



Press Release

Appeal to our governments to entrust tobacco growers as the key partners and stand firm in the defense of tobacco sector

- *Foreign exchange earnings through the export of tobacco & tobacco products garner about Rs.13,000 crores per annum.*
- *Farmers' activities and initiatives undertaken in India towards sustainable tobacco production*
- *An estimated 35 million man-days of employment have been lost due to the FCV tobacco crop reduction.*
- *Appeals to the government to develop a consultative approach and include tobacco farmers while framing tobacco control regulations*

Guntur, 28 October, 2023: On the occasion of World Tobacco Growers Day (WTGD) FAIFA in association with The International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) Celebrated World Tobacco Growers' Day on 28/10/2023 at various Tobacco growing regions of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka organised meetings with tobacco farmers'. Farmers later at their respective regions, conducted a peaceful rally carrying banners to voice out their concerns. Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), a non-profit organization representing the cause of millions of farmers and farm workers of commercial crops across the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Gujarat etc., on the occasion of World Tobacco Growers Day (WTGD) on behalf of FCV Tobacco farmers' appeal against "High Taxation and stringent regulations, Low Production of the crop, lack of export incentives and forever ending illegal/smuggled/contraband boom, who are not using Indian produced tobacco and false propaganda of foreign vested NGO's and Central Government committees have being formed without tobacco farmer representative involvement. Also FAIFA would like to make a call to our governments to support the sector recognizing the important contribution that tobacco provides.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Mareddy Subrahmanyeswara Reddy, Member of Tobacco Board and Executive Member Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), said at the farmers' gathering at Ongole that "FAIFA along with The International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) is holding the World Tobacco Growers' Day Celebration for the twelfth consecutive year. To the group of farmers' he addressed the following "India has embraced this event since the very beginning in order to promote the positive socio-economic impact of tobacco in our country. In India tobacco growing generates significant contributions:

- Tobacco provides direct and indirect employment to more than 45.7 million people, around 70% of whom are in the agricultural sector. Tobacco is a highly remunerative crop providing economic/social benefits to farmers in the tobacco growing regions.
- ASSOCHAM study Tobacco Economics in India: The Voice of the Farmer and other Stakeholders found that the tobacco growing areas of the three major tobacco producing States in India, viz., Andhra Pradesh,

Karnataka and Gujarat are better off in several socio-economic parameters as compared to the non-tobacco growing areas of these States. "...tobacco does create higher returns and other social capabilities for its farmers than those who are engaged in growing other cash crops," the study report observed.

- Studies conducted by the Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI), Rajahmundry, have shown that FCV tobacco is more remunerative than other crops grown in the region, and is difficult to substitute.
- The performance of FCV tobacco has been impressive, particularly in terms of farmer earnings.
- Tobacco products generate Tax revenues amounting to more than Rs. 70,000 crores annually. In addition, foreign exchange earnings through the export of tobacco & tobacco products garner about Rs.13,000 crores per annum.
- However, demand for FCV tobacco has reduced considerably post 2013-14 due to sharp decline in legal cigarette volumes on account of high taxes and growth of illegal cigarette trade.
- In fact, since 2013-14, the earnings of FCV tobacco farmers have shrunk cumulatively by more than Rs.7,500 crores due to drop in offtake of tobacco for the manufacture of domestic legal cigarettes. From a normal crop size of 316 million kgs in 2013-14, the crop size has shrunk to 189 million kgs in 2021-22.
- The massive drop in FCV tobacco production has resulted in loss of livelihood of farmers and workers in the tobacco growing areas of the country. An estimated 35 million man-days of employment have been lost due to the FCV tobacco crop reduction.

Mr Gadde Seshagiri Rao, Vice President, Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) stated that "the supply chain undertakes various initiatives to address the social and environmental effect of tobacco growing which is also inherent to most agricultural crops. He further explained the Specific activities and initiatives undertaken in India towards sustainable tobacco production -

- **Education of Farmers** on the importance of safe and environmentally responsible agrochemical use and minimization of the incidence of Crop Protection Agents (CPAs) residue in the crop through Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices
- **Setting up of waste collection centres** in villages to dispose of empty pesticide containers and wrappers
- **Tray and Green tech systems** of seedling production to facilitate high yielding and disease resistant tobacco seedlings
- **Drip irrigation system** - one of the most efficient water management practices - resulting in a significant saving of water
- **Soil Sustainability** measures such as Green Manuring, Sub Soiling, Soil test-based fertility management, soil nutrient management, optimizing fertilizer application etc. ensuring physical, chemical and biological health of the soil
- Using **customized Farm Equipment** to enable efficient farming
- **Aiding farmers** with user-friendly and cost-effective technological solutions to increase crop yield

Mr. Rao concluded by saying that "As a result of the above mentioned facts, we make a call to our governments to support the sector recognizing the important contribution that tobacco provides.

Mr Javare Gowda, President, Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) in Karnataka, while addressing the farmers' gathered for WTGD celebrations, stated "The World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) will hold its 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10) from 20 to 25 November

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in Panama. We expect the usual unfounded claims against our sector to be reinforced during the meeting sessions of the Conference. The WHO FCTC is aiming to mobilize governments to end subsidies for tobacco growing and insist on the rapid moving away from tobacco growing, which could have devastating consequences. In the two decades since the treaty was adopted, there has been no evidence to support their claims.

What is more, tobacco growers, who are the main subject of these deliberations, are effectively excluded from all meaningful discussions.

Since the start of this treaty, tobacco growers and their representatives have offered their help and expertise on all items in the agenda that might have an impact on tobacco production. Unbalanced regulation can have a devastating effect on tobacco growing communities, especially in countries where tobacco is still a pivotal cash crop.

He further stated “Time and again we, farming community has held our breath to be not a part of impending irregular regulations, we hope that the FCTC COP10 meeting does not come up with ill-conceived policy measures on issues like alternative cropping, regulation of contents/ingredients etc. which will have a devastating impact on India’s export performance and on the livelihood of millions of farmers, farm workers and their families”

He concluded by saying “Today, on the celebration of World Tobacco Growers’ Day, we make an appeal to our governments to entrust tobacco growers as the key partners and stand firm in the defence of our sector. We are confident that by acting together, the responsible actors in the supply chain, with the support of our governments can guarantee a better future for the next generations”.

**International Tobacco Growers Association and
Federation of All India Farmer Associations [FAIFA]**