

# National Consultation on Economics of Tobacco Use

20 – 21 December 2012

## Recommendations of the Group on Economically viable alternatives for tobacco workers and growers

**Background:** Tobacco use is a serious health hazard leading to debilitating diseases and loss of lives. Besides being a health issue, tobacco is also closely associated with depleting socio-economic progress and hindering development. Several tobacco producing countries face the constant dilemma of contradictory policies of tobacco control and tobacco promotion. Tobacco Control has always been a complex subject in India as it is the world's third largest producer, second largest consumer of tobacco products and the sixth largest exporter of leaf tobacco. In the last decade, the Government has taken steps to regulate tobacco use through enactment of tobacco control laws and policies. Several ministries play an important role in the production, distribution and sale of tobacco in the country. Six ministries namely Agriculture, Commerce, Finance, Industry, Labour and Rural Development deal with one or other specified aspects of the tobacco industry.

The National Consultation on Economics of Tobacco Use was organised by WHO Country Office for India in collaboration with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. The expert group on Economically Viable Alternatives for Tobacco Workers and Growers formed as a part of this consultation, examined the various facets of the issue and made the following recommendations after detailed discussions among the members. The recommendations presented during the workshop were further revised and finalized based on best practices and available research evidences.

### Key recommendations are as follows:

- Government to make efforts to progressively discontinue all forms of institutional support to tobacco production, including promotion, market support and subsidies. Incentives and support to be given for tobacco control measures and viable alternatives to tobacco.
- A rapid assessment to be done on current policies to analyse which aspects are contradictory to tobacco control policies and WHO FCTC and mandate immediate change.
- Data collection to be done to provide actual numbers of tobacco farmers, workers, bidi rollers and tendu leaf pluckers employed in the tobacco sector with geographical distribution and number of days/months spent on this employment.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labour & Employment and Ministry of Rural Development to initiate a comprehensive, national initiative on economically viable alternate vocations for tobacco workers and growers, in coordination with all key stakeholders through public-private partnership across states.
- Ministry of Labour, Agriculture and Rural Development to draw a clear roadmap on alternate livelihoods each for Tobacco Farmers and Bidi Rollers in view of the country's obligations under WHO FCTC.
- In compliance to Article 5.3 of the FCTC, Government to set up clear protocols/ guidelines or code of conduct for prohibiting any form of partnership with the tobacco industry. No investments by governments or public officials be made in the tobacco industry and no industry representation be present on government tobacco control bodies. All government interactions with the tobacco industry to be transparent and made public.

## **Tobacco farming**

- There should be a clear roadmap for gradually phasing out tobacco cultivation in the next 20 years and assisting farmers to shift to viable alternatives.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Commerce to discontinue all direct and indirect incentives and subsidies both at the central and state level, such as, fertilizer subsidy on DAP, urea, NPK, insecticides, and pesticides, etc.) to tobacco farmers in a phased manner. Facilities like soft loans and credit facility for cultivating tobacco also be discontinued.
- Incentives and support to be given by Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Commerce, through a separate fund towards alternate cropping initiatives for tobacco growers who want to shift.
- The Tobacco Board (Ministry of Commerce) and the Central Tobacco Research Institute (Ministry of Agriculture) should revise their mandate and provide a rehabilitation package with technical assistance, market support, and subsidies for farmers who want to shift to other crops.
- The Directorate of Tobacco Development, Chennai, under Ministry of Agriculture to be re-structured as “Directorate of Crop Diversification Board for Food Security” to provide all required technical and institutional support to farmers to shift to alternate crops.
- The National Agriculture Insurance Scheme/ Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana (under Ministry of Agriculture) Small Farmers Agro-Business Consortium, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) to be approached to organize farmer groups and support alternate cropping.
- Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Tobacco Board to initiate the pilot on alternate cropping in 2013-14 beginning with non-FCV farmers who are inclined to shift to other crops.
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with State Agriculture Department, Agriculture Universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK's) to initiate sensitization and awareness programmes for tobacco farmers as well as policymakers on health impact and environmental impacts of tobacco farming, and long-term benefits of shifting to other crops.

## **Bidi Rolling**

- Ministry of Labour and Employment to draw a roadmap for gradually phasing out bidi rolling in the next 20 years and the bidi rollers to be provided alternative sources of livelihood.
- Ministry of Labour and Employment to launch training programmes on alternate vocations across states for bidi rollers who want to shift to other occupations.
- Ministry of Labour and Employment to utilize the bidi cess to launch pilot initiatives in bidi rolling districts, upscaling/replicating NGO pilots that have been successful.
- The National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and other poverty-reduction programmes to provide a viable umbrella to support bidi rollers and tobacco workers for shifting to alternative vocations/sources of livelihood.
- Enforcement of labour laws to be increased for bidi manufacturing; all provisions for workers/labours under industrial laws in formal sector to be made applicable to the informal bidi sector.

## **Tendu Leaf Pluckers**

- Ministry of Environment and Forests and Ministry of Tribal Affairs in consultation with State Governments to develop clear policies for protecting the rights of tribals and forest dwellers.
- Tendu leaf plucking is a seasonal occupation and leaves pluckers with no alternate vocations for most part of the year. State Governments to provide support for them to move to alternate forest produce/alternate livelihoods.