

Dear Grower



PROLIFERATION OF ILLEGAL TOBACCO VARIETIES: VIABILITY IMPLICATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

TO ALL TOBACCO GROWERS

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INTRODUCTION

Kutsaga has recently received numerous reports of illicit imports and sales of unauthorized and uncertified flue-cured tobacco seed varieties in Zimbabwe. This includes some unprescribed old fertile lines and varieties and also landraces purportedly sold as Kutsaga hybrids.

Unfortunately, growers who have cultivated these varieties have suffered huge economic losses due to their inherently low or poor agronomic attributes which result in crop and leaf that falls short of market standards for flue-cured tobacco. This letter briefly discusses the pertinent issues on the importance of using certified seed varieties for grower profitability and viability of the industry as a flavor source choice of tobacco.



ILLEGAL TOBACCO VARIETIES: PUTTING OUR QUALITY AND REPUTATION AT RISK

An illegal variety is that which has not been prescribed and approved by the Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board (TIMB) on the recommendation of the Tobacco Research Board (TRB) for commercial production in Zimbabwe.

Our unique tobacco attributes are safeguarded by proven and widely adapted locally bred genetics as well as tested and approved foreign varieties. Rigorous industry-wide testing protocols (including agronomic, chemical, smoke quality) guarantee the sought-after quality of all tobacco varieties bred locally or imported in Zimbabwe. Below (Fig 1 & 2) are recent and unfortunate scenarios where growers unknowingly bought and used seed/seedlings for 4 ha in the 2024-25 season that turned to be a cigar wrapper type of tobacco and not the intended flue cured type.

Figure 1: Leaf and field Images from a farmer from Gutu, Masvingo, who unknowingly bought cigar wrapper type seed from unauthorized and unscrupulous sources, thinking it was flue cured, only to realize the mistake at reaping. The grower intended to grow flue-cured Virginia, heavily lost all their season's investment.

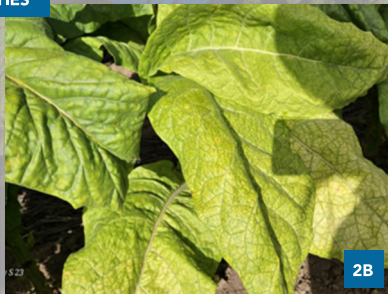


Figure 2: Physical contamination, different tobacco types observed in Gokwe South (Fig 2a) and Karoi (Fig 2b) and admixtures a common feature for growers who use seed from questionable sources. Figure 2a & 2b below shows scenarios in Gokwe South and Karoi where growers purchased seedlings from questionable sources and are now facing severely compromised crops, characterized by poor yields, curing issues and poor leaf quality. Some plants not ascribing to any of the known tobacco strains.



CONSEQUENCES OF GROWING ILLEGAL VARIETIES

Growing illegal varieties is tantamount to wholesale sabotaging of the enviable and prosperous Zimbabwe's tobacco industry. Growers and merchants will inadvertently suffer financial losses through yield penalties, increased cost in pests and disease control and low value leaf crop (or filler styles). The net effect is that, at household level this compromise family income and food security and at national level it results in low foreign currency receipts and this goes against government policies such as the Tobacco Value Chain Transformation Plan and its tenets towards a US\$5 billion-dollar revenue crop.



The strength of our tobacco industry lies in its integrity, quality, and adherence to established norms. Cultivating untested, unapproved and unrecommended tobacco varieties dilutes the signature quality and smoke the Zimbabwean grown leaf is renowned for. Loss of markets to competition such as Brazil, becomes inevitable. International markets are very clear with the quality of tobacco they require. Thus, growers and merchants are called to desist from cultivating and buying leaf from unprescribed varieties respectively. The cultivation of unauthorized tobacco varieties is illegal, as stipulated in Section 64(1) of the TIMB Act, and the Tobacco Marketing and Levy Act [Chapter 18:20]. Those found guilty may be liable to a fine not exceeding level ten, imprisonment for a maximum of one year, or both. Kutsaga has engaged the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development and the TIMB to ensure that all suspected cases are fully investigated and saboteurs are brought to book.

KUTSAGA HYBRID VARIETIES

Kutsaga has developed and released well over 75 tobacco varieties for all the cultivated tobacco types (Flue-cured, Burley, Oriental, Dark Fire and Cigar wrappers). These varieties are well suited for the Zimbabwean growing conditions and superior in terms of yield, disease resistance and leaf quality. Zimbabwe's esteemed reputation as a premium tobacco producing nation has been achieved through the development and selection of specific signature tobacco varieties. These exceptional varieties have distinct flavor profiles which have made Zimbabwean tobacco unique on the global market. At optimal agronomic conditions, these varieties can give high yields of up to 5,000 kg/ha and produce the highly prized cured leaf styles that are in high demand in the international market. Should there be other varieties from other countries growers may need, an industry agreed variety and agronomic testing protocol is available and is supervised by both the Agricultural Research and Innovation Services (formerly Department of Research and Specialist Services) and TIMB.

Currently Kutsaga is working with Alliance One international and Cavendish Lloyd Zimbabwe in testing varieties from Europe and South America for suitability and adaptability to Zimbabwe conditions.

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Figure 3: Kutsaga bred varieties bred; showing robust growth and well adapted to the local conditions guarantee high yields and good leaf quality.



