Climate Change and Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **The short version:** Heat, drought and erratic rain are reshaping where and how tea grows. The dated facts, what they mean for your cup, and the sensible response.

Tea is one of the more climate-exposed everyday crops. This sits in the climate-and-cost cluster beside why tea costs more.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in April 2026.

Drawn from public reporting on markets and climate, this was accurate in May 2026; treat the figures as estimates that change. Not financial advice.

The picture, in one place

Question	The answer
The core problem	tea wants stable temperature and reliable rain; heat, drought and erratic monsoons cut yield and shift flavour
The scale	bad years can cut yields by up to ~30%; a large share of current tea land could be stressed by ~2050
Where it bites	Assam and the rest of India, Kenya, Sri Lanka, where millions of livelihoods depend on the crop
On your shelf	not empty shelves but price rises, smaller packs, fewer offers and quality risk at the cheap end
The response	measured, informed buying and support for transparent, climate-investing supply chains

The core problem

Tea is a climate-exposed crop, grown overwhelmingly in a handful of regions and harvested as repeated flushes that depend on stable temperature and reliable rainfall, exactly what heat extremes, drought and erratic monsoons attack. Public reporting points to bad-year yield losses of up to around thirty per cent in affected areas, India's output fell meaningfully in 2024, and longer-range projections suggest a large share of today's tea land could be stressed or unsuitable by about 2050. The pressure is hardest in Assam and the rest of India, in Kenya and in Sri Lanka. It is gradual rather than overnight, and it stacks with non-weather pressures, freight, energy, labour and packaging inflation and trade-policy shocks such as new tariffs. See

tea and drought and the future of tea.

How it shows on your shelf

It does not mean imminent empty shelves. Global supply is diversified and UK demand is gently declining, so the pressure surfaces as higher prices, smaller packs, fewer promotions and quality risk at the very cheap end rather than scarcity, which is why stockpiling a product that stales is the wrong move. The era of ever-cheaper tea is structurally over, and the cost lands unevenly: the cheapest blends defend their price by quietly adjusting sourcing and quality, while transparent and premium teas pass it through more openly. See why tea costs more.

The livelihoods dimension

There is a real human dimension too. Assam and Kenyan tea support very large workforces, so origin stress is a livelihoods crisis as much as a market one. Supporting transparent, fair-paying, climate-investing supply chains is, in practice, the single most useful thing a buyer can do about it. See the Assam crisis and Kenya and climate.

The flavour effect

Stress years also subtly change leaf chemistry, so a familiar blend can shift in character as well as price. A consistency you have relied on for years can drift a little as growers cope with harder seasons, which is an underappreciated part of the story rather than your imagination. See taste changes.

The response

The rational response is measured and undramatic. Keep buying the tea you enjoy, but judge it by cost per cup rather than pack price, lean toward loose leaf and sensible bulk where it really saves and steeps again, expect gradual shifts in both price and character, and treat any tea apocalypse framing with scepticism. The realistic future is different and dearer tea, shifting origins, more premium and functional formats and gentle blend tweaks, not the disappearance of tea. Unhurried, informed buying is both the sensible response to the economics and, through support for transparent supply chains, the most constructive one. See is tea sustainable.

Want to actually buy a good one?

If this has helped, buy a really good tea next, choosing it by the cup in front of you rather than any climate marketing. The teas on this climate page were picked for the topic, so they make a good starting point. To see the wider range, browse tea and herbal infusions at teas.co.uk or the full tea shop. The wiki rule holds here too: buy on the cup and its description, ignore the marketing, compare per cup prices, and UK delivery is free past £35.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (cultivation and trade)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Try a cheap, plain version of any style first. Move up only once the style has proved itself.

More tea reading

- Why tea costs more
- The Assam crisis
- The future of tea
- Is tea sustainable

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

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