

## AP: Tobacco farmers wary over proposed changes in law

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**AMARAVATI:** The new laws proposed by the Centre to restrict use of cigarettes is creating ripples among tobacco growers. Farmers' associations say the move would affect livelihood of growers despite having adverse impact on the country's economy.



*Representative image*

The Union health ministry issued the draft guidelines for the proposed amendments to the Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) (COTPA Amendment) Bill, 2020, has led to a debate.

The Federation of All India Farmer Associations [FAIFA] said the proposed amendments in COTPA Bill are unwarranted.

It said the move would have huge impact on tobacco farmers and workers. Tobacco is one of the few cash rich crops cultivated in select soil regions in India. It is drought-tolerant, hardy, and a short-duration crop which can be grown on soils where other crops cannot be cultivated profitably.

Presently, India stands second in the global production of tobacco (800 million kg) after China. It provides employment directly and indirectly to 45.7 million people, including 6 million farmers and 20 million farm labour engaged. "Tobacco is giving Rs 43,000 crore revenue to the government besides fetching Rs 6,000 crore in foreign exchange due to exports," said Mittapalli Umamaheswara Rao, a leading tobacco exporter.

"The proposed amendment in the Bill seeks to introduce excessive and arbitrary restrictions on sale of tobacco products and imposes penalties that are draconian and we are concerned that it will impair our livelihoods," said FAIFA general secretary PS Murali Babu.

The provisions of original COTPA were studied, debated and deliberated prior to its enactment to give due consideration to the impact of tobacco regulation on the livelihood of people involved in the tobacco sector, he said.

"Similar amendments proposed to COTPA in 2015 were withdrawn in 2017 on the ground that a Bill amending COTPA should not be introduced until farmers shift to alternative crops. The government is yet to identify and help the growers migrate to other crops," said Murali Babu.

The growers and traders say the proposed amendment would terrorise retailers and traders, who would not want to engage in the business of sale of tobacco products at all, lest they be harassed under the pretext of the new law.

**Source:** <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/vijayawada/tobacco-farmers-wary-over-proposed-changes-in-law/articleshow/80103569.cms>