

## Tobacco Board urges ryots to produce quality output

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Farmers felicitating Tobacco Board Executive Director A.Sridhar Babu in Ongole on Thursday.

### Action plan has been prepared to step up exports by 32% this year, says official

The Tobacco Board has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to help farmers realise a remunerative price for their produce with a focus on stepping up exports in a big way, its Executive Director Addanki Sridhar Babu has said.

Taking part in the World Tobacco Growers' Day celebrations at the Ongole-II auction platform on Thursday, Mr. Sridhar Babu termed the Centre's decision to cut the penalty on excess production by half as a 'victory' for the farmers who had been demanding it since long. "The Tobacco Board is keen on stepping up exports. Farmers should produce good quality tobacco comprising more bright grade varieties to ensure better price for their produce," he said.

The Tobacco Board, Mr. Sridhar Babu said, had taken up with the Centre the inclusion of tobacco and tobacco-related products in the Free Trade Agreement with United Arab Emirates (UAE) and South Korea. "Embassy-level talks are on with China, Japan, Egypt where state monopoly on tobacco trade exists, to finalise the export orders. An action plan is ready to step up the exports by 32% this year," he said.

Meanwhile, tobacco growers from the drought-prone region led by YSRCP's farmers' wing President Mareddy Subba Reddy urged the authorities to take stringent measures to curb the increasing menace of 'illicit' cigarette that carried no mandatory pictorial health warning.

"Thanks to the high tax regime, India has emerged as fourth largest market for illegal tax-evaded cigarettes," said Potu Murali, a farmer leader. The sale of smuggled cigarettes had increased to 28 billion sticks in 2019 from 11.5 billion sticks in 2005, he said.

The FCV (flue-cured Virginia) tobacco farmers had incurred losses of more than ₹7,000 crore owing to drop in production from 325 million kg in 2014-15 financial year to 227 million kg in 2020-21, said B. Ramanjaneyulu, another farmer leader.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/tobacco-board-urges-ryots-to-produce-quality-output/article37222294.ece>