

UPASI calls for curbs on rubber imports

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United Planters Association of Southern India (UPASI) has called upon the Centre to play its role as a regulator and introduce necessary safeguards to limit rubber imports.

N Dharmaraj, President of UPASI, says the association understands the need for imports to bridge the gap between consumption and production, but the unbridled imports beyond this gap is causing harm to the domestic growing industry.

According to him, dwindling production will not only affect income of the growers but also lead to higher imports, draining the exchequer of valuable foreign exchange.

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Speaking at a stakeholder meeting organised by the Rubber Board, he said India is showing the maximum negative growth in production of minus 21 per cent.

This is the result of both low prices and high cost of production, as compared to other producing countries.

In 2014-15, import was to the tune of 76 per cent of production and 43 per cent of consumption. At the end of October this year, the

stock with growers was only 66,000 tonnes, which is an insignificant quantity taking into account that there are 12 lakh growers. The stocks with dealers, processors and manufacturers were 1,62,000 tonnes.

Projections

The projected production for 2015-16 is expected to be below 6,00,000 tonnes, since large areas are being abandoned due to un-remunerative prices, he added.

Meanwhile small rubber farmers have urged the Centre to take steps to arrest the decline in rubber prices and implement recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce, which has stated that very high and disproportionate im-

ports have adversely affected rubber prices. According to Suresh Koshy, President, National Federation of Rubber Producers Society, the time has come for the Centre to take drastic action that may include a temporary cessation of imports as well as levy of higher duties to safeguard the rubber economy, to ultimately prevent a complete collapse of the sector.

He stressed that this was the time growers looked up to the Rubber Board for support and assistance.

However, the board is without a full-time Chairman, and has not been constituted despite the Committee having recommended that this be done within three months of tabling the report in Parliament, he said.