

## Tobacco Growers Demand Protection of Livelihood

*Declaration of the ITGA AGM, as agreed by participants at Litohoro, Greece on October 17, 2017*

Tobacco Growers from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America gathered at the ITGA Annual Meeting in Litohora, Greece, asking Governments and Institutions to protect their livelihoods due to the drop in demand and new policies threatening their future.

Tobacco growers represented by growers' organizations from Argentina, Brasil, Bulgaria, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Macedonia, Malawi, South Africa, Turkey, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe met on October 17, 2017.



Growers attending the meeting highlighted the important contribution of tobacco to their countries' economies.

Growers are aware of the efforts to be made in order to improve tobacco production and sustainability in order to address challenges such as child labour and deforestation.

Growers stressed the fact that they are committed to working in a compliant manner, following good agriculture practices in order to produce a crop supplying a legal market of more than 900 million consumers and that such crop provides a livelihood to millions of farmers, rural workers and their families around the world.

Growers attending this Regional Meeting do accept the need of regulating consumption of tobacco products, but insist that regulatory measures should be balanced and based on science, not on personal opinions, so as to prevent such measures having a devastating impact on the livelihoods of millions of tobacco farmers and labourers, without achieving any of the desired aims of tobacco control.

Growers are also particularly concerned with the recent announcement of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding the implementation of a policy to reduce nicotine in cigarettes. This measure will influence other policy makers out of the USA and will finally come down to the most vulnerable part of the tobacco value chain, the growers. The reduction of nicotine will make the production and sale of traditional cigarettes almost impossible, pushing consumers to illicit products that do not respect such limits; and therefore, the demand for legal tobacco will drop sharply without any alternative plan for tobacco growers around the world.

Growers attending the meeting agreed on a possible platform to include all the relevant stakeholders, including health authorities, to discuss this issue and to search for achievable results.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) keeps excluding growers and their representatives from the discussions being held about matters having a direct impact on tobacco production and therefore, on growers' livelihoods. Growers are a legitimate part of this process and they have been asking for their inclusion into the FCTC's debates.

Many of the subjects being debated in the FCTC meetings, concern tobacco growers across the world. More specifically Articles 17 and 18 relate directly to tobacco production as they refer to alternatives to tobacco production and the environmental impact of tobacco growing. Growers have been offering their help and their expertise to define measures that will directly affect their future. The legitimate growers' representatives could have helped the Government Delegations attending FCTC meetings to have a much more realistic view of the present situation of tobacco growing around the world.

Growers insist that the WHO FCTC must return to its original mandate under Article 17, as was reiterated at the previous Conference of the Parties (COP6) in Moscow. Said COP6 reaffirmed the importance of carrying out studies and research to identify alternative crops that could provide a level of income and assured export markets equal to those provided by tobacco. For this reason, it was agreed upon that pilot projects in tobacco-growing regions would be necessary to demonstrate the long-term feasibility of such alternative crops.



Since the beginning of the FCTC negotiations, growers have requested that:

- Their right to be consulted on the development of policies which have a direct impact on them must be guaranteed,
- the significant economic contribution of the tobacco crop to the economies of tobacco-growing countries to be recognized, and
- a comprehensive economic study on the market to be conducted and taken into account when proposing measures.

*The International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) is a non-profit entity that promotes the cause of millions of tobacco growers around the world. The ITGA advocates for the inclusion of tobacco growers in global discussions, trying to provide them with a strong collective voice in the international arena to ensure protection for them and their families.*