



Putting the chop on illicit tobacco crops

The ATO is urging the community to be aware of signs that illicit tobacco is being grown, and report it to us.


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Illicit tobacco operations are not run by genuine farmers but by organised crime syndicates. These activities divert vital funds from the community and place them into the hands of criminals, who use the profits to fund other serious crimes.

By staying informed and vigilant, everyone can play their part in keeping the community safe and ensuring a level playing field for legitimate businesses.

With the tobacco growing season well underway, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is urging the community to be aware of signs that illicit tobacco is being grown, and report it to us.

How to spot a tobacco plant

Ever wondered if the plant you're staring at in a field is a [tobacco plant](#)  or perhaps a type of vegetable? Here's how to tell:

- **Height:** A tobacco plant typically stands tall at around 2.5 metres.
- **Leaves and resemblance:** Look for large, green leaves that might remind you of kale, cabbage, or even corn.
- **Flowers:** Tobacco plants feature long, trumpet-shaped flowers that are pinkish-white.

Next time you see a plant that fits this description, you might just be looking at a tobacco plant.

How to spot illicit tobacco activity

Ever wondered if there's a secret tobacco operation happening right under your nose? Here are some telltale signs that might suggest the presence of illicit tobacco activity in your community:


- Construction activities along creeks and rivers on private and public land.
- Unexplained and potentially unlawful use of water resources.
- Vans without markings constantly being loaded with cardboard boxes, potentially at odd hours of the day and night.
- Excessive security measures such as cameras, locks or guards, in seemingly ordinary farms or shops.
- The sound of machinery running overnight.

How to report it

If you suspect that illicit tobacco is being grown or manufactured in your community, report it to the ATO online at www.ato.gov.au/tipoff, or phone **1800 060 062**. Community tip-offs are one of our best sources of information.

A recent raid at a property in rural Victoria, prompted by a community tip-off, led to the seizure and destruction of over 16 tonnes of illicit tobacco. The amount seized is equivalent to the size of a young blue whale and has an estimated excise value of nearly \$35 million. This operation, which targeted an organised crime syndicate, highlights the crucial role that community members play in combating illegal tobacco activities.

The ATO urges everyone to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity related to illicit tobacco production to the authorities. By working together, we can help protect our communities from the harmful impacts of illegal tobacco operations.

Visit www.ato.gov.au/illicittobacco and download our [infographic \(PDF, 490KB\)](#)  to learn more about illicit tobacco and how we are fighting back.

Notes to journalists

ATO stock footage and images are available for use in news bulletins from our media centre.

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