

Ongole: Tobacco farmers in AP can auction leaf bits & scrap now



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FCV tobacco bales brought to the auction centre in Podili on Friday

HIGHLIGHTS

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Ongole: The tobacco farmers and workers in Andhra Pradesh, who are now selling the top leaf, bits and scrap of Virginia tobacco to the small traders, can now officially auction them to the registered merchants, just as their counterparts in Karnataka are doing, for a better price. For the year 2022-23, the Tobacco Board fixed the crop size of 142 million kg for the cultivation of flue-cured Virginia Tobacco in Andhra Pradesh. It also notified that the farmers from northern light soil can cultivate a maximum of 49.31 million kg, northern black soil 3.34 million kg, southern lite soil 48.16 million kg and southern black soil 41.19 kg.

It is estimated that there are about 27,000 barns in the State, and the board limited the farmers to register each barn for 4 acres with a production of 3,500 kg in NLS, 3.25 acres with a production of 2,400 kg in NBS, 7.25 acres with a production of 3,650 kg in SLS and 4.75 acres with a production of 3,550 kg in SBS. Every year, the farmers sell their flue-cured tobacco at the auction centres after grading, but leave the top leaf, bits and scrap at the barn as the board does not allow auctioning them. It is expected that based on the quality of the tobacco cured, there will be about 400 to 600 kg of bits and scrap left behind at each of the barns.

The small traders purchase the bits and scrap from the farmers and workers at a price of Rs 20 to 25 per kg, remove the foreign objects and resell them to the manufacturers of beedi, cigarette and other tobacco-induced products at a higher price. Though it is not allowed to sell the scrap, the Tobacco Board officials occasionally collect penalties from the farmers, who were caught selling them. Following the recurrent losses for years, the farmers are mounting pressure on the Tobacco Board to allow them to sell the bits and scrap at the auction platforms and let the traders buy it by offering a competitive price.

Considering the pleas from the farmers, the board allowed the sale of bits and scrap in Karnataka last year, and farmers received a maximum price of Rs 100 per kg, almost equal to the low-grade tobacco sold in the auction. The Tobacco Board director appointed from the farmers, Boddapati Brahmaiah, explained that the farmers from Andhra Pradesh met the board chairman and secretary again and requested them to purchase the bits and scrap in the State also. He said that the board agreed to auction the bits and scrap at three auction centres, Vellampally, Podili and Kanigiri starting this Saturday, one day on every weekend until the auction ends. He said that the board will extend the auction to other centres also based on the response and the price they receive in the auction. He said that as the board barred the farmers from selling the bits and scrap at the barn to others, it will penalise those who resort to it.

Source: <https://www.thehansindia.com/andhra-pradesh/tobacco-farmers-in-ap-can-auction-leaf-bits-scrap-now-790668>