

Govt asked to disallow cotton import from Torkham, Wagah borders

MULTAN: Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) has opposed the import of raw cotton through Torkham and Wagah borders, terming it against the law and detrimental to local cotton growers as well as the national interests.

The country's foreign reserves are rapidly shrinking and the ginneries are unable to repay the foreign loans. Government is allowing the import of cotton when four million bales are already available in the country on a reasonable price.

Talking to journalists here on Friday, the PCGA office-bearers including vice chairman Mehr M Ashraf, former chairmen Haji M Akram, Shehzad Ali Khan, Talat Sohail, Asim Saeed Sheikh, Khawaja Riaz Hussain Siddiqui and Khalid Bashir demanded that while talking to journalists on Friday.

The PCGA office-bearers said, "At least 200 trucks carrying 50,000 tons of cotton are waiting at Torkham borders for a green signal from the Plant Protection Department (DPP) and National Food Security and Research Ministry without laboratory test of Phytosanitary."

They said that the federal government had allowed entry of these trucks into Pakistan's territory in haphazard without taking the other stakeholders into confidence. They said that granting permission to cotton import through Torkham or Wagah border was unlawful as cotton can only be imported through the seaport. They suggested the government to impose regulatory duty and sales tax on the imported cotton to save the local market.

They feared that granting permission of import would not only depress the local cotton prices to the disadvantage of growers but may also hurt the indigenous crop because the country had no fumigation facilities at the borders to make the import pest free.

Quoting the import law, the PCGA office-bearers said the import was also illegal for raw cotton as it could only be imported with prior permission of the DPP and adopting phytosanitary measures complying with the Plant Protection Quarantine Act 1967, which also disallows cotton import other than Karachi seaport, where quarantine and fumigation facilities are available.

They said that 19,47,544 bales were lying unsold in ginneries and another two million bales would be received from the field in near future. In the presence of four million bales in the country, it is an unwise decision to allow the import of cotton from neighbouring countries.

Textile mills should have to import cotton in June or July when domestic stock would not be available. They have imported cotton worth billions of rupees when the government is running after the international financial institutions for debt, they lamented. They alleged that textile millers were pressurising the DPP to set aside the Quarantine Act and issue cotton consignment release orders to customs authorities.

Our Correspondent