



For a small 5-acre grower producing 11,000 pounds, this would be an annual cost of about \$0.155 per pound. It is highly unlikely the labor savings for the small farmer would be high enough to justify the large baler. However, the farmer might partner with neighbors on a baler to lower the cost.

For a 50-acre grower producing 110,000 pounds, this cost would be \$0.015 per pound. In this case, the investment is probably worthwhile.

Incentives or cost-sharing opportunities also may be available through tobacco buying companies for switching over to large bales, which would further lower the cost of conversion.

RESEARCH UNDER WAY

Research is under way at the University of Tennessee to measure the difference in labor cost between the big-bale and the traditional 80-pound-bale system. The results from this study will provide better guidance to producers in different situations about the potential value of making the switch.

At this time, the university has talked to many farmers who have made the switch and are happy with it. They feel the labor savings are worth the cost, and they would not go back. These producers were all growing at least 50,000 pounds

There have been concerns about heat buildup in the wetter burley bales and resulting deterioration of leaf, as well as possible increases in tobacco-specific nitrosamine content. In research at the University of Tennessee, tobacco in big bales has shown no more tendencies to heat up than in standard traditional 80- to 100-pound bales, indicating no problem when tobacco was baled at moisture contents of less than 24%.

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