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Cigarette lobby may be behind move to ban areca nut: Campco

Cooperative to fight gutka ban, says will launch agitation if growers' interest hit

December 12, 2013 12:27 pm | Updated November 16, 2021 07:55 pm IST - MANGALORE:

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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Campco would not allow banning of areca nut, its President said. File photo

Alleging that some officials of the Union government are attempting to ban areca nut, president of the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. (Campco) Konkodi Padmanabha said in Mangalore on Wednesday that the cooperative will continue to make all efforts to protect the interests of growers.

He said that Campco would not allow banning of areca nut. If situation warranted "we will come to the streets", he said while addressing presspersons here on Wednesday.

Mr. Padmanabha said that a director of the National Rural Health Mission, under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, wrote to the director of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India on September 6, 2013, "requesting to examine the scientific evidences on the harmful effects of areca nut with a view to initiating necessary action to classify areca nut as an injurious substance and accordingly prohibit its use as ingredient in any food product".

The copy of the letter released to media said that a meeting chaired by the Secretary of the ministry on July 2, 2013, "... recommended that areca nut should be classified as an injurious substance".

Mr. Padmanabha said that it was not sure if the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India had taken any steps based on the letter.

He said the Karnataka High Court in its verdict in a case (The Malnad Areca Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd vs Union of India) in 2007 had ruled that areca nut was not injurious to health. The Union government had not challenged this order.

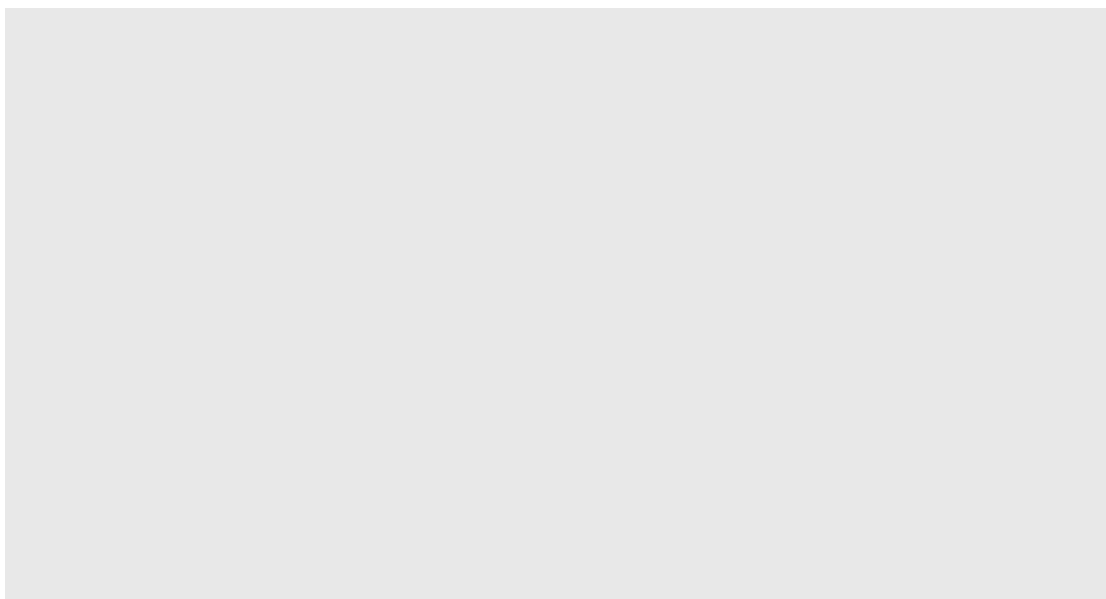
It was not easy to ban it as both the Union and state governments have been supporting areca nut cultivation.

The government was also earning revenue in its marketing. But only in the official circles there was some move to ban it. But

the Campco would protest any move to ban areca nut.

“I suspect a lobby, probably cigarette lobby, behind this (move to ban areca nut),” he said.

A World Health Organisation report had mentioned that the presence of alkaloids in areca nut was below 0.15 per cent, below the permissible limit.



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