

President Note – WTGD 2025

Dear Members, Partners, and Friends inside and outside our sector,

Today, we proudly celebrate **World Tobacco Growers' Day**, a tradition observed worldwide to honor the people and communities who dedicate their lives to this sector.

On this occasion, I want to recognize our resilience and share a message of strength and hope. The reality is that our sector often finds itself at the crossroads of pressures coming from many different fronts. That is why we must remain vigilant, united, and determined.

In just 15 days, the **WHO FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP)** will take place in Geneva. While the official agenda contains no items directly addressing tobacco growers or tobacco production, history has shown us how misleading COP procedures can be. During the last COP, for example, an additional item was introduced without the consensus of the Parties.

Such a lack of transparency in decision-making procedures raises serious concerns and undermines trust in the process. As growers, whose livelihoods and communities are directly affected, we cannot ignore these risks.

Since the creation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and for years now, tobacco growers, workers, and their families have been under constant scrutiny. What began as a well-intentioned effort to control and diminish tobacco consumption has evolved into an exclusionary movement. It is now largely driven by radical anti-tobacco activists who show no intention of understanding the pressures faced by communities whose livelihoods depend heavily on tobacco cultivation.

Discussions about measures to control tobacco production are taking place under the auspices of the COP meetings. Yet, the representation within these forums is strikingly unbalanced:

- Less than **5%** of delegates have expertise or knowledge in agriculture,
- Less than **3%** have any understanding of tobacco growing, and
- Only about **8%** of the participating countries have significant tobacco production.

This imbalance is compounded by a severe lack of transparency from the WHO FCTC Secretariat. Under a legally questionable interpretation of Article 5.3, they have excluded every stakeholder directly linked to tobacco growing.



International Tobacco Growers' Association

Let me be clear: we understand the concerns about the negative impact of tobacco consumption, and we support policies that are genuinely aimed at reducing harm. But what we cannot understand is why tobacco growers and their representatives are given such a fundamentally different treatment compared to other sectors.

Take, for example, the alcohol industry—which has its place at the negotiating table. Tobacco, on the other hand, is the only sector bound by a UN-specific treaty, the FCTC. And within this treaty, Article 5.3 has been repeatedly used—and misused—to exclude us, while governments and the public are kept in the dark about the discussions inside COP meetings.

What is even more concerning is that public money—our money, generated by us taxpayers—is being used to fuel this anti-tobacco lobby, sustaining hundreds of NGOs that work to silence and exclude us.

As representatives of tobacco growers, we cannot remain silent. We raise our voice today to condemn this misconduct of the WHO FCTC Secretariat. Our governments must stand with us.

I have already sent a letter to the WHO and the WHO FCTC, calling for transparency and inclusion. We expect to be heard.

On this World Tobacco Growers' Day, let us celebrate our resilience, reaffirm our unity, and raise our demand to be heard united in this demand, so that our governments can support us in this plea—for fairness, for inclusion, and for the right to be part of the decisions that directly affect our lives and our communities.

José Aranda
ITGA President