

WORLD TOBACCO GROWERS' DAY: FARMERS SEEK PROTECTION OF TOBACCO SECTOR

The Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) celebrated World Tobacco Growers' Day on October 28, 2023 at various tobacco growing regions of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka and organised meetings with tobacco farmers.

FAIFA, on behalf of FCV Tobacco farmers, appealed against high taxation and stringent regulations, lower crop production of the crop, lack of export incentives, illegal/smuggled/contraband boom, false propaganda of foreign NGOs with vested interest and non-involvement of farmers in policy formulations. Also, FAIFA made a call to the government to support the tobacco sector, recognizing that it provides livelihood to millions and its important contribution to the Indian economy.

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

Mr Gadde Seshagiri Rao, Vice President, FAIFA stated, "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 that specific activities and initiatives have been undertaken in India towards sustainable tobacco production. Mr. Rao made a call to the government to support the sector recognizing its significant contribution.

Mr Javare Gowda, President, 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 in Panama [now postponed to February 2024]. 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 [WHO] claims. What is more, tobacco growers, who are the main subject of these deliberations, are excluded from all discussions," Mr Gowda said.

He said that since the start of this treaty, tobacco growers and their representatives have offered their help and expertise on all items on the agenda that might have an impact on tobacco production. Unbalanced

regulations can have devastating impact on tobacco growing communities, especially in countries where tobacco is still a major cash crop.

He concluded by saying, “Today, on the celebration of World Tobacco Growers’ Day, we make an appeal to our government to trust 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”.