BENEFITS OF GROWING REGISTERED VARIETIES

Kutsaga-approved hybrids unlock maximum yield potential (Fig. 3 & 4), guarantees good quality, and enhanced disease resistance, enabling growers to boost profitability.

Tobacco hybrids, K RK75, K RK74, K RK66 & K RK72 (Fig 4), K RK64 (Fig 3a) and K RK76 (Fig 3b) grown at Beatrice and Karoi in the 2024-25 season respectively showing robust growth ensuring growers get high return on investment through high yields, guaranteed cured leaf quality and assured profitability. Economically, there is huge merit in adopting locally bred tobacco hybrids.



Figure 4: The exceptional Kutsaga genetics showcasing outstanding performance demonstrating impressive yields & robust growth; K RK75, K RK74, K RK66 and K RK72 varieties.

PURCHASE SEED AND SEEDLINGS FROM TRUSTED, REPUTABLE SOURCES

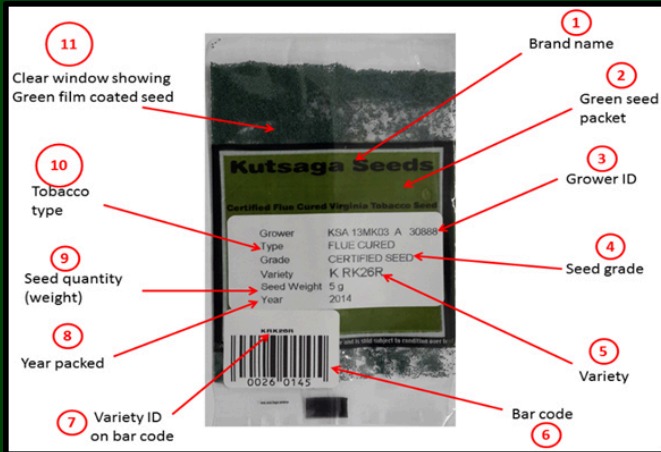
As the 2025-26 season beckons, growers and contractors are encouraged to buy seed/seedlings from trusted and authentic outlets. Kutsaga selling points are strategically located at all tobacco auction floors. Table 1 shows details of shops and kiosks where growers should buy genuine seed. When in doubt, section 3.1 details security features on the seed packet to expect from a genuine Kutsaga seed source.

Table 1: Kutsaga seed selling shops, locations and contact persons of sales reps.

SELLING POINT	ADDRESS	PROVINCE	CONTACT PERSON AND PHONE NUMBER
ZTGC	4-12 PAISLEY ROAD SOUTHERTON	HARARE	VALENTINE PIRIRAYI- 0717 990 748
TSF	161 GLEN EAGLES ROAD, HARARE	HARARE	TARIRO KUMAPENDA- 0781 508 901
FARMBIZ	139/143 ROBERT MUGABE & 5th	HARARE	NYASHA CHIKOMBA - 0777101140
BOOST 2	206 DERBYSHIRE ROAD WATERFALLS	HARARE	PRISCILLA NYONI - 0784 352 020
PREMIER	334 AFFIRMATIVE WAY WILLOWVALE	HARARE	GABRIEL HWEZVA- 0776 481 803
KUTSAGA	AIRPORT RING ROAD	HARARE	MARUFU CHIMEDZA- 0773 579 595
BINDURA	NO.1 ROBERT MUGABE WAY	MASH CENTRAL	KUDZAI MAKONO- 0784 872 091
RUSAPE	86 MAUNGWE STREET SUPER BAKERY	MANICALAND	GLADYS SUWARI- 0775 029 282
MARONDERA	NO.3 FIRST STREETCHURCH OF CHRIST -MARONDERA	MASH EAST	FADZAI NYARUGWI- 0784 974 355
MT DARWIN	217-218 PFURA DAIRYASSOCIATION	MASH CENTRAL	DAISY MUDZENGERE- 0772 818 852
KAROI	522 WENTOK INVESTMENTS INDUSTRIAL AREA	MASH WEST	SANDRA MUPAKATI- 0777 070 010
CHINHOYI	147 COMMERCIAL STREET CHINHOYI	MASH WEST	TAFADZWA KANJERA - 0774938055

Please Note: Genuine Kutsaga seed is unlikely to be sold by an individual especially when outside Kutsaga approved outlets. For your records, kindly ensure you receive an invoice/receipt and carefully store your seed packets after sowing, as this will help with record-keeping and potential future inquiries.

SECURITY FEATURES ON TOBACCO SEED PACKETS



NB: Growers must check for the above features when purchasing tobacco seed. Note that the bar code can be located on the flip side of the packet. Avoid buying seed or seedlings from individuals. Soon after sowing growers are encouraged to keep their seed packets in a safe place.



Kutsaga has a dedicated team of plant breeders, agronomist, liaison and advisory specialists to assist in the selection of the right variety for a farming operation. Please do not hesitate to contact them directly or on all our social media platforms.

Should growers suspect that the seed they intend to buy or have bought is fake, please call 0719 004420 or 0712 881 814 or contact Kutsaga Research Station on telephone 080688002604 or toll-free, 0800 4511 or Email: tobres@kutsaga.co.zw or visit us at our Kutsaga (Harare), Banket and Oriental (Masvingo) Research Stations for assistance.

YOURS SINCERELY, FOR & ON BEHALF OF KUTSAGA

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Regional Sales: 0718 581 408/0719 530 111/0718 581 399/0718 581 409/0718 581 390/0775 985 339/0772 804 426

