



FEDERATION OF ALL INDIA FARMER ASSOCIATIONS

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Date: September 20, 2016

To

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India
Government of India
New Delhi.

Respected Sir,

Sub : Tobacco farmers' Appeal - Protect us from livelihood threatening measures of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

India is the second largest tobacco growing country in the world with tobacco supporting the livelihood of 45.7 million people including farmers, farm workers, retailers, women, tribals etc.

However, it is a matter of great concern to us that due to the interference of NGOs in Policy making and many years of discriminatory & extreme regulatory policy against the cigarette industry, farmers of FCV Tobacco are in great financial distress and under huge livelihood pressure.

While FAIFA as a representative body of farmers has been agitating and representing to the government for a roll-back of some of the extreme measures implemented in recent times, such as the 85% Pictorial Warning, we also demand that no new regulatory impositions should be brought against the tobacco industry which can have a direct impact on our produce and income thereby increasing the distress and pressure that we find ourselves under.

In November 2016, India will be the host to the Seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). This Conference will play an important role in promoting extreme and damaging tobacco regulation for the future without any scientific basis and which will prove destructive not only to India but also to the entire world.

We the tobacco farmers of the country, note with concern the secretive manner in which COP7 deliberations are held and are extremely apprehensive that some proposals on tobacco control which will be discussed at the FCTC Conference would put at risk the livelihood of millions of tobacco growers and others dependent on tobacco without providing any scientifically proven public health benefit.

**Farmers are particularly concerned that:**

1. The FCTC decisions are made undemocratically, behind closed doors, with media, the public and tobacco farmers 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 in the West and have no knowledge of tobacco growing or any concern for the vast livelihood dependency of millions of people on tobacco cultivation and tobacco 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 very 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 viable substitutes for tobacco. Experiments and trials carried out in India by CTRI have not been able to establish an economically viable alternative crop 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 have no access to Policy Makers for consultation and therefore no say in policy formulation or any avenue to air their grievances against any regulation on tobacco that affects them. In our view this is against the high democratic ideals of the Indian Constitution.
6. FCTC Article 6 with recommendations for imposing excessively high taxation on tobacco products will have serious livelihood impact for Indian Cigarette tobacco farmers. Legal Cigarettes are already subjected to very high and discriminatory taxation in the country which has led to a shift of consumption to smuggled cigarettes which do not use local tobacco. This affects negatively the demand for tobacco grown by us and supplied to the domestic legal industry.



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Faced by the Serious Threat of the FCTC to Our Livelihood, we call upon the Indian Government to:

- ▶ Ensure that India's tobacco farmers are allowed to participate in the FCTC conference and included in the process of adopting India's position on the policy recommendations that will be discussed at COP7.
- ▶ Include Tobacco Farmers in the official Indian delegation to the Conference.
- ▶ Being the host country, ensure that COP7 follows India's high democratic ideals which favour openness and dialogue.
- ▶ Promote transparency throughout the FCTC process and reject further attempts at adopting additional guidelines or declarations that would limit the ability of stakeholders to consult and interact with the Government and share their views on Policy and other matters that affect them.
- ▶ Be aware of the false propaganda that will be unleashed by anti-tobacco NGOs before the FCTC COP7 demanding even more extreme and unreasonable regulations and investigate the motives behind their campaign.
- ▶ Reject proposals on alternative crops, which are being driven by NGOs and other activists to substitute tobacco for other crops in a situation when no viable alternative has been established putting the livelihood of millions of farmers at risk.
- ▶ Ensure that unreasonable and impractical proposals under Articles 9 & 10 are not adopted by the FCTC as they will cause devastating impact on tobacco farmers & the Indian economy rendering bulk of the tobacco grown in the country unusable.
- ▶ Tobacco taxation policies should not create arbitrage opportunities for unscrupulous anti-social elements which would fuel smuggling in India and across the globe.

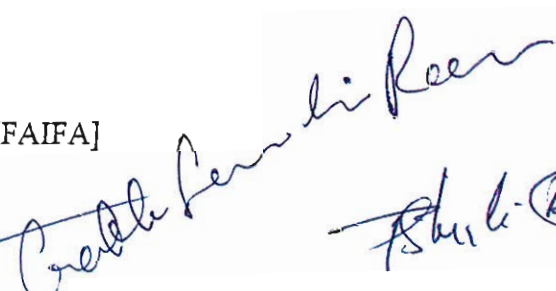
We the tobacco farmers of the country call upon the Indian Government, in its capacity of host to the FCTC Conference this year, to take the opportunity to leave a footprint on global tobacco policy by rejecting extreme FCTC proposals which are not evidence based and by promoting balanced regulation towards protecting the interests and livelihood of millions of small farmers and rural workers and their families.

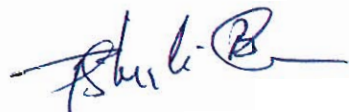
Yours faithfully,

For Federation of All India Farmer Association [FAIFA]


K Reddy Naidu
Hon'rary President


B V Javare Gowda
President


G. Seshagiri Rao
Vice President [FAIFA]
Vice Chairman (Tobacco Board)


P S Murali Babu
General Secretary