

FAIFA writes to PMO, FinMin against WHO recommendation on tobacco

NEW DELHI: Farmer organisation Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) has written to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and finance ministry against the WHO recommendation that alternative crops should replace tobacco as it contributes to global food crisis.

In its representation to the PMO, finance ministry, commerce ministry and the ministry of health and family welfare, FAIFA has made a case that the recommendation of the World Health Organisation (WHO) is unscientific and there are no benefits of other crops replacing tobacco cultivation. Citing a study conducted by the Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI), the organisation said the previous attempt made in Andhra Pradesh for substitution to alternative crops like grams and paddy led to significant losses for the farmers in comparison to their previous earnings from tobacco cultivation.

FAIFA, a non-profit organisation representing the cause of millions of farmers and farm workers of commercial crops across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Gujarat, requested the government that India should not implement the guidelines or recommendations made by WHO as these are "one-size fits all" solutions based on a western model of tobacco consumption.

"They do not necessarily serve the purpose



of tobacco control or revenue enhancement in a country like India. Further, India being a large tobacco producer, the livelihood of millions will be affected due to such appeals without doing proper agro-climatic studies," FAIFA general secretary Murali Babu said in a statement.

Apart from extreme tax policies, climate change is resulting in the decline of tobacco cultivation in India, it said, adding, the Tobacco Control Board, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, regulates tobacco cultivation and sets authorized production levels for each state.

However, it said, due to the impact of climate change manifested through cyclones like Nivar and Pethai, floods and droughts, actual production has consistently fallen short of the authorised levels.