



Price Distortion in the Indonesia's Tobacco Market: An Islamic Economic Ethics Perspective

Abd Aziz

Program Studi Pascasarjana Ekonomi Syariah Universitas Islam Madura
acaryyaway@gmail.com

Abstract

Tobacco is one of the strategic agricultural sectors that supports the economy of rural communities in Indonesia. Although it contributes significantly to farmers' income, tobacco pricing practices at the upstream level are still dominated by an oligopsonistic market structure, placing farmers in the weakest position. This study aims to explain the causes of tobacco price distortions and review them through the lens of Islamic economic ethics. This research uses the library research method by reviewing classical and contemporary literature on prices, justice, market mechanisms, and the works of scholars such as Ibn Taimiyah and al-Ghazali. The results show that price distortion occurs due to quality standards determined unilaterally by manufacturers, farmers' lack of access to information, economic dependence on companies, and a closed trading system. This situation is not in line with the principles of justice, transparency, and prohibition of exploitation in Islamic economics. Ibn Taymiyyah's perspective emphasizes that fair prices should follow the mechanism of supply and demand without intervention that harms either party, while al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of market supervision in order to maintain public welfare. Thus, this study confirms that the application of Islamic ethical values in the tobacco distribution chain is important for building a more transparent, fair, and beneficial market for farmers.

Keywords: distortion, tobacco, Islamic economic perspective

Abstrak

Komoditas tembakau merupakan salah satu sektor pertanian strategis yang menopang perekonomian masyarakat pedesaan di Indonesia. Meskipun memberikan kontribusi signifikan terhadap pendapatan petani, praktik penentuan harga tembakau di tingkat hulu masih didominasi oleh struktur pasar yang oligopsoni, sehingga menempatkan petani sebagai pihak yang paling lemah. Studi ini bertujuan menjelaskan penyebab distorsi harga tembakau serta meninjaunya melalui etika ekonomi Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode *library research* dengan mengkaji literatur klasik dan kontemporer tentang harga, keadilan, mekanisme pasar, serta karya-karya ulama seperti Ibn Taimiyah dan al-Ghazali. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa distorsi harga terjadi karena standar kualitas yang ditentukan sepahak oleh pabrikan, minimnya akses informasi petani, ketergantungan ekonomi terhadap perusahaan, serta sistem tataniaga yang tertutup. Keadaan ini tidak selaras dengan prinsip keadilan,

transparansi, dan larangan eksplorasi dalam ekonomi Islam. Perspektif Ibn Taimiyah menegaskan bahwa harga yang adil semestinya mengikuti mekanisme penawaran dan permintaan tanpa intervensi yang merugikan salah satu pihak, sedangkan al-Ghazali menekankan pentingnya pengawasan pasar demi menjaga kemaslahatan publik. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa penerapan nilai etika Islam dalam rantai tatanan tembakau penting untuk membangun pasar yang lebih transparan, adil, dan bermaslahat bagi petani.

Kata kunci: distorsi, tembakau, perspektif ekonomi islam

INTRODUCTION

Prices in economic activities not only function as a medium of exchange, but also reflect the relationship of fairness between market participants. From an Islamic economic perspective prices must be formed fairly free from elements of fraud exploitation, and the exploitation of information asymmetry.¹ When the price mechanism operates under conditions of unequal bargaining power the issue is no longer purely technical and economic, but becomes a matter of ethics and market fairness.² This view emphasizes that the market in Islam is a space for muamalah (transactions) that is imbued with moral values and social responsibility.³ This phenomenon of price injustice is clearly evident in the tobacco commodity trade in Indonesia. Although tobacco has strategic economic value and is a major source of livelihood for farmers in various regions, pricing practices at the farmer level are often unbalanced.⁴ The tobacco market structure, which is dominated by a small number of large buyers, puts farmers in a weak bargaining position and makes them highly dependent on companies or middlemen. This dependence has an impact on farmers' low ability to influence the selling price of their products.⁵

Price distortion in tobacco trade is also reflected in the high price fluctuations experienced by farmers during each harvest season. These fluctuations are not solely

¹ Anggi Anggreini, Aina Fitri Alma, and Fathimah, "Konsep Keadilan Dalam Hukum Bisnis Islam: Studi Atas Akad Dan Transaksi Modern" 1, no. 1 (2025): 133–40.

