

Lack of finances affecting tobacco farmers – TBZ

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THE Tobacco Board of Zambia (TBZ) says lack of financial support among tobacco farmers is affecting their potential to grow the crop at full capacity. TBZ tobacco inspector – Southern Region Teddy Chirwa said most farmers are unable to grow the crop, which is labour-intensive with a high production cost.

Last year, Zambia recorded 23 million tonnes of tobacco, contributing about three percent to the gross domestic product.

In an interview at the ongoing 91st Zambia Agricultural and Commercial Show, Mr Chirwa said improving access to finance can increase farmers' investment choices and provide them with more effective tools to increase yields.



This year's show is being held under the theme: Promoting a green economy. "The biggest challenge that farmers are facing is sponsorship [financial]...Support is not much, a lot of farmers want to grow tobacco, but they lack sponsorship because it is a high-value crop and is labour-intensive. The cost of inputs is very high," Mr Chirwa said.

He said there is need to come up with policies that will support the growth of the tobacco industry in the country to enable more farmers grow the crop. Mr Chirwa also bemoaned the low consumption levels of tobacco in the country, and that currently, farmers depend on China as it is the only export destination. Commenting on this year's theme, Mr Chirwa said TBZ will continue to promote a green economy through sustainable agricultural practices in the tobacco value chain.

TBZ is encouraging small-scale growers to use efficient irrigation technologies in tobacco production.

Mr Chirwa called for the use of climate-smart and environmentally-friendly agro-chemicals in various productions.

"There is need to promote alternative and more efficient tobacco curing methods by embarking on a tree planting exercise in the tobacco value chain to promote a green economy. "As a country, we also need to strengthen re-forestation programmes and smart agriculture practices for tobacco production to support economic growth," he said.

Source: <https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/lack-of-finances-affecting-tobacco-farmers-tbz/>