

# Imported Dairy Products to Hurt Indians: Amul

Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation asks govt to ensure that Indo-EU FTA doesn't compromise rights of farmers and consumers

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NEW DELHI

The co-operative federation that sparked India's milk revolution has warned the government that allowing imports of cheaper, subsidised dairy products from Europe could adversely impact the livelihoods of 3.2 million domestic dairy farmers and hurt consumers.

Better known by its brand name Amul, the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) has written to Commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma that the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU) must ensure that the ec-

onomic and commercial rights of farmers and consumers are not compromised.

The EU wants to export their dairy products to India, the world's largest producer and consumer of milk, and have sought a concessional duty rate for cheese imports in the FTA. If incorporated into the pact that is now in the final stage of negotiations, the EU demand would threaten cheese brands from such as Amul Gouda and Amul Emmental that were developed in partnership with the Swiss government.

"The EU is actually anticipating huge market opportunity once the comprehensive free trade agreement is ratified... We are afraid that by entering into FTA with EU, India's export may increase slightly

to EU, but imports will grow much more," said letter from RS Sodhi, managing director, GCMMF, to the commerce minister, urging him to put up a counter case to protect the commercial and economic rights of farmers and consumers.

India's largest dairy co-operative has pointed out that EU has the highest number of geographical indicators (GIs) for which it is seeking 'extra protection' beyond the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). But EU is neither willing to agree to give GI protection to India's Lassi or Paneer, nor is it refusing to stop the biopiracy of India's traditional knowledge like Ayurveda and resources like Neem, Amul has noted. The EU also doesn't allow import of Indian dairy products, citing

its strict sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards, which are nothing but a non-tariff barrier.

"In entire EU, one can find Indian products like 'paneer' and 'lassi' being manufactured or marketed by local people. These are ethnic Indian products and India can actually claim similar GI protection," GCMMF's managing director R S Sodhi has told Sharma in a letter reviewed by ET.

"Essentially, EU is asking India to give more monopoly protection in areas where it has more intellectual property," Sodhi's letter stated, warning that this will cost Indian consumers as well as dairy producers who are in the nascent stage of agro-food processing industry.

