



Facebook: Protect Our Livelihood/ POLFAIFA  
<http://bit.ly/2cAA0ph>

Twitter: POLFAIFA  
<http://bit.ly/2d5Fteb>

Press Release

## **Boycott WHO – FCTC COP7 & Uphold Indian Tobacco ‘Farmers Respect and Country’s Democracy’ - FAIFA Appeals to Government**

- **Appeals to Sh. J.P Nadda to promote balanced regulations and safeguard the interests and livelihood of millions of small farmers and rural workers**
- **Stage protest outside WHO office demanding they stop promoting one-sided interests**
- **Demand CBI enquiry against all beneficiaries of anti-tobacco activities funded by international bodies**

**New Delhi, October 27, 2016:** Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), a non-profit organization representing the cause of millions of farmers and farm workers of commercial crops across the States of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Gujarat etc. today appealed to the Prime Minister of India, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare and all the other concerned Ministers to uphold Indian Tobacco ‘Farmers Respect and Country’s Democracy’ by boycotting the WHO – FCTC COP7.

The WHO FCTC Conference of Parties (COP 7) Meeting is being hosted by India in Greater Noida between the 7th and 12th of November 2016. Adhoc decisions on tobacco control at this Conference, as in previous such Meetings, will affect the livelihood of millions of tobacco farmers and farm labourers involved in tobacco cultivation in the country. Till date, despite making several representations, concerns of tobacco farmers have completely been ignored by WHO. The farmers have also not received the observer status as part of the official Indian delegation in the upcoming conference. FAIFA is urging Government of India to include the tobacco farmers in the official Indian delegation to the upcoming conference or else boycott the conference.

Showing their resentment towards the WHO – FCTC regulations, farmers today protested outside the Ministry for Health & Family Welfare, New Delhi appealing to the policy makers to boycott the upcoming conference. The farmers also staged a protest outside the office of WHO demanding transparency, in FCTC decision making and stop to promoting the interest of vested business syndicates.

As a representative of the tobacco farmers in India, FAIFA has applied to the WHO FCTC Secretariat seeking observer status in the FCTC COP7. This would allow farmers’, one of the key stakeholders of the tobacco community, to understand the future course of actions being proposed by the WHO on tobacco control and its impact on tobacco crops. The applications and requests of the farmers have not even been acknowledged by the WHO FCTC and it seems that the UN agency wants to conduct the conference in a non-inclusive manner.

FAIFA has appealed to the Government requesting to be a part of the Indian delegation to WHO FCTC.

FAIFA has also written to the UN General Secretary requesting to be invited to the WHO FCTC conference. FAIFA is hopeful the UN Secretary General will uphold the principles of transparency and inclusiveness and will issue suitable directions to WHO FCTC secretariat to take an unbiased view on the request for inclusion.

The official FCTC Charter states that observer status will be provided to stakeholders. However, as a matter of record, till date only anti-tobacco parties have been allowed participation, while those whose livelihoods are being impacted because of actions of FCTC have been, denied even observer status.

**Shri B.V. Javare Gowda, President, Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA)** said, *“We the tobacco farmers of the country call upon the Indian Government, in its capacity as host to the upcoming FCTC Conference, to uphold Indian Tobacco ‘Farmers Respect and Country’s Democracy’ and boycott the conference. We also appeal to the policy makers to reject FCTC proposals which are not evidence based, promote balanced regulations which gives due consideration to the interests and livelihoods of millions of small farmers and rural workers and their families.”*

*“Pursuing a non-evidence based health agenda which brings farmers to the brink of death by taking away their livelihoods is not social justice”,* he added.

**Mr. Murali Babu, General Secretary, Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA)**, added, *“We the tobacco farmers of the country, note with concern the secretive manner in which COP7 deliberations are contemplated to be held and we are extremely apprehensive that proposals on tobacco control will be discussed at the FCTC Conference which would put at risk the livelihoods of millions of tobacco growers and others dependent on tobacco without providing any scientifically proven public health risk.”*

FAIFA is concerned that some of the agenda and intent of WHO is suspect and their actions are not as pure as they should be. According to WHO’s own report ‘Mapping of WHO’s engagement with non-State actors’, the financial funding of WHO from non-state actors in 2012 stood at a whopping 25.5%, which is ample proof that the WHO’s agenda is increasingly being influenced by non-state actors. These financial contributors include NGO’s, private sector, philanthropic foundations and academia, many of them may have hidden agendas. There will definitely be a conflict of interest when you dig deep into it. We demand that the Government initiates an independent inquiry into the affairs and the financial dealings of all anti-tobacco proponents.

The Preamble to the FCTC recognizes the need to consider the livelihood and economic interests of tobacco growers and workers in implementing its provisions: “Mindful of the social and economic difficulties that tobacco control programmes may endanger in the medium and long term in some developing countries and countries with economies in transition...”. It is however unfortunate that this ethos has not been given any heed to, till date, and the conference in India is another proof that the process continues to be non-transparent and WHO FCTC is not paying any attention to the socio-economic issues of the effected countries.

Such an undemocratic FCTC–COP7 meeting is not good for India’s reputation which values transparency and democracy and it will certainly be the darkest day in the history of our Country.

Through this silent protest, the farming community with folded hands, requests the Prime Minister of India to direct the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to boycott the WHO – FCTC COP7 meeting.

For further information, please contact:

Murali Babu – 9989005898

Venkatesh Warlu – 8897019097

**FAIFA Concerns:**

1. The FCTC decisions are made undemocratically, behind closed doors, with media, the public and tobacco farmers all excluded from the process. This means that the views and interests of tobacco growers are not represented in the debates especially when decisions arrived at during the Conference have direct bearing on the lives of tobacco growers.
2. The FCTC has become an instrument in the hands of anti-tobacco NGOs and Activists who are funded by vested interests and have limited knowledge of tobacco growing countries and have no concern for millions of people dependent on tobacco cultivation and trade.
3. FCTC proposals to regulate tobacco product contents under Articles 9 & 10 would result in a virtual prohibition of all regular tobacco crops grown in the country. The rules that are being drafted by the FCTC for adoption by tobacco producing countries like India are extreme and will have severe and adverse impact on tobacco farming in India.
4. Under FCTC Articles 17 & 18, the anti-tobacco activists and such bodies are seeking to influence governments to force tobacco farmers to shift to alternative crops which are not suitable substitutes. Experiments and trials carried out in India by CTRI have not been able to establish an equally remunerative viable alternative crop to tobacco that can be grown in similar agro-climatic conditions.
5. The FCTC Article 5.3 is being driven in a direction whereby Tobacco Farmers and other stakeholders will be denied access to Policy Makers for consultation and therefore have no say in policy formulation or have any avenue to air their grievances against any regulation on tobacco, that affects them. This is against our fundamental right to express our views and opinions.
6. FCTC Article 6 recommends imposing excessively high taxation on tobacco products. In India Legal Cigarettes, which is merely 11% of tobacco consumption in India, is already subjected to very high and discriminatory taxation. High tax arbitrage has led to India becoming the fastest growing and is currently the 4<sup>th</sup> largest market for illicit cigarettes in the world. As the consumption shifts to smuggled cigarettes the Indian tobacco farmers are losing volumes as these smuggled products do not use local tobacco. With this the demand of tobacco grown in the country further comes down, which impact the livelihoods of tobacco farmers seriously. When you look at the cumulative consumption of legal and smuggled cigarettes there is no evidence that raising taxes has resulted in reduction of consumption of this product.