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Senate body sets tobacco at Rs150/kg

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ISLAMABAD - The Senate Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture and Livestock has recommended Rs 150 as the minimum price for one kilogram of tobacco.

The Standing Committee during its meeting held at the Parliament House on Monday unanimously approved the recommendations prepared by its sub-committee constituted for looking into the matters like price of tobacco and performance of Pakistan Tobacco Board (PTB).

The committee's Chairman Senator Shujaul Mulk chaired the meeting, while Senators Muhammad Abbas Komaili, Raza Muhammad Raza and Sahibzada Khalid Jan, and high officials of PTB were also present.

The committee recommended that keeping in view the price of tobacco in international market, tobacco growers should be paid as minimum as Rs 150 for one kilogram tobacco (green). The committee also sought reconstitution and refurbishment of PTB, besides calling for induction of parliamentarians and representatives of registered bodies of tobacco growers as members in PTB. The committee also recommended that Chairman PTB should be an elected parliamentarian and that the tenure of its board members should not exceed than two years.

The committee took serious exception to the ambiguities in the network for collection of tobacco cess and observed that huge amounts of tax were being misappropriated due to concealment of tobacco production and consumption.

The body observed that the amount collected as tobacco cess, Rs 170 billion, could be easily enhanced to about Rs 400 billion, once the PTB was put on right track. The Senate body recommended thorough revision of the process and network of the collection of the cess to curb the malpractices.

The Committee further recommended that tobacco growing areas, particularly those of NWFP, should be given greater representation in PTB as compared to other provinces of the country. The committee urged the PTB to send its scientists and other staff abroad for better training and research so that the quality and production of the most important cash crop of the country could be enhanced.

The committee urged the government to take serious exception to the substandard pesticides being sold in markets openly.

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