² Andriani Tenri et al., "Keadilan Dalam Mekanisme Pasar Islam: Antara Prinsip Syariah Dan Praktik Ekonomi Modern" 2, No. 2015 (2025): 105–14.

³ Huda, N., & Nasution, M. E. (2020) "Etika Pasar dan Tanggung Jawab Sosial dalam Sistem Ekonomi Islam." *Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah Teori dan Terapan* 7, no. 4: 601–615

⁴ Ihdiani Abubakar and M R Yantu, "Kinerja Kelembagaan Pemasaran Kakao Bijji Tingkat Petani Perdesaan Sulawesi Tengah :" 1, no. April (2013): 74–80.

⁵ Susilowati, S. H., & Maulana, M. (2021). Struktur Pasar dan Ketimpangan Harga Komoditas Pertanian Strategis di Indonesia." *Forum Penelitian Agro Ekonomi* 39, no. 2: 101–118.

caused by natural factors or changes in market demand.⁶ but are closely related to marketing patterns and distribution structures that are not favorable to farmers. Farmers' dependence on middlemen and limited access to end markets cause tobacco prices at the farmer level to be unstable and difficult to predict. As a result, the prices that are formed are often below fair value and are unable to adequately cover production costs. This condition shows that the tobacco market mechanism is not yet running efficiently and fairly, so that price fluctuations actually become an instrument that reinforces bargaining inequality and weakens the welfare of tobacco farmers.⁷

From an Islamic economic perspective.⁸ market mechanisms are not understood as a value-free process, but rather as part of muamalah practices that must adhere to the principles of justice and benefit. Prices formed through the interaction of supply and demand are considered valid as long as they are conducted honestly, transparently, and without coercion or manipulation. When market mechanisms operate under conditions of information asymmetry or dominance by one party, the resulting prices lose their fairness and have the potential to cause economic injustice.⁹ Therefore, Islamic economics places ethics as the main foundation in price formation, where the state and market authorities have a supervisory role to prevent practices that harm the weak. This approach emphasizes that price fairness is not measured solely by formal agreements, but by the fulfillment of the principles of fairness and balance in market relations.¹⁰

According to al-Ghazali, fair prices should be formed naturally through honest and transparent transactions.¹¹ However, when the market experiences distortions due to hoarding, information manipulation, or the dominance of certain actors the price mechanism loses its moral legitimacy.¹² In such conditions buying and selling practices remain formally valid, but are ethically reprehensible because they contain elements of

⁶ Sherly Shylviana and B R Purba, "Evaluasi Stabilitas Harga Komoditas Pertanian Dalam Sistem Ekonomi Terbuka," n.d., 1–11.

⁷ Fauziyah, E., & Suprapti, I. (2021). Pola Tataniaga Tembakau dan Dampaknya terhadap Harga di Tingkat Petani." *Jurnal Sosial Ekonomi Pertanian* 14, no. 1: 55–69.

⁸ Tertia Salsabila Fadly Yashari Soumena, Muh Ihsan Nuari Imran, "Konsep Keadilan Harga Perspektif Ekonomi Islam," *Iktisar Jurnal Pengetahuan Islam*, 2024, 27–44.

⁹ Pedagang Hasil, Pasar Koga, and Bandar Lampung, "Penerapan Etika Bisnis Islam Terhadap Perilaku Pedagang Dalam Perspektif Ekonomi Islam" 2, no. 1 (2025): 2259–70.

¹⁰ Anwar, M. K. (2022) "Konsep Harga Wajar (Al-Thaman Al 'Adil) dalam Ekonomi Islam." *El-Jizya: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 10, no. 1: 1–18.

¹¹ Vita Ditya Wardani, "Pemikiran Ekonomi Muslim Klasik Masa Al-Ghazali" 9, no. 02 (2023): 2320–25.

