

## **Karnataka growers seen returning to tobacco**

**Board raises crop size to 97 m kg for 2021-22**

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Transplantation of tobacco has begun in Karnataka and it is said to gain momentum over next few weeks even as a section of farmers who had switched over to other crops like ginger last year are seen coming back to the cash crop.

Recently, the Tobacco Board fixed the crop size for Karnataka in the 2021-22 season at 97 million kgs, higher than previous year's 88 million kgs.



About 80% of the virginia tobacco grown in Karnataka is exported

“We expect the farmers to return to tobacco this year,” said BV Javare Gowda, President, Federation of

Karnataka Virginia Tobacco Growers Association. Karnataka's crop size for 2021-22 is the average for the past three years and is marginally lower than the growers' request of 100 million kgs, Gowda said.

Last year, the crop size was shrunk to 88 million kgs due to the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, said Gowda, former vice-chairman, Tobacco Board.

Virginia tobacco is mainly grown in Mysuru and Hassan districts of Karnataka and the area is estimated to be between 70,000 hectares and one lakh hectares. Karnataka is the second largest producer of tobacco after neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, where the 2020-21 crop is currently being auctioned.

The flue-cured virginia tobacco produced in Karnataka is mainly exported and used for blending with other variety. Gowda said about 80 per cent of the virginia tobacco grown in Karnataka is exported.

### **Poor returns**

Gowda said the poor returns from ginger and an increase in auction prices towards the fagend of season in early March would prompt growers to return to tobacco this year. The average prices for the 2020-21 auction season was around ₹121 a kg, lower than the previous year due to quality issues, Gowda said. Excess rains in the producing regions had impacted the quality and productivity of the tobacco crop last year. However, during February-end and early-March, tobacco prices went up as high as ₹250260 per kg and that would attract growers' interest, he said.

## **Mysuru to retain**

In Mysuru district, the area is likely to remain between 43,000 hectares and 45,000 hectares this year, almost similar to last year, said Mahanteshappa, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, Government of Karnataka. In fact, Mahanteshappa said that tobacco area in Mysuru district has come down from about 75,000 hectares to 45,000 ha over the past 7-8 years.

Vikram Raj Urs, Secretary of Federation of Karnataka Virginia Tobacco Growers Association, said pre-monsoon rains have been good in the producing regions and that transplantation has been carried out in 2,000 hectares. Unlike Gowda, Urs does not expect the return of farmers to tobacco from ginger. He said ginger is an easy crop and for farmers, who had grown on leased lands, had fetched lower returns.

*Source: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/karnataka-growers-seen-returning-to-tobacco/article34482440.ece#:~:text=Vishwanath%20Kulkarni%20Transplantation%20of%20tobacco,back%20to%20the%20cash%20crop>*