

Geneva, Switzerland
13th October 2025

ECLT Foundation Statement for World Tobacco Growers' Day (28 October 2025)

On this World Tobacco Growers' Day, the ECLT Foundation pays tribute to the millions of farmers, families and farming communities around the world whose labour sustains the tobacco sector, often in challenging conditions. We recognize the vital role that growers play — not only as producers of leaf, but as stewards of rural landscapes, contributors to local economies, and custodians of agricultural heritage.

As we join our founding member, the International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) in marking this occasion, we reaffirm that the wellbeing of farmers and the protection of children are inseparable goals. Sustainable livelihoods, decent incomes, access to education, and strong community systems reinforce each other to create lasting change.

ECLT's experience across tobacco-growing regions and agricultural communities shows that smallholder farms are the backbone of rural life, often sustaining families through difficult economic conditions. Yet, poverty, limited access to services, and seasonal pressures can make children — particularly younger ones — vulnerable to child labour. Sustainable progress is only possible when smallholder farming thrives — when farmers are resilient, livelihoods are secure and diversified, and local systems safeguard every child's right to a safe and healthy future.

On this day, we invite all stakeholders — growers' associations, governments, the private sector, civil society, and international agencies — to renew our shared commitment to rural development that leaves no child behind. Achieving this vision requires genuine collaboration across sectors — at all levels of supply chains — and, above all, careful attention to the voices of those who live and work in rural areas, whose experience is essential to building solutions that are both inclusive and sustainable.

Together, let us make this World Tobacco Growers' Day both a celebration and a renewed pledge: that no child is deprived of education, health, safety, or opportunity because of child labour in agriculture.

Dr. Innocent Mugwagwa

Executive Director, ECLT Foundation

