



India exported tobacco worth ₹9,740 crore during 2022-23, according to Tobacco Institute of India

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Ten tobacco farmers from the State were felicitated at the 23rd Tobacco Institute of India award ceremony in Periyapatna in Mysuru district on Tuesday. | Photo Credit: special Arrangement

India exported tobacco and tobacco products worth ₹9,740 crore during 2022-23 with a major contribution coming from cigarette-type tobacco like Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) and Burley, said director of Tobacco Institute of India (TII) Sharad Tandan.

Speaking at the 23rd edition of TII's Tobacco Farmers' awards ceremony at Periyapatna in Mysuru district on Tuesday, Mr. Tandan said India's leaf tobacco exports reached a record high during 2022-23, both in volume and value terms.

Though India is the world's third largest producer of FCV tobacco, the most remunerative variety with a huge export demand, FCV accounts for only around 25% of the country's total tobacco production. However, FCV contributes around 70% of India's overall leaf tobacco exports in value terms. "We can attain newer heights in tobacco exports if we harness the tremendous export potential of tobacco by aligning our exports with the global demand," Mr. Tandan said.

Despite 13% share of world's tobacco production, India accounts for only 5% value of global tobacco leaf exports. "It exports only 30% of the tobacco produced in the country whereas other leading tobacco-growing countries viz. Brazil, USA, and Zimbabwe export between 60-90% of their production," he said.

Mr. Tandan also expressed serious concern over drop in FCV tobacco production in India from a high of 316 million kg in 2013-14 to 189 million kg in 2021-22, causing losses of an estimated 35 million man-days of employment in tobacco-growing areas of the country. This massive drop in tobacco production in India has incentivised

competitive leaf-producing countries like Brazil, Zimbabwe, Vietnam etc. to increase their production of leaf tobacco-substituting Indian tobaccos in the world market, he said.

“It is unfortunate that India is losing its strong position in the world trade and other tobacco producing countries are benefiting at its cost. Zimbabwe, one of the large FCV producing countries seeing the export potential and global demand has a strategy to substantially increase its tobacco production levels to 300 million kg. While FCV production in India has dropped in recent years, Zimbabwe has increased its production to around 290 million kg from a low of around 50 million kg in 2008,” Mr. Tandan said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Tandan claimed that tobacco farming in India uses only 0.24% of total arable land area and the crop is grown largely in semi-arid and rain-fed areas, where cultivation of other crops is not equally remunerative. “Studies conducted by Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI) have also outlined that no single crop is more remunerative than FCV tobacco in the region. There are instances of FCV tobacco farmers suffering huge loss as they switched to alternative crops such as Bengal gram, chilli etc. making them return to tobacco the following year,” he said.

“Even the World Health Organisation (WHO), which has been campaigning for alternative crops in place of tobacco under guise of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), has not been able to suggest an equally remunerative alternative crop to tobacco,” he said.

Referring to the 10th session of Conference of Parties (COP10) organised by WHO’s FCTC later this year, Mr. Tandan hoped that the meeting does not come up with “ill-conceived policy measures on issues like tobacco crop diversification etc, which will have a devastating impact on India’s export performance and on the livelihood of millions of farmers, farm workers, and their families”.

Award winners

Ten tobacco farmers of Karnataka, who were felicitated at the ceremony for their performance and use of contemporary and sustainable farming practices included Prabhakararadhya (lifetime achievement award), G. Krishna, Umesha, Sumathi (best farmer awards), Kempanaika, Thammegowda, Puttaraju M.P. (sustainability awards), Indiramma, H.K. Ravi, and Thulasi Ramegowda (recognition awards).

The awards ceremony was attended by Minister for Animal Husbandry and Sericulture K. Venkatesh, MLC A.H. Vishwanath, MLAs A Manju, Anil Chikkamadu, Ravishankar, president of Federation of All India Farmers’ Associations (FAIFA) B.V. Javare Gowda, and Principal Scientist and Head of ICAR-CTRI Research station, Hunsur, S. Ramakrishnan.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/india-exported-tobacco-worth-9740-crore-during-2022-23-according-to-tobacco-institute-of-india/article67223710.ece>