

An Analysis of the Implementation Methods and Effects of the Tobacco Leaf Production Acquisition Model of "Centralized Grading, Unified Transportation, and Representative Delivery"

Yangxinting Zhaoxiaojun Yuhaidong Yufengju Jiangdong

Songming Branch of Kunming Tobacco Company, Yunnan Kunming, 651700;

Abstract: Doing a good job in tobacco leaf acquisition management is a key link for the tobacco industry to achieve effective quality control of tobacco. With the increasing maturity of tobacco science and technology today, the upgrading of tobacco leaf acquisition management models has also become crucial. This paper analyzes the main implementation methods of the flue-cured tobacco acquisition model of "centralized grading, unified transportation, and representative delivery", examines the existing problems and puts forward targeted suggestions, and summarizes the achieved effects, in order to provide reference for tobacco leaf acquisition management.

Keywords: Tobacco Leaf Acquisition; Acquisition Model; Tobacco Leaf Production

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Introduction

In the current process of flue-cured tobacco production and acquisition, the model of "centralized grading, unified transportation, and representative delivery" is a newly established tobacco leaf acquisition model. Built on previous tobacco leaf acquisition models, it integrates advanced concepts and proven practices. The greatest advantage of this model lies in its ability to significantly reduce human resource demands, improve tobacco leaf acquisition efficiency, and enhance the quality of tobacco leaf acquisition. Therefore, this tobacco leaf acquisition model boasts broad market prospects and development potential.

1 Current Status of Tobacco Leaf Production and Acquisition

1.1 Low Acceptance of the New Acquisition Model by Tobacco Growers

Owing to the widespread extreme natural disasters (early drought followed by late waterlogging) in Yunnan Province this year, the grade and quality of tobacco leaves have been severely compromised. Nevertheless, loose-leaf acquisition under the new model places higher demands on the grade purity and quality of tobacco leaves. This contradiction has further heightened tobacco growers' resistance to the new acquisition model. To increase their income, tobacco growers tend to mix green and foreign matter-containing tobacco leaves into regular-grade tobacco leaves, which imposes enormous pressure and workload on the professional grading process and seriously hinders the efficiency of tobacco leaf grading and the progress of acquisition.

1.2 Significant Restrictions on Off-Station Centralized Grading Sites

Some off-station grading sites are relatively small, making it impossible to accommodate a sufficient number of grading personnel. As a result, graders cannot free up effective space for grading, leading to low daily acquisition volume and efficiency. Additionally, some off-station grading sites lack adequate moisture-proof and humidifying equipment, which adversely affects the quality of tobacco leaf preservation. Meanwhile, the waiting areas for tobacco growers at some sites are

open-air. In case of rain or high-temperature weather, tobacco growers may suffer losses.

1.3 Weakness in Home Visitation Guidance

With the adjustment of the current tobacco leaf acquisition model, substantial investment has been made in off-station grading sites, professional transportation, and staff recruitment, with the focus shifted to off-station centralized grading sites. This has resulted in a relative reduction in human resources allocated to home visitation (village and household) services, leading to lower efficiency of appointment-based tobacco leaf grading and prolonged grading time. These issues directly impact the progress of tobacco leaf acquisition and tobacco growers' satisfaction.

2 Implementation Methods of the Tobacco Leaf Production Acquisition Model of "Centralized Grading, Unified Transportation, and Representative Delivery"

2.1 Optimal Selection of Off-Station Centralized Grading Sites

To address the existing problems in professional grading—such as superficial implementation of the grading process, insignificant grading effects, insufficient grading labor, and perfunctory evaluation and assessment at tobacco stations (sites)—the city has uniformly adopted the acquisition model of "centralized grading, unified transportation, and representative delivery" to "solidify professional grading and standardize professional grading practices". Third-party grading service providers offer centralized grading sites, equipped with facilities and equipment like grading tables and auxiliary light sources, to deliver centralized professional grading services outside the stations.

The establishment of off-station centralized grading sites strictly adheres to the principles of "rational planning, relative concentration, convenience for tobacco growers, and facilitation of management". It adapts to local conditions, takes into account the actual local acquisition situation, and makes overall use of qualified rural halls, village public houses, and other venues to optimize the layout of centralized grading sites. This ensures both convenience for tobacco growers and appropriate concentration for easy management. Each functional area of the grading site has clear boundaries and distinct signs, with complete facilities and equipment. The site area and the standard for equipping grading equipment comply with the requirements for the establishment of standardized tobacco stations.

