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# PM's vocal-for-local campaign should be applicable to tobacco control policies in India: FAIFA

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NEW DELHI: Urging the government to be sensitive towards the financial distress faced by [tobacco](#) growers due to the coronavirus [pandemic](#), farmers body [FAIFA](#) on Friday said PM [Narendra Modi](#)'s vocal-for-local campaign should be applicable to tobacco control policies in India.

It said the government should shun aping the western world and adopt measures that are "rooted into the reality of tobacco consumption pattern" of the country.

Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) claims to represent farmers and farm workers of commercial crops across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Gujarat.

It asked the government to "reduce cigarette taxes to pre-GST levels so the market share of smuggled foreign brands can reduce and Indian industry and farmers can benefit in line with the vocal-for-local vision of the Prime Minister."

"In the last few years, under the influence of WHO FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control), the government has imposed harsh regulations such as increasing the size of pictorial warnings, imposing punitive taxation on cigarettes with the tax burden more than trebling since 2012-13 and has even withdrawn export benefits," FAIFA President Javare Gowda said.

These policies are a result of the legacy of aping the western world by the previous governments where cigarettes represent 91 per cent of tobacco consumed as compared to India where cigarettes are only 9 per cent of the tobacco being consumed, he added.

Gowda further said, "All these are leading to adverse consequences on livelihood of crores of Indians without providing any alternatives livelihood opportunities or help to farmers who cannot grow any other equally remunerative crop in the dry and arid regions they reside in."

While lauding PM Modi's vocal-for-local campaign, FAIFA asked "the government to shun the legacy of tobacco control policies aping the western world and adopt policies that are rooted into the reality of tobacco consumption pattern of India."

FAIFA said India has a unique pattern of tobacco consumption and cigarettes are the smallest component of tobacco consumption in India.

"However, it is facing the brunt of these most draconian and stringent regulations in the world. Also, the per capita annual consumption of cigarettes in India is just 96, amongst the lowest in the world," it added.

The farmers' body further claimed that only 3 per cent of the adult population consumes cigarettes. While, smokeless tobacco product users and bidi smokers outnumber cigarette smokers by 6 times and 3 times, respectively.

"However, cigarettes account for more than 80 per cent of revenue from tobacco taxation, while the contribution to tax collections from the other two segments is insignificant. Majority of the tobacco industry (68 per cent) is in the untaxed or unorganised sector," it said.

"In view of the current weakening economic scenario and the rising unemployment in the country due to COVID-19, the government should remain mindful of the fact that no such policy decisions are taken that brings instability in farm prices and have an adverse



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impact on the livelihood of Indian flu-cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco farmers," it said.

Indian tobacco farmers are already facing huge losses due to delays in marketing their crop, it added.

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