

Tobacco regulations: farmers urge Centre to seek their views

Special Correspondent | ONGOLE, October 29, 2020



'Illegal cigarette trade is a threat to livelihoods of ryots'

Tobacco farmers have urged the Centre to hold consultations with them, being the main stakeholders, while framing any regulations pertaining to the cultivation of the crop.

On the World Tobacco Growers' Day on Wednesday, the representatives of the farmers from the Southern Light Soil and Southern Black Soil regions urged the Union Government to help them produce tobacco leaf on par with international standards.

Tobacco Board Vice-Chairman Konda Reddy said the proliferation of illegal cigarette trade in the country has undermined the tobacco control policies of the government. The illicit trade is also impacting the growers' earnings adversely following the reduction in demand for the domestically grown crop.

Federation of All India Farmers Association (FAIFA) general secretary P.S. Murali Babu said the demand for FCV tobacco had reduced considerably post 2013-14 owing to the sharp decline in legal cigarette volumes on account of high taxes and expansion of illegal cigarette trade.

Production declines

"The trade remains a threat to the livelihoods of farmers. Reports suggest that India is the fourth largest illegal cigarette market in the world," he lamented. Farmers who cultivated FCV tobacco in the drought-prone region have incurred a loss of at least ₹4,000 crore following the reduction in production from 325 million kg in 2014-15 fiscal to 210 million kg in last financial year, pointed out Vaddela Vara Prasad, president of Service and Welfare Organisation for Rythu Development.

SBS Farmers Welfare Organisation president P. Bhadri Reddy said the tobacco sector provides employment to more than 45 million people. There is no alternative to tobacco in view of the persistent drought condition, he said while referring to studies conducted by the CTRI, Rajamahendravaram.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/tobacco-regulations-farmers-urge-centre-to-see-their-views/article32969152.ece>