¹² abdul Jalil Ajrul Hidayatillah, "Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Terhadap Ekonomi Di Era Modern" 7, No. Juli (2024): 54–63.

injustice. For al-Ghazali, the validity of a transaction is not only measured by the fulfillment of the pillars and conditions of buying and selling, but also by the fulfillment of the values of justice and the intention to maintain public interest.¹³

Based on this description, this study positions tobacco price distortion as an issue of Islamic economic ethics that is directly related to the principles of justice, fair pricing, and protection of the weak. This study aims to examine the forms and factors causing tobacco price distortion and assess them from an Islamic economic ethics perspective, so that prices are not only understood as the result of economic transactions, but as a reflection of market morality and social justice.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method¹⁴. This method allows researchers to summarize and synthesize the results of relevant studies descriptively. Collect various literature sources, including scientific journals, books, and reports from trusted organizations that discuss price distortion, classify the data collected based on theme, relevance, and contribution to understanding pricing that tobacco farmers need to know.¹⁵ Literature review as the main approach to examining the phenomenon of price distortion in market mechanisms, especially in tobacco commodities. This approach is considered effective for an in-depth examination of various concepts, theories, and empirical findings related to price distortion, market structure inequality, and their implications for economic justice. Through a systematic literature review, this study seeks to build a comprehensive understanding of the causes and characteristics of price distortion in the context of agricultural commodity trading.

RESEARCH RESULT

Oligopsony Market Structure and Price Inequality in the Indonesian Tobacco Market

Primary data and media reports indicate that the tobacco market structure in Indonesia tends to be oligopsonistic, where the number of buyers (manufacturers/industries) is relatively small compared to the number of farmers, so that price control is mainly in the hands of buyers. This system places farmers as price

¹³ Al-Ghazali. *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Jilid II. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, tanpa tahun, 72–75.

¹⁴ Nuriman, *Memahami Metodelogi Studi Kasus, Grounded Theory, Dan Mixed Method* (kencana, 2021).

¹⁵ Iexy j. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarys, 2019).

takers who do not have a significant bargaining position in determining the selling price of their products.¹⁶

This problem is clearly evident in several major tobacco production centers such as Temanggung, Bondowoso, and Jember. In Temanggung, for example, farmers are heavily dependent on the absorption of tobacco products by the industry (IHT). Local production in this area is estimated to reach around 10,000–11,000 tons per year, but absorption by large manufacturers such as PT Gudang Garam Tbk,¹⁷ which has been absorbing around 7,000–8,000 tons, has declined sharply due to the decline in the cigarette industry's performance and strict regulations, making it difficult for farmers to sell their crops at reasonable prices. The price of the best quality tobacco previously averaged Rp90,000–Rp125,000 per kilogram, but currently it is often below Rp75,000 per kilogram, or even much lower for certain qualities.

Further empirical support was also found in a study of the market for the Voor-Oogst¹⁸ Kasturi tobacco variety in Jember. The results of qualitative and quantitative research in this study show a highly concentrated market structure, as seen from the very high CR4 (Concentration Ratio): for most types of tobacco, CR4 is between 60% and 90%,¹⁹ indicating that a small number of large buyers dominate the market share (tight oligopsony). In this structure, farmers, small traders, and even marketing agencies only act as price takers, while pricing decisions are practically determined by warehouses or large capital owners who are at the forefront of the marketing channel.

Unilateral Quality Standards as a Source of Market Inequality.

The distortion of tobacco prices at the farmer level cannot be separated from the issue of information asymmetry and the unilateral setting of quality standards by large buyers. Empirical findings show that farmers do not have adequate access to information regarding quality classification²⁰, industry preferences, or the basis for price

¹⁶ Whedy Prasetyo, “Paradoks Ganda Kos Produksi Petani Tembakau(Studi Fenomenologi Pada Petani Tembakau Di Kabupaten Jember” 20, no. 1 (2017): 67–82.

¹⁷ Bondan Satriawan, “Tingkat Persaingan Pada Industri Tembakau Dan Dampaknya Terhadap Petani Tembakau(Studi Kasus Industritembakau Madura),” *Bismajurnal Bisnis Dan Manajemen* 2, No. 031 (2025).

¹⁸ Beby Alfin Naby et al., “Analisis Scp (Structure, Conduct, Performance) Tembakau Voor-Oogst Kasturi Di Kabupaten Jember” 03, no. 01 (2023): 12–25, <https://doi.org/10.56013/kub.v3i01.2281>.

