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Tobacco e-auctioning platform to be inaugurated today

Purandeswari to launch the facility at Periyapatna

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The Tobacco Board plans to introduce e-auctioning in all the 11 auction platforms in Karnataka by the month-end. The first tobacco e-auctioning platform located at Periyapatna in Mysore district will be inaugurated on Friday.

The e-auctioning system will be extended to all the tobacco auctioning platforms in Andhra Pradesh in the next season thus providing farmers an assured and remunerative price for their crop through a transparent bidding process.

Manju P. Pillai, Director (Auctions), told journalists here on Thursday that though farmers were getting remunerative prices in the manual auctioning system and receiving assured payments in time, there were disadvantages such as cartelisation of trade, discrimination in the allotment of bales, price ceiling, and errors in recording the price and weight. To curb such malpractices and to ensure transparency in the bidding process, it was decided to go for e-auctioning, she said.

As buyers have to physically inspect the bales and evaluate the quality of tobacco in terms of physical and chemical properties, handheld terminals in wireless networking environment will be provided at the e-auction platform.

However, given the hygroscopic nature of tobacco and variations in its physical and chemical characteristics due to changing climatic conditions, buyers prefer to physically inspect the bales before bidding and this has put certain limitations in automating the auction process, according to Ms. Pillai.

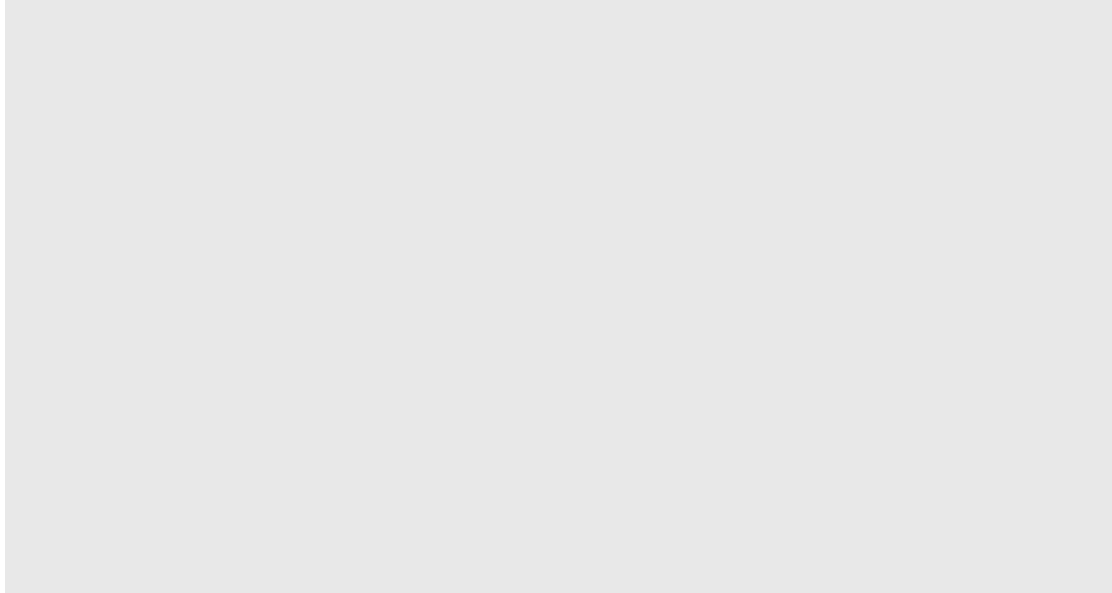
The concept was implemented as a pilot project for marking of Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco at J.R. Gudern-II auction platform in Andhra Pradesh in 2008 season for a limited period and later at Hunsur for five months. The concept was well received and in the run-up to the Friday's inauguration, farmers and tobacco cultivators have been apprised of the functioning of the system.

The board members pointed out that the bidding process would be very fast and would take only 4 to 5 seconds for sale of each


bale consisting of a maximum of 150 kg. Nearly 800 to 1,000 bales of tobacco are to be auctioned every day. Each buyer will be provided with a handheld terminal (HHT) to participate in the bidding. Nearly 30 buyers will be present in each location.

Ms. Pillai said NIIT Technologies Ltd., New Delhi, was the service provider and had designed the e-auction project in all the auctioning platforms under build-own-operate model for six years.

There are nearly 42,000 registered tobacco cultivators in Karnataka who will benefit from the system. Minister of State for Commerce and Industry D. Purandeswari will inaugurate the system.



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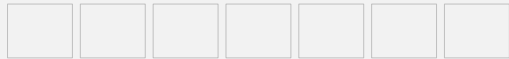
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