

Title: Need to fix the Minimum Support Price of Tobacco and extend facilities and financial aid to tobacco growers suffering losses in Chamarajanagar Parliamentary Constituency, Karnataka-laid.

SHRI R. DHARUVANARAYANA (CHAMRAJANAGAR): I would like to raise long pending problems of tobacco growers who are engaged in the cultivation of tobacco crop in my constituency. The present dire status of tobacco growers needs the attention of the Union Government to extend the possible financial aid to them. Nearly 83, 000 farmers are engaged in the cultivation of tobacco in Karnataka. A grower has to spend Rs. 30,000 to grow one barrel load of tobacco which include the expenditure of 3 tonnes fire wood loading and unloading wages, usage of fertilizers and pesticides, conditioning of raw tobacco, curing and grading charges. An average of Rs 75/- is required to produce 1 kg tobacco. But now a days the grower is getting an average return of Rs 50/- per kg tobacco with a loss of Rs 25/- per kg tobacco. The cost of 1 kg tobacco starts from Rs. 30 to Rs. 130 depending upon the quality of tobacco produced after conditioning it in a barrel. Earlier, the Tobacco Board had agreed to go for an alternative fuel system to condition the tobacco inside the barrel replacing the use of large quantity of fire wood to prevent deforestation and other environment related problems. The Tobacco Board has sufficient funds to the tune of more than Rs. 160 crores in terms of penalty collected from those farmers who have cultivated tobacco additionally and illegally. The Tobacco Board can utilize the funds to help the growers by providing an alternative fuel system or bearing the transportation cost of coal. The funds should be utilized by the year 2020 to benefit the tobacco growers to process their tobacco crop as the country promised to World Health Organization (WHO) to ban the cultivation of tobacco by 2020. The Board did not have any plans to spend the funds on the medical needs of Tobacco growers who are continuously exposed to the tobacco environment which is injurious to their health. Fixing the minimum support price (MSP) per kg tobacco will help the tobacco growers.

Hence, I would like to urge the Centre to take steps to fix the MSP of per kg tobacco and extend the facilities to Tobacco growers so as to make this Tobacco growing activity into a profitable one in India till 2020.