¹⁹ M Alfiqran and Andi Amran Asriadi, “Analisis Struktur Dan Perilaku Pasar Komoditas Kacang Tanah Di Desa Libureng Kecamatan Tanete Riaja Kabupaten Baru” 5, no. 02 (2025): 117–31, <https://doi.org/10.55180/aft.v5i2.1908>.

²⁰ Jurnal Kajian et al., “Analisis Asimetris Informasi: Perilaku Konsumen Pada Pasar Online S” VII (2023): 645–58.

assessment used by manufacturers. Under these conditions, market relations do not take place within a framework of equal exchange, but rather within a structure of unequal power relations, where buyers control strategic information while farmers are in a position of dependence.

Information asymmetry prevents farmers from assessing the quality of their tobacco objectively and independently. Quality assessment is entirely in the hands of warehouses or manufacturers, without any transparent verification mechanism. As a result, price reductions are often justified on the basis of quality, even though the quality criteria are not clearly known to farmers. From an economic perspective, this condition creates an information advantage for buyers, enabling price suppression, which is the suppression of prices below fair market value. The prices that are formed no longer reflect healthy supply and demand interactions, but rather the result of information dominance by one party. Unilateral quality standards also serve as a market control instrument that reinforces oligopsony structures. By establishing flexible and unpredictable quality classifications, buyers can easily reject or lower tobacco prices without risking a loss of supply, as farmers have no comparable market alternatives. This situation reinforces farmers' ²¹position as price takers and narrows their room for negotiation. In the long term, this mechanism creates structural dependence, in which farmers continue to produce at high risk but without the certainty of fair prices.

From an institutional economics perspective, this practice reflects the failure of market institutions to ensure transparency and fairness in transactions. The market not only fails to provide symmetrical information, but also fails to establish rules that protect small producers. Information closure and non-participatory quality standards make the tobacco market exclusive and non-competitive. Therefore, the price distortion that occurs is not a temporary anomaly, but a logical consequence of a market institutional design that does not favor farmers.²²

Within the framework of Islamic economic ethics, this asymmetry of information and unilateral standards contain elements of injustice (zulm) and contradict the principles of honesty (shidq) and openness (transparency) in muamalah. Price

²¹ Mei Hardianti Utari And Zulva Azijah, "Volatilitas Harga Bawang Merah Di Indonesia 16680 (2019): 309–36.

²² dwi Haryono Dwika Mutiara Abriani, Dyah Aring Hepiana Lestari, "The Effect Of Goverment Policy And Market Failure On Divergence Of Cassava Competitiveness In South Lampung" 20, no. 1 (2023): 130–41.

agreements that arise from information asymmetry cannot be considered fully free agreements, because one party does not have the equal ability to assess the object of the transaction. Thus, tobacco price distortion is not only a matter of market efficiency, but also an ethical violation that systematically harms the weaker party.²³

The Implications of Price Distortions on Farmers' Welfare

The impact of price distortion on farmers' welfare can be seen from two main aspects: income uncertainty and inability to access alternative markets. When tobacco prices are set unilaterally and do not reflect fair market value, farmers' incomes become vulnerable to fluctuations and domination by large buyers. This uncertainty reduces farmers' ability to plan production, invest in quality inputs, or adopt technologies that can increase productivity. In many cases, the response to this income risk is the accumulation of debt, the sale of productive assets, or a switch to other commodities that may be less profitable in the long term.²⁴

Dependence on an unequal market structure also limits farmers' opportunities to gain access to more profitable alternative markets, such as organic markets, farmer cooperatives, or new distribution networks. Unclear quality standards and a lack of information on negotiations make farmers inclined to choose the certainty of selling to large buyers even if the prices are unfair. As a result, they are unable to build a stronger bargaining position in the tobacco value chain, which in turn weakens their collective bargaining power and ability to adapt to macroeconomic changes.²⁵

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²³ unjid dan Dwi Sungkawaningrum, "Etika Pasar dan Kejujuran Transaksi dalam Perspektif Ekonomi Islam," *Fokus Ekonomi dan Bisnis* 10, no. 2 (2025): 115–117

