

## International Tobacco Growers' Association plea for Small Farmers' Protection in view of COVID-19

### #togetherwecare

(GLOBAL VERSION)

The International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) in coordination with its Members' Organizations is doing a thorough analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 on tobacco farmers and more particularly on small non contracted farmers more vulnerable to the potential health and economic consequences of the Virus and the subsequent crisis threats.

This analysis already targeted more than three hundred thousand farmers (1) under unprotected circumstances. In some countries tobacco sales will be opening soon and these farmers will be moving around to try to sell their tobacco. General Recommendations established by MoAs and other entities may fail to protect these farmers and in farms, villages and communities it is very unlikely that they will get any support in this regard.

These circumstances are new for all those countries and the capacity to adapt and put in place a prevention plan will be key to overturn the situation to a lesser uncontrollable one especially in countries with a fragile health and infrastructure system.

Noting the above, the ITGA together with its members is developing a campaign (2) that aims to raise awareness and to provide basic conditions to the weakest link of the supply chain not only looking at tobacco farmers but all small farmers subject to similar conditions. ITGA and its worldwide network of associations are making a plea to Governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other entities to support this campaign which has been outlined to attend specific recommendations for each country.

Tobacco Growers are all, with no exception, practicing crop rotation and therefore, are a crucial part to improving family farming in their countries and contributing to food security. Studies show that tobacco is grown as a cash crop in a multi-production system.

Some countries are highly dependent on tobacco as a source of foreign exchange, a reality that the economic crisis induced by the COVID-19 will surely worsen. Therefore, this years' marketing season must be a successful operation so that the livelihoods of the millions involved in tobacco growing do not suffer dramatically.

On April 17th, the World Bank published a newsletter highlighting the importance of collective action and innovation and appealing for a multisectoral cooperation (3) to contain the pandemic and mitigate its health, social and economic consequences. It also mentions the special need to pay attention to the provision of affordable medical supplies and to food security and safety. While recognising the commitment to tackle this global issue, we also commend these Global Institutions and United Nations Agencies to support efforts being made at national and regional level, within our scope of targets, which jointly with other similar initiatives, will make the difference in the collective success of the global approach.

ITGA is doing its part by putting its workforce and resources together to provide this meaningful support to small farmers in vulnerable countries.

(1) Source: *ITGA MEMBERS DATA*

(2) For more info check <https://www.tobaccolleaf.org/togetherwecare/>

(3) World Bank newsletter link: [https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/17/world-bankimf-spring-meetings-2020-development-committee-communicate?cid=ECR\\_E\\_newsletterweekly\\_EN\\_EXT\\_SM2020&deliveryName=DM60534](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/17/world-bankimf-spring-meetings-2020-development-committee-communicate?cid=ECR_E_newsletterweekly_EN_EXT_SM2020&deliveryName=DM60534)

For more information about our campaign please contact **International Tobacco Growers' Association** at [itga@tobaccolleaf.org](mailto:itga@tobaccolleaf.org), website [www.tobaccolleaf.org](http://www.tobaccolleaf.org)