



Tobacco Associates 8th International Leaf Standards Seminar in Indonesia

TA's previous International Leaf Standards Seminar in Indonesia was in 2018. That year in Bali, TA trained 36 participants representing 16 companies, mainly from Indonesia and Malaysia. The following year, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak occurred, curtailing most air travel and face-to-face meetings for over two years. In September of 2022, World Tobacco decided to hold its first in-person international trade fair in Asia since the outbreak, and TA attended. The two-day fair took place in Surabaya, a city on the island of Java where much of the tobacco manufacturing and production takes place.

TA's contacts and fair attendees hailed the idea of another leaf standards seminar, so much so that **TA returned to Surabaya on June 19-23, 2023 to conduct another one. The training program included 35 participants representing 14 cigarette manufacturers and 4 leaf suppliers. Over three decades, TA has conducted eight such seminars in Indonesia in addition to its continuous trade servicing and market development programs.**

Our International Leaf Standards Seminars provide the foundation for understanding and appreciating the quality aspects of US tobacco and how tobacco is graded based on official USDA grade standards. The five-day, hands-on training allows participants to learn specific grade characteristics and how certain attributes result from production or curing practices. For those officials directly involved in leaf utilization or purchasing, it gives them a better understanding of which grades are more desirable and suitable for their specific blend needs and clearly affirms why U.S. tobacco is considered the "quality choice" worldwide.





An integral part of the training involves seeing, touching, and smelling the tobacco we commonly grow in the U.S. TA shipped over 200 whole-leaf samples for use and examination during the training program. The samples were selected by Mr. Bobby Wellons, USDA-AMS grading instructor, to highlight the group (stalk position), elements of quality, and color, the three factors that determine a USDA grade. Visually, the participants learned how to differentiate varying degrees of injury, waste and uniformity, distinguish between natural vs. artificial colors, and determine the color intensity of the leaf. Leaf size requirements, another defining element, are physically measured. Mr. Wellons also trained the participants on the importance of feel and touch when grading tobacco. One determines the degree of maturity, leaf structure, body and oil content through feel. When combined with the visual examination and leaf size, these elements define tobacco “quality.” And, of course, the natural aroma of U.S. flue-cured in general and of specific grades in particular, does not exist in other origins. **This clear understanding of our tobacco quality and grade characteristics sets the foundation for successful marketing endeavors.**

The tobacco industry is one of the largest industries in Indonesia and the world. **Indonesian cigarette manufacturers produce over 308 billion sticks annually, making it the second-largest cigarette market by retail volume.** With 5.38 trillion sticks produced worldwide, Indonesia makes up almost 5.73% of the world's volume. Indonesia's total population exceeds 278 million people, and 67.74% falls in the 15-64 years-old range. By 2030, Indonesia expects to surpass 300 million people. The people of the Republic of Indonesia are many and young, and they smoke. The smoking prevalence of males in Indonesia is 63%, one of the highest in the world. With population growth, a growing economy, increasing disposable income and purchasing power, limited smoking restrictions, a somewhat supportive government (Indonesia is one of the only Asian countries that has yet to ratify the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control), and an annual market growth of 2.94% (CAGR 2023-2028). **TA continues to see growth potential for US flue-cured exports to this critical and dynamic market.**

