



Reduce tea import, Upasi requests central government

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Udhagamandalam: United Planters Association of South India (Upasi) has sought the central government's intervention to reduce the import of tea from Kenya, Nepal and Vietnam as it has been detrimental to the domestic tea sector. In a press release issued in the town on Tuesday, Upasi said during the first quarter (Jan-Mar) of 2020, the amount of tea imported stood at 2.49 million kg while it rose to 5.96 million kg for the same period in 2021, showing a significant jump of 139.36%.

The import of tea during 2020 was estimated at 23.40 million kg as against 15.85 million kg in the previous year, an increase of 47.63%.

On the other hand, the domestic tea sector has been witnessing increasing cost of production due to high input cost and high wage cost. Any higher intake of teas through import will have a telling effect on this sector which caters to a large segment of population residing in remote areas.

On the other hand, tea exports had taken a hit as evident from the decline in the quantity exported and the value realized.

For instance, tea export was lower by 42,430 tonnes in 2020 and declining trend continued during the first four months of 2021.

The shortage of containers, especially food grade containers, and increased freight charges had turned out to be an obstacle for plantation exports including tea from India, said the release.

President of UPASI Prashant Bhansali said, "Tea is an important agro industry that employs 2.12 lakh growers and 11.65 lakh workers. Fifty per cent of the production in the country comes from the small grower sector."

He added, "Under the ASEAN Agreement, the import duties were gradually reduced since 2009 for tea."

Hence, UPASI suggests that the government of India should closely monitor import of tea and implement provisions of Tea (Distribution & Export) Control Order 2005, wherever necessary to safeguard the tea industry in India.

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