



FEDERATION OF ALL INDIA FARMER ASSOCIATIONS

H.No. : 4-19-1/24, 2nd Line Vijayapuri, JKC College Road, Guntur Andhra Pradesh
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Date: 3rd August 2018

To

Shri Radha Mohan Singh
Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
Government of India
New Delhi

Respected Sir,

Sub: Tobacco Farmers Right to Participate in the WHO FCTC COP 8 Deliberations

The Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) is a non-profit federation whose mission is to support the farmers in India. Tobacco growers all over the world share similar problems, threats and challenges, regardless of the size of their crop production. FAIFA also defends tobacco farmers' right to be represented nationally & internationally, to ensure that the issues & challenges faced by them are justly considered by the decision makers.

The WHO is holding the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Conference of Parties (COPS) at Centre International de Conferences Geneve (CICG), Rue de Varembe 17, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland from October 1 to 6 with India as the chair. The decisions on tobacco control at this Conference, as in previous such meetings, will have grave effect on the livelihood of millions of tobacco farmers and farm labour connected with tobacco cultivation in the country.

In this context, we would like to draw your attention that prior to the COP 7 we had represented to be included as part of the Indian delegation and had also sought observer status from the WHO-FCTC. To our dismay we were not included in any deliberations during the COP 7. Some of our farmer brethren also protested the exclusion from the WHO-FCTC.

We drew heart from our Hon'ble Health Minister's address during the COP 7 wherein Shri J P Nadda Ji had **highlighted the important role of tobacco farmers in policy making stating, "...the Governments, the WHO-FCTC, WHO and other UN agencies, the Civil Society as well as the tobacco growers and workers are our partners and stakeholders in framing and implementing effective tobacco control policies at the national and international**



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levels. We can together review implementation of WHO FCTC, to identify and applaud best practices across countries and to chart the way forward."

While the COP 7 was in progress, we were given assurances by Shri A.K. Panda, Additional Secretary and Shri Amal Pusp, Director of the Ministry of Health that they would meet with us and our concerns would be addressed in a joint meeting with Ministry Commerce and Ministry of Agriculture. Although the meeting took place but our concerns have not been addressed.

You will appreciate that our participation will enable us to present the ground realities in India, as important stakeholders and contribute to the process of decision making. Our participation will also help other participants appreciate our point of view and understand the impact on the livelihood of 4.6 crore people that are dependent on tobacco in the country.

It is our submission to include tobacco farmers in the official delegation to the WHO-FCTC COP 8 and give them the right to participate in the policy-making process, in line with the high ideals of the democratic spirit of the Indian Constitution as well. This will also give the representatives of the tobacco farmer community the opportunity to voice their views on any proposal *at the Conference which affects* livelihood.

The tobacco farming community is worried that since FCTC is a forum dominated by anti-tobacco NGOs, from countries which have no dependence on tobacco farming and hence have no concern about the impact on the people dependent on tobacco. They also lack the knowledge of tobacco growing and do not know that in India, millions of farmers and farm workers depend on tobacco for their livelihood. Lack of knowledge on this front is bound to negate the just rights of tobacco farmers, workers and adversely affect their livelihood and result in immense damage to the tobacco farming community and the Indian economy. It is important that the Tobacco Control Agenda of the WHO FCTC is not allowed to be hijacked by NGOs acting at the behest of vested interests.

The United Nations, in its recommendation on Good Governance states that "in the community of nations, governance is considered "good" and "democratic" to the degree in which a country's institutions and processes are transparent." It further states that "Good governance promotes equity, participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and the rule of law, in a manner that is effective, efficient and enduring." Therefore, the participation of farmers in the FCTC COP deliberations will be in keeping with the principles of transparency and equity as adopted by the United Nations itself.

Moreover, the 'Guidance Note of the Secretary-General (UN Secretary General) on Democracy' very clearly enunciates that "Popular participation, collective deliberation and



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political equality are essential to democracy, and should be realized through a framework and structure of accessible, representative, transparent and accountable institutions subject to periodic change or renewal."

Participation of farmers in the COP8 would also be in line with the 'Policy and Recommendations on Economically Sustainable Alternatives to Tobacco Growing (in relation to Article 17 and 18 of the WHO FCTC)" Guiding Principle 2", which states that "Tobacco growers and workers should be engaged in the process of policy development concerning Article 17 and 18 and involved in implementation, in accordance with national laws, through a bottom up and territorial approach, making sure that their involvement is insulated from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry."

Here would also like to draw you attention to the circular of Ministry of Law and Justice which recommends a pre-legislative consultative policy to resolve contentious and complex policies and that the legislative process should also involves the study of social, financial and key challenges to be settled before undertaking the legislation. The circular also includes a policy document with a directive of strict compliance of the same. The Policy document recommends a consultative process with all stakeholders and placing in public domain any proposed legislation / rule and the feedback and comments from the stakeholders. Therefore, any decision in the Conference of Parties without even consulting the stakeholders would be a violation of the process laid down by the Government of India.

We request the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India to intervene and ensure that the representatives of the tobacco farmers are able to attend the COP8 deliberations as part of the official Indian delegation. The Government of India should advise the WHO that in India tobacco plays an important socio-economic role and any decisions taken at the conference cannot be taken in isolation without involving important stakeholders like tobacco farmers. This would also be in line with your views expressed at the previous COP meeting.

Our participation will also ensure that the farmers view point on issues are taken into account resulting in reasonable and balanced policy adoption and prevent the formulation of extreme one-sided decisions by the Parties to the Conference which will cause misery and suffering to the livelihood of millions of farmers and others in the tobacco sector.

Democratic rights of farmers to voice their concerns should not be denied by an international conference which is going to impact the fate of the millions of tobacco farmers in India. The conference should abide by the democratic principles and any conclusion arrived at in the Conference should be based in scientific evidence and not merely on empirical data. We would like to know why 98% of the persons who are non-consumers of tobacco products are losing their lives.



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In conclusion, FAIFA once again requests the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India to kindly ensure that the representatives of tobacco farmers are included in the official Indian delegation to the Conference so that no resolution is passed which will have long-term adverse impact on the Indian farming community.

Thanking you Sir,
Yours faithfully,

P S Murali Babu
General Secretary - FAIFA