

# FCV tobacco farmers promised support

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## Cultivation will be encouraged till there is demand, says Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu

Union Minister for Commerce, Industry and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu on Tuesday asserted that cultivation of the Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco would continue till there was demand and assured farmers of support. Addressing the stakeholders of the Tobacco Board in Vijayawada, Mr. Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu said the Ministry of Tobacco was concerned with the supply, and until there was a continuous demand, the Tobacco Board would stand by the farmers.

### Comprehensive policy

“The interests of the farmers are the foremost, and the Tobacco Board will do all that is possible for their well-being. I would like the board to come up with a comprehensive policy with inputs from all the stakeholders, including the Central Tobacco Research Institute, instead of a piece meal approach,” Mr. Prabhu said.

The Minister’s comments come in the wake of uncertainty over the export of the FCV tobacco in the backdrop of sliding global demand and ever rising production in countries such as China.

The prices of tobacco have witnessed a steady decline over the last five years, forcing the Tobacco Board to cut down on the annual crop size. The Union Health Ministry has also come up with several decisions to curb smoking, forcing the farmers to agitate.

Mr. Prabhu said a roadmap for tobacco would be ready by the end of January 2019, and added that this policy document would discuss the ways and means of increasing productivity, cost of

production, alternative crops, providing storage facilities with public private partnership and strategies for export promotions.

Chairman and Executive Director of the Tobacco Board K. Sunitha, in her address, highlighted the issues such as declining demand for FCV tobacco, competition from countries such as China, Brazil and Zimbabwe, and global fluctuations in price.

Secretary A. Sridhar Babu, board member Gokaraju Ganga Raju, vice- chairman G. Satyanarayana, former MPs Kavuri Sambasiva Rao and Y. Sivaji were present.

Vice-president, Leaf Operations, ITC, G. Krishna Kumar, urged the Minister to consider inclusion of tobacco and tobacco products under the MEIS and provide export incentives, increase the duty drawback, rationalise levy of GST and expand the interest subvention scheme available to the MSMEs to tobacco exporters also.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/fcv-tobacco-farmers-promised-support/article25666003.ece>