

CTRI to transform into NIRCA; shifts focus to high-value commercial crops

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KV Sailendra | 20 Jan 2025



Central Tobacco Research Institute (Photo | Express)

RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM: The Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI), which has been synonymous with agricultural research in Rajamahendravaram for the past six decades, will be officially transformed into the National Institute for Research on Commercial Agriculture (NIRCA) on January 21.

This transition signifies a paradigm shift from a tobacco-centric research to a broader mandate that includes high-value commercial crops such as turmeric, castor, chilli, and ashwagandha.

Established in 1965, the CTRI has been the cornerstone of tobacco research, focusing on a crop often referred to as the 'golden leaf' due to its high returns and substantial revenue contribution to the government. However, public perception of tobacco has grown increasingly negative over time due to its health risks and environmental impact. Anti-tobacco campaign and the Covid-19 pandemic, which heightened vulnerabilities among tobacco consumers, have further accelerated the decline in its consumption.

Speaking to TNIE, NIRCA Director Dr Maganti Sheshu Madhav explained that the transformation aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, which emphasises advancing agricultural exports, and strengthening value chain systems. “Given the challenges facing the tobacco sector, the CTRI needed to evolve its research mandate. The establishment of NIRCA enables us to broaden our focus to include multiple high-value commercial crops, which will benefit farmers and boost the agriculture sector,” he said.

Dr Madhav added that the name change from CTRI to NIRCA marks a renewed commitment to addressing post-harvest needs, value addition, and quality enhancement for export-oriented crops. The institute’s efforts aim to reduce the cost of cultivation and increase the income of farmers by meeting the demands of both domestic and international markets.

NIRCA’s roadmap includes fostering innovation through collaborations with academic, private, and public institutions of national and international repute. With its expertise in Chemistry, value addition, and strong connections with the farming community, the institute is poised to become a premier centre for commercial agriculture research.

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