

Reduction in penalty sought for unauthorised tobacco cultivation

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Tobacco cultivation is controlled by the Tobacco Board. | Photo Credit: [M.A. Sriram](#)

Pratap Simha, MP, writes to Union Minister, officials

Mysuru MP Pratap Simha has sought a reduction in penalty imposed on unauthorised cultivation of tobacco.

As a regulated crop, tobacco cultivation is controlled by the Tobacco Board, which imposes penalty not only on tobacco cultivated by unregistered growers, but also the tobacco grown in excess of the quota sanctioned to individual registered growers.

Mr. Simha, in a recent letter to Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal, Commerce Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam and Tobacco Board Chairman has sought a reduction in penalty from the existing 10 per cent to 5 per cent on excess tobacco cultivated by both registered and unregistered growers in Karnataka.

He has sought necessary directions for implementing the “new penalty policy” of flat ₹1 per kg and 5 per cent on the value of sale of unauthorised tobacco by registered and unregistered growers.

After expressing his gratitude for reducing the penalty from 15 per cent to 10 per cent last year, Mr. Simha pointed out that the tobacco farmers in Mysuru, most of whom were small and marginal,

cultivated tobacco in rainfed areas and were solely dependent on the tobacco crop for their livelihood and survival.

In India, if any farmer is being penalised for cultivating crops, it is none other than growers of Flue Cured Variety (FCV) of tobacco, he said while pointing out that the farmers cultivating tobacco on Karnataka Light Soil (KSL) in Mysuru region were unable to grow even the authorised crop fixed by the Tobacco Board due to bad weather conditions and labour issues.

While ideal weather conditions coupled with good agricultural practices followed by growers result in improved productivity, the tobacco farmers adopting good agricultural practices are unable to reap market benefits and end up paying penalty, he regretted.

Also, he said there were thousands of unregistered tobacco growers, cultivating FCV tobacco since several years despite the heavy penalty due to lack of a viable alternative crop.

Meanwhile, President of Federation of Flue Cured Variety (FCV) Tobacco Growers Associations of Karnataka Javare Gowda said the Tobacco Board had already given concession in penalty on unauthorised tobacco in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. “We are also looking forward to concessions from the Tobacco Board this year”, he said.

Objection

However, convenor of Anti-Tobacco Forum (ATF) Vasanthkumar Mysoremath has taken exception to Mr. Pratap Simha’s appeal to the Centre to reduce the penalty on unauthorised tobacco.

“MPs must stop interfering in tobacco control policies”, said Mr. Mysoremath, who also heads the Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA), Mysuru.

“Tobacco is impacting the world’s 1.3 billion smokers and low and middle-income countries, whose health systems are plagued by tobacco-related diseases”, he said while citing World Health Organisation (WHO) to claim that people with cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease and cancer were more likely to face serious illness or death from COVID-19.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also commits countries to strengthen their implementation of WHO’s Framework Conventional for Tobacco Control, he said.

“While these serious issues are being tackled at global level, Member of Parliament's letter for concessional levy of fines is paradoxical, conflicting and is not in consonance with the oath of office the MP has taken to honour all national and international protocol commitments for good governance of their country. This kind of internal political interference is against FCTC protocol. Therefore, it would be in the best interest of health of the people to utilise the golden opportunity provided by COVID-19 to ban tobacco cultivation”, he said.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/reduction-in-penalty-sought-for-unauthorised-tobacco-cultivation/article37127183.ece>