

## Farmers Denied Access to WHO FCTC Meet

India hosted the Seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which was attended by representatives of 136 FCTC signatory countries, NGOs, anti-tobacco activists and others to deliberate over future tobacco control policies and regulations that countries should adopt.

However, tobacco farmers whose livelihood is directly affected by the decisions adopted at this conference were not allowed to participate in the conference despite repeated pleas for inclusion from farmer associations such as Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) and International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA). In fact, the applications for COP Observer status to farmers' bodies such as FAIFA and Virginia Tobacco Farmers Associations were formally rejected during the Conference held in Greater Noida between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016.



Unhappy with the FCTC's undemocratic way of framing anti-tobacco policies in a secretive and exclusionary manner, hundreds of tobacco farmers from various tobacco-growing States in India demonstrated outside the venue demanding transparency in COP procedures.

Farmers from other tobacco growing countries viz., Brazil, Zimbabwe, U.S.A., Malawi, Portugal, Bulgaria etc. joined their Indian counterparts in this protest against unfair denial of the farmers' right to be heard at a global tobacco control forum such as the FCTC COP.



The farmers appealed to their Governments to probe the hidden agenda of global organisations that, under the garb of development and welfare, were silently working towards destroying local markets and livelihoods in developing economies, which is against the Guiding Principles of the FCTC.

Farmer leaders emphasized that adhoc decisions on tobacco control in WHO FCTC meetings would severely impact the livelihood of millions of tobacco farmers and farm labourers involved in tobacco cultivation. They observed that there are around 30 million tobacco farmers worldwide, including six million farmers in India, and despite years of relentless efforts, the FCTC has not been able to suggest a remunerative alternative to tobacco crop.

The farmers made a Delhi Declaration calling the Governments to provide equally remunerative alternative crop options for all tobacco growers across the globe and demanding alternative

