

Centre keen to turn CTRI into multi-crop research institute

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AMARAVATI: In what could be a major blow to tobacco research and cultivation in the country, the Centre has set the stage to likely weaken the Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI). The Centre is readying plans to make the institute a multi-crop research arm by bringing research issues of other crops including chilli, turmeric into its ambit.

A committee set up by Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR) has suggested the Centre to rename CTRI as Indian Institute of Research on Commercial Agriculture (IIRCA). Tobacco growers and traders are worried that the weakening of CTRI will put them in disadvantageous situation in global markets. CTRI is the only government research organization that has been extending support in research and extension activities pertaining to tobacco by meeting industry specific needs with respect to endorsements and certifications



CUTTING OFF SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Tobacco is known for its potential to give relatively high returns to farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Declining tobacco consumption resulted in a reduction of about 20 % acreage and production in the last five years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Tobacco consumption may decline further due to Covid-19 > Recommendations of ICAR committee are contrary to recommendations of parliamentary standing committee on commerce 	<p>ICAR Committee on CTRI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Dr HS Gupta, former IARI chairman > CL Acharya, former IISS director > Dr Mrutyunjaya, former NAIP director > Dr KS Varaprasad, former IIOSR director > Dr Prakash S Naik, former IIVRV director > Dr D Damodar Reddy, CTRI director
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Dilution of research efforts leads to slowing down of technology development and dissemination to growers. CTRI recommendations and references are critical components to meet certain Sustainable Tobacco Production (STP) protocols —Indian Tobacco Association (ITA)

Sources said the ICAR committee studied the present situation in tobacco market at global and national level, uncertainties in tobacco sector before compiling its report. It recommended that CTRI be converted into an institute to take up research on diverse aspects of commercial agriculture for enhancing farm income and employment. The institutes's research area will be broadened to cover chilli, turmeric, castor, aswagandha and tobacco.

Already there are institutes looking after research issues of commercial crops. For instance, Centre for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CMAP) is taking care of aswagandha research. Indian Institute of Oil Seeds Research, Hyderabad, is mandated to research on castor.

Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Spices Board and Angrau are involved in chilli research. Indian Institute of Plantation Crops is studying growth of turmeric growth. "Bringing other crops under the CTRI's purview is nothing but duplication of job handled by different organisations and distract scientists," said a senior agriculture official.

The parliamentary standing committee on commerce has expressed concern on inadequate allocation of funds for tobacco research, a major obstacle in gaining a competitive edge in global markets.

"The lower allocation of funds has resulted in low recruitment of scientists which has slowed down research activity. This is a matter of grave concern," said Magunta Srinivasula Reddy, member of the standing committee and Ongole MP.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/amaravati/centre-keen-to-turn-ctri-into-multi-crop-research-institute/articleshow/79117099.cms>