2.2 Management of Professional Grading Teams, Transportation Vehicles, and Tobacco Grower Representatives

In accordance with the professional grading service requirements of the tobacco department, and combined with the acquisition plan of the stations (sites) and the selected professional grading model, service providers establish professional grading teams. These teams include positions such as grading team leaders, grading group leaders, graders, and auxiliary workers. In principle, professional grading teams are established based on acquisition sites, with grading team leaders responsible for overall coordination of relevant work and grading groups set up under their leadership. Grading groups are established based on centralized grading sites, with grading group leaders in charge of work related to the centralized grading sites.

The county-level tobacco department assists service providers in conducting grading skill training and technical guidance for their staff. Service providers organize personnel to participate in grading skill training at a ratio of more than 1:1.3 of the actual number of employees required. After passing the examination, service providers select and employ personnel based on the training results, issue work permits, and require employees to work with permits. The number of professional grading personnel is strictly determined in accordance with the requirements for the establishment of standardized tobacco stations: 30 grading tables are allocated per 10,000 dan (a traditional Chinese unit of weight, approximately 50 kilograms), with two workstations per table. In principle, graders are required to have a strong sense of organizational discipline and be familiar with tobacco leaf grades; grading team leaders and grading group leaders should possess good organizational and coordination capabilities.

The main responsibility and supervision responsibility are strictly fulfilled to strengthen the supervision and management of unified transportation vehicles within the jurisdiction. Supervision over the signing of agreements and safety

management of professional unified transportation vehicles of the winning bidders for professional grading is enhanced to ensure the normal operation of unified transportation vehicles and that drivers work with valid permits. The identified unified transportation vehicles are reported to the Monopoly Office of the Branch Company, and the operation time periods and routes of the vehicles are clearly defined to prevent the transportation of tobacco leaves outside the specified time periods or across jurisdictions.

Second, daily supervision and management of tobacco grower representatives are well conducted. Tobacco grower representatives strictly abide by the tobacco leaf acquisition time periods. In principle, one tobacco grower representative is assigned to one unified transportation vehicle to ensure that the representative travels with the vehicle and effectively fulfills their role.

2.3 Whole-Link Process Control

The acquisition model of "centralized grading, unified transportation, and representative delivery" refers to a loose-leaf acquisition model where centralized grading sites are set up for one or more villages. Professional grading organizations conduct grading at these centralized sites. The tobacco leaves preliminarily inspected by quality controllers are centrally transported to the tobacco stations (sites). After being inspected and qualified by the chief quality evaluators (graders) and having their grades determined, the tobacco leaves are acquired. In other words, grading is conducted at the centralized grading sites and delivery is made at the tobacco stations (sites).

Process-oriented and assembly-line operations are adhered to, with grade purity as the core focus of work and the basic requirements of "clearly distinguishing positions and colors, separating regular and auxiliary grades, and preventing the mixing of green and foreign matter-containing tobacco leaves". In accordance with the principles of "third-party services and fixed-point grading", the setting of specialized workstations is standardized, and the first process of "removing green and foreign matter-containing leaves" is transferred from the planting entities to the professional grading organizations. Centralized fixed-point grading is strictly implemented in accordance with the "two workstations" requirement, and professional grading personnel are prohibited from conducting grading or preliminary inspection at tobacco growers' homes.

The work process of "professional grading (appointment confirmation → grading scheduling → grading against samples → purity inspection → bagging and sealing → transportation to stations) → verification and entry into stations (information confirmation, grading scheduling) → acceptance and grading (purity acceptance → grading against samples) → weighing and warehousing (weighing and announcing grades → confirmation by growers or their representatives → invoicing → tobacco leaf warehousing)" is strictly implemented.

2.4 Traceability Supervision of Third-Party Service Evaluation and Acceptance

Third-party service providers develop rules and regulations for the organizational management, daily operations management, performance evaluation, and workplace safety of professional grading teams. In accordance with the implementation requirements of professional grading, they prepare centralized grading sites in advance, fully allocate grading personnel, equip grading equipment such as grading tables and auxiliary light sources, standardize the work process, set up rework tables at the acquisition sites, and promptly rectify tobacco leaves with unqualified grading quality.

Based on the acquisition volume, acquisition progress, and grading efficiency of the sites, service providers scientifically calculate the number of professional grading personnel needed, and are responsible for recruiting, training, and managing the grading personnel. They properly register the files of grading personnel to ensure that the personnel are trained and qualified before taking up their posts with permits, and distribute uniform work clothes and work permits. Grading personnel should be regularly rotated among different grading sites to prevent the occurrence of "favoritism tobacco leaves" (tobacco leaves acquired through personal connections). Grading personnel who are not competent for the grading work should be replaced in a timely manner. If service providers and their grading personnel commit violations of discipline or rules during the service process, the persons responsible shall be held accountable; if losses are caused, compensation shall be made in accordance with the law; if personnel accidents occur due to poor management of the service providers, the service providers shall bear the responsibility.

