DEITH: We went to an estate called Doomur Dullung. We saw a range of problems, not just appalling housing and unsanitary conditions, but child labour. We spoke to men who said that they spray pesticides without the right protective gear. How many things do they have to fall down on for you to look again at the certification?

MILLARD: Well, those two things which you quote there, had those been found in an audit, they would be decertified. And let me assure you that, as a result of the report which you shared with us, we have right now, as we’re speaking, auditors revisiting those farms to check if they find the evidence of these things, and if they do then they will lose their certification and we will ....

DEITH: The problem that you have, though, is that buyers think the logo means this is okay, workers are all right, I’m exerting ethical pressure, I’m buying ethical tea, and I’m not convinced, having seen what I’ve seen, that they can have any faith in that.

MILLARD: Consumers are exerting ethical pressure. They are exerting the pressure of the market to take deep-rooted systemic problems and move them to a position that everybody would feel more comfortable about. They can’t expect that that whole process is going to happen in a couple of years, but if they keep faith with the progress, they can expect and will get corroborating evidence that it’s improving.

DEITH: Rainforest Alliance markets itself as ‘the seal that sells’. But many campaigners for tea workers’ rights in India think ethical certification is just a meaningless marketing ploy. Stephen Ekka is director of Pajhra, the organisation for the Promotion and Advancement of Justice, Harmony and Rights of Adivasis. He says so-called ethical tea doesn’t benefit employees at all.

EKKA: In my opinion, it is just a certification on paper, because it doesn’t relate on the ground. Therefore, maybe these certifications are enhancing their market, but it has in no way helped the workers in improving their conditions. It’s more about selling tea and marketing tea than actually about empowering the workers in the tea garden.

DEITH: So if I go to the supermarket and pick up a box of tea with the frog, the Rainforest Alliance logo, it’s pointless, it doesn’t help anybody?

EKKA: I would say it is pointless. I say this because it has not changed the lives of the people in the plantation.

#### ACTUALITY OF COCK CROWING

DEITH: The state government in Assam has decided that workers’ housing, rations and healthcare – the so-called wages in kind – are not worth half what the tea companies claim. So they’ve ordered an increase in workers’ cash wage from 115 rupees a day to 148 rupees. That’s about £1.50. And government inspectors are prosecuting more gardens over illegal living conditions. But the truth is, in Assam, there’s still a very long way to go before life – for those who’re born and who will die - in the tea gardens – improves.

#### SIGNATURE TUNE