²⁴ Gunawan dan D. Susanto, "Dampak Ketidakpastian Harga terhadap Kesejahteraan Petani Kopi di Indonesia," *Jurnal Agribisnis Indonesia* 9, no. 2 (2021): 115–128

²⁵ Permana dan A. Wibowo, "Pengaruh Struktur Pasar terhadap Kesejahteraan Petani: Studi pada Komoditas Jagung di Jawa Timur," *Jurnal Ilmu Pertanian Indonesia* 26, no. 3 (2021): 401–412,

accumulation of debt, the sale of productive assets, or a switch to other commodities that may be less profitable in the long term.²⁶

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Fair Pricing in the Perspective of Islamic Economics

The concept of fair pricing in Islamic economics stems from the view that market mechanisms are not merely an arena for economic exchange, but rather a space for muamalah transactions imbued with moral values.³⁰ A fair price is not measured solely by a formal agreement between the seller and the buyer, but by the fulfillment of

²⁶M. Sari dan A. Kusuma, "Transmisi Harga dan Ketidakpastian Harga Komoditas Pertanian di Indonesia," *Jurnal Agribisnis dan Pengembangan Wilayah* 14, no. 1 (2022): 55–69,

²⁷ Rahmadyanti dan R. Hidayat, "Analisis Ketidakpastian Harga dan Strategi Bertahan Hidup Petani Sayuran di Bandung Raya," *Jurnal Sosial Ekonomi Pertanian* 13, no. 2 (2020): 143–156

²⁸ Shylviana and Purba, "Evaluasi Stabilitas Harga Komoditas Pertanian Dalam Sistem Ekonomi Terbuka."

²⁹ Agnes Sunartiningsih Et Al., *Pengembangan Masyarakat Dalam Perspektif Pembangunan Sosial Dan Kesejahteraan*, Ed. Suzanna Eddyono, 1st Ed. (Sleman Yogyakarta: Buana Grafika, 2018).

³⁰ Cahya Wulandari, "Tinjauan Islam Terhadap Mekanisme Pasar Dan Penanganan Distorsinya JIEFeS" 1, no. 1 (2020): 82–99.

the principles of honesty openness and balance of bargaining power between market participants. Therefore, when prices are formed under conditions of information asymmetry and dominance by one party, those prices lose their ethical legitimacy even if they appear formally valid.³¹

In the context of tobacco price distortion, empirical findings show that farmers are in a weak position due to the oligopsonistic market structure and lack of access to information. This condition contradicts the principle of al 'adl (justice).³² which demands balance and proportional treatment for all parties in a transaction. Fair pricing in Islamic economics requires that every actor have an equal opportunity to understand the value of the goods being exchanged and to be rationally involved in the price determination process. When farmers do not know the basis for quality assessment and prices are determined entirely by buyers, then the market relationship reflects structural injustice. Islamic economics also emphasizes the importance of ridha bi al-ridha (mutual consent)³³ as the basis for valid transactions. However, this consent cannot be narrowly understood as passive acceptance of the offered price. Ethically valid consent must arise from conditions free from coercion and exploitation of ignorance. In the tobacco market, farmers' economic dependence on large buyers often leads to pseudo-consent to prices, as farmers have no viable market alternatives. Thus, such price agreements are ethically problematic from an Islamic economic perspective. Furthermore, the principle of fair pricing is also related to the prohibition of zulm (injustice) in muamalah.³⁴ Any market mechanism that systematically transfers economic benefits from the weak to the strong is considered a form of economic injustice. The distortion of tobacco prices, which suppresses farmers' incomes and transfers economic surpluses to large buyers, indicates a deviation from the basic objectives of sharia (maqashid al-shariah), particularly the protection of property (hifz al-mal) and the livelihoods of small communities.³⁵

³¹ Fachrounissa Zein Vitadiar dan Tika Widiastuti, "Analisis Faktor Penyebab Distorsi Harga Pasar dan Penanggulangan Dampaknya dalam Perspektif Islam," *Masyrif: Jurnal Ekonomi, Bisnis, dan Keuangan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 256–273,

³² Ria Tifanny Tambunan Et Al., "Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Ibn Taimiyah Dalam Konsep Mekanisme Pasar Dan Penetapan Harga Terhadap Perekonomian Islam" 10, No. September (2023): 654–62.

