

Tobacco board chief exhorts farmers to adapt to change ONGOLE , MARCH 15, 2021



Tobacco Board Chairman Y. Raghunatha Babu on Sunday exhorted farmers to adopt the best global farming practices to survive in the international arena.

Inaugurating an electric loose leaf barn imported from Brazil at Mangamoor village in Prakasam district, he said: “Farmers should realise that they are catering to an international market and competing with farmers globally.”

Interacting with a group of farmers a day ahead of commencement of auctions in the traditional tobacco growing areas, he wanted them to make a conscious effort to cut costs and improve efficiency in processing of tobacco to realise better price for their produce.

First-of-its-kind

The ₹10 lakh loose leaf barn is first-of-its-kind in the southern black soil(SBS) region promoted on a trial basis with the Tobacco Board and the ITC bearing ₹3 lakh each as subsidy and farmer V.V. Prasad bearing the rest. ITC has also provided technical support to the farmers to install the energy-saving barn, the primary processing unit of raw tobacco.

Farmers could save about 50% of the labour cost by going for energy efficient loose leaf barn and save in a season up to ₹1.5 lakh per acre. Tobacco yield could be increased by about 130 kg per hectare by eliminating the losses caused by the stitching machine in vogue in conventional barns.

The Chairman said the barn cost could be recovered in just six to seven years and expected at least 5% of the farmers to install the barn during the year. The State government has agreed to include the barn in the farm mechanisation scheme and provide additional subsidy, he added.

Organic farming

Farm mechanisation was the only way out for farmers given the labour shortage, he opined, adding that the shortage would only aggravate in the future. Farmers should also make a conscious effort to improve the soil health by resorting to organic farming.

Noting that the acreage under tobacco had come down from 79,000 in the previous year to 65,000 this year, he said the Tobacco Board is keen on ensuring a fair price for those who are dependent on the crop in the drought-prone region. Farmers would be encouraged to go for farm ponds in a big way this year to ensure assured irrigation, he added.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/tobacco-board-chief-exhorts-farmers-to-adapt-to-change/article34069802.ece>