The company earnestly fulfills its supervision responsibility, conducts evaluation and acceptance of the process and

results of the third-party centralized grading, unified transportation, and representative delivery services, collects and archives the traceability records of centralized transportation and representative delivery for future reference. The traceability records include transportation vehicle information, schedules, tobacco grower representative information, images, etc. The graders at the sites promptly conduct acceptance and record the grading qualification rate (grading purity) of the tobacco leaves that enter the grading link after professional grading, covering 100% of the planting entities.

3 Improvement Suggestions for the Tobacco Leaf Production Acquisition Model of "Centralized Grading, Unified Transportation, and Representative Delivery"

3.1 Emphasis on Policy Promotion

In the tobacco leaf production link, the promotion and guidance of the acquisition model of "centralized grading, unified transportation, and representative delivery" should be well done in advance. Various forms such as training sessions, home visitations, distribution of promotional materials, and WeChat groups should be used to strengthen the promotion of the acquisition model. Tobacco stations assist service providers in conducting technical training for professional grading personnel and scientifically and reasonably setting up fixed centralized grading sites. Appointment plans should be formulated in advance to ensure that the professional grading volume is continuously matched with the acquisition volume. Tobacco stations (sites) are encouraged to have their quality management personnel shift their focus to the frontline and strengthen management, so as to guide tobacco growers to correctly understand and treat the model and lay a solid foundation for the tobacco leaf acquisition in the next year.

3.2 Early Optimal Selection of Centralized Grading Sites

The site selection work for off-station centralized grading sites should be carried out in advance. Sites with large areas, relatively complete functions, and convenient transportation should be selected in accordance with local conditions. Combined with actual situations, public welfare parks, councils, and other venues should be preferred as far as possible, which are not only conducive to grading but also convenient for delivery.

In principle, the hardware facilities of professional grading sites should be improved year by year. The environmental color should be neutral, the floor should be cement-hardened, and the wall color should be white or grayish-white. Each functional area should have clear boundaries and distinct signs, and complete facilities and equipment. The site area and the standard for equipping grading equipment are implemented in accordance with the requirements for the establishment of standardized tobacco stations. Centralized grading sites must be equipped with video surveillance systems, and video image data must be retained for the entire process for future reference.

3.3 Strengthening Home Visitation Guidance

The guidance work on tobacco growers' preliminary grading of tobacco leaves should be regarded as a key task in tobacco leaf acquisition. Tobacco growers should be actively guided to harvest mature tobacco leaves, classify fresh tobacco leaves, properly string the leaves onto poles, conduct scientific curing, stack the cured leaves by curing batches after post-curing sorting, and make preparations before grading.

The tobacco leaves after professional grading must be packed and sealed in unified preliminary inspection bags to facilitate transportation management and site acceptance. The tobacco leaves that enter the grade determination area of the sites after professional grading must meet the following requirements: pesticide residues and heavy metal content comply with the provisions of agricultural product safety standards; the moisture content and non-tobacco substances such as sand in the tobacco leaves comply with the standard provisions; green and foreign matter-containing leaves, positions, and colors are clearly distinguished, and the purity tolerance complies with the national standards; there are no useless tobacco leaves such as moldy, oil-stained, insect-infested, or contaminated ones, or leaves with stems. Tobacco leaves that do not meet the acquisition grade purity requirements should be returned for re-sorting and grading, and the relevant costs incurred shall be borne by the service providers.

4 Work Effects of the Tobacco Leaf Production Acquisition Model of "Centralized Grading,

Unified Transportation, and Representative Delivery"

It has strongly supported the sustainable development of tobacco-growing areas. To solidly promote the tobacco leaf acquisition work in the base units, the Kunming tobacco-growing area has taken "solidifying professional grading and standardizing professional grading practices" as the key work of acquisition management, adhered to pursuing quality and efficiency through management, continuously standardized the process node control of professional grading work, refined and implemented professional grading, and effectively improved the effects of professional tobacco leaf grading and standardized organizational management.

It has well met the raw material needs of industrial enterprises. The needs of industrial enterprises have always been regarded as the top priority. The collaboration between industry and commerce has been continuously deepened, the implementation of key technologies has been firmly grasped, the quality characteristics of tobacco leaves have been stably highlighted, and service measures have been continuously optimized. The quality of tobacco leaves has been continuously improved, with good stability and high usability, which has well met the formula needs of cigarette brands and achieved high satisfaction from industrial enterprises.

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Author's Profile: Yang Xinting (1996-), female, Bai ethnic group, from Dali City, Yunnan Province, holds a master's degree, and works at Kunming Branch of Yunnan Tobacco Company.