³³ Zahratul Jannah et al., "Akad Dalam Jual Beli : Akad Murabahah , Akad Salam , Akad Istishna," 2025.

³⁴ Kendro Pratomo dan Trisna Taufik, "Mekanisme Pasar dan Penetapan Harga dalam Perekonomian Islam (Analisis Pemikiran Ibn Taymiyah)," *Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 4, no. 3 (2018): 213–216,

³⁵ Ahmad Rofiq, "Transparansi dan Keadilan Harga dalam Transaksi Ekonomi Islam," *Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi Islam* 13, no. 1 (2021): 1–15,

Synthesis of Findings on Price Distortion

The synthesis of research findings shows that tobacco price distortion is a direct consequence of an unbalanced market structure, where bargaining power is concentrated on the buyer side. The oligopsony pattern causes prices to be formed not through the interaction of equal supply and demand, but through a mechanism of systematic price suppression. Under these conditions, prices lose their function as a reflection of real economic value and become the result of market power relations.³⁶ Empirical findings also show that information asymmetry deepens the price distortion that occurs. Farmers do not have adequate access to information on prices, quality, and market standards.³⁷ while buyers have complete control over the assessment of tobacco quality. This information imbalance creates a quasi-coercive situation, where farmers formally appear to be conducting voluntary transactions, but substantively are in a position of compulsion due to limited choices and economic dependence.³⁸

In addition, the unilateral application of quality standards serves as an instrument for legitimizing price distortions. Non-transparent quality standards allow buyers to justify price reductions without a fair appeal mechanism. These findings indicate that price distortions stem not only from market structures, but also from institutional practices that continuously weaken the position of farmers.³⁹ Overall, the identified tobacco price distortion is structural, systemic, and recurrent. These findings confirm that the price issue cannot be reduced to short-term market fluctuations, but rather as a manifestation of market governance failure. This synthesis provides an important basis for assessing price distortion not only as an economic problem, but also as an ethical and distributive justice issue, especially when examined from an Islamic economic perspective.⁴⁰

³⁶ Saptana, Ashari, dan Friyatno, “Struktur Pasar, Perilaku, dan Kinerja Tataniaga Komoditas Pertanian di Indonesia,” *Forum Penelitian Agro Ekonomi* 38, no. 2 (2020): 115–132.

³⁷ Suwandari, Anik, I. G. A. A. Ambarawati, dan I. K. Satriawan, “Asimetri Informasi dan Ketimpangan Distribusi Nilai Tambah pada Rantai Pasok Pertanian,” *SOCA: Jurnal Sosial Ekonomi Pertanian* 15, no. 3 (2021): 401–415.

³⁸ Hmawati, S., dan Adiwarman A. Karim, “Distorsi Pasar dan Keadilan Distribusi dalam Perspektif Ekonomi Islam,” *Al-Iqtishad: Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi Syariah* 15, no. 2 (2023): 245–262

³⁹ Saptana, Ashari, dan Friyatno, “Struktur Pasar, Perilaku, dan Kinerja Tataniaga Komoditas Pertanian di Indonesia,” *Forum Penelitian Agro Ekonomi* 38, no. 2 (2020): 115–132.

⁴⁰ Romagia dan Putri A. S., “Kegagalan Kelembagaan Pasar Pertanian dan Dampaknya terhadap Produsen Kecil,” *Jurnal Kebijakan Ekonomi* 19, no. 2 (2024): 141–158.

CLOSING

Price distortions in tobacco trade indicate that market mechanisms are not functioning fairly and efficiently, due to market structure imbalances, information asymmetry, and the dominance of certain actors that weaken farmers' bargaining positions. From an Islamic economic perspective, this condition not only reflects market failure but also violates the principles of justice, honesty, and benefit in muamalah (transactions) as emphasized by al-Ghazali and Ibn Taimiyah. Therefore, price formation should not be assessed solely based on formal agreements but must also ensure fairness and balance in market relations, which requires strengthening farmer institutions, ensuring information transparency, and the role of state oversight to achieve a fair and sustainable tobacco market system.

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