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# Tobacco farmers urge govt to withdraw warnings

DHNS

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A farmers' body on Tuesday asked the Centre to withdraw the large pictorial warnings on tobacco products contending they were facing stiff competition from foreign players who sold their wares without displaying the warnings.

“We appeal to the government to reconsider the proposal on 85 per cent graphical health warning notification which has been pushed by NGOs with vested interests,” Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) President B V Javare Gowda said in a statement here. FAIFA members also took out a protest march demanding that the Centre should safeguard farmers' interests.

Gowda said the pictorial warnings were harming the interests of domestic farmers as consumers prefer smuggled foreign cigarettes which do not have picture warnings. The association said that the government should not blindly follow the claims of anti-tobacco lobby as most of the lobby is funded by foreign sources.

“There has been a concerted effort by some of the foreign players with vested interests to see India converting from a tobacco exporter to a net tobacco importer, as India is the second largest tobacco consuming country in the world after China,” it said.

It also claimed that there was a quantum jump in the illegal sales of smuggled cigarettes which is leading to reduced sale of home grown tobacco and due to which farmers were affected.

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