

ITGA AFRICA REGIONAL MEETING

theme: Farm Productivity
26th to 28th June, Zambia



ITGA Africa Regional Meeting June 27th and 28th 2024 – Lusaka – Zambia

The ITGA 2024 Africa Regional Meeting focused on supporting small scale tobacco farmers to adapt to more efficient farming practices in line with sustainable production approaches.

The 2024 Africa Regional Meeting gathered International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) members from Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe and supply chain partners from around the world to share tobacco farming best practices. Prior to the meeting, ITGA conducted comprehensive research on tobacco yields across the globe to assess the challenges at regional and country level highlighting the main pressures on small scale farmers.





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The Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Reuben Mtolo Phiri, represented by Paul Mumba, Chief Economist in Policy and Planning at the Ministry of Agriculture, officially opened the meeting stating that “investing in value addition is key for Zambia’s future”.



During his speech, ITGA’s President José Javier Aranda reinforced the need of tobacco farmers’ associations to be closely engaging with their governments as key partners in addressing tobacco production issues: *“For 40 years, ITGA has been working to reinforce the message about the important socio-economic contribution tobacco production brings to the countries*





where the crop is grown and counterbalance the negative arguments used inappropriately against our sector. In this sense, governments of tobacco producing countries are the key partners. It is in the hands of tobacco associations to reinforce this partnership because they are the ones directly communicating with farmers on the ground.”

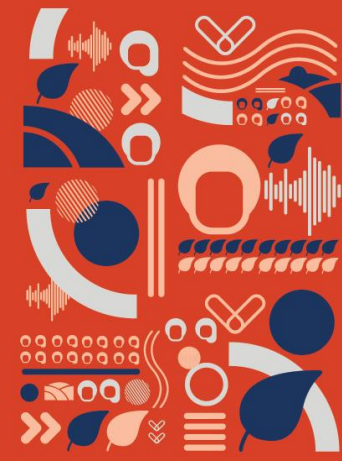
Farm Productivity was the main theme of the meeting and topic at the core of several debate sessions.

Dr. Brian Kapotwe, Country Programme Coordinator at International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), shared an in-depth analysis on the barriers faced by small-scale farmers in East and Southern Africa. Dr. Kapotwe insisted that improving agricultural productivity among small-scale farmers can help to solve socio-economic, ecological and political challenges of rural livelihoods in Africa. Dr. Kapotwe highlighted infrastructural, environmental and policy related challenges and provided key recommendations: *“Improving land use efficiency, promoting the adoption of climate smart practices, use of technology, improving extension services and support improved farmer organizations are at the center of IFAD’s efforts, considering that 60% of Africa’s population derives its income from agriculture.”*

Mercedes Vázquez, ITGA CEO, presented the results of the association’s recent research on global tobacco yields and the specific factors impacting different regions. Common threats include extreme weather variations, labor shortages, and lack of continuity. Reflecting on small farmers, poor infrastructure, water deficits and land ownership are among the top concerns, while commercial farmers, for example, often rely on established leaf types that could ensure stable crops while yield potential can remain suboptimal. *“It will be part of ITGA’s strategic priorities to bring up the productivity conversation to all ITGA meetings.”*

Discussing the overall markets trends provided the background of the discussion with a focus on the key tobacco growing countries. Ivan Genov, ITGA Manager Tobacco Industry Analysis, shared the latest production dynamics. *“Globally, supply of the main leaf varieties remains very short, while demand is high. Adverse weather conditions have brought production in leading African markets and Brazil down, which is likely to have a lasting impact beyond the 2024 marketing season.”*





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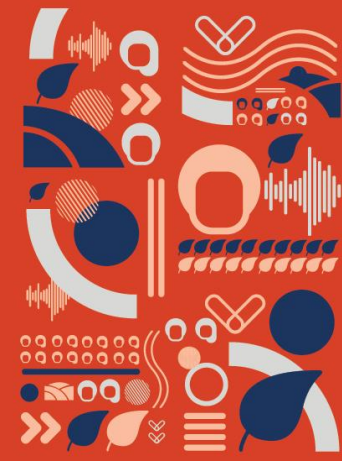
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Christopher Day, Euromonitor International Senior Research Analyst, provided a global overview of the latest tobacco product consumption trends. Mr. Day highlighted that the Middle East and Africa region was one of the few that is showing growth for cigarettes in volume terms. He also shared updates on new products, where heated tobacco is taking the lion's share of global sales. *"The biggest challenges for African markets are the rising inflation, stricter regulations, shifts in consumption patterns for younger generations and the increasing share of the illicit market."*

The panel session on farm productivity and the lively debate that followed illustrated examples in different layers of the supply chain in their efforts to implement cost efficient projects. On the one hand farmers are doing everything in their power to provide a good quality product and maintain decent margins. On the other hand, partners in the supply chain examined in detail the outcomes of their efforts aiming to help growers improve their farming practices. Successful initiatives in Malawi can shed a light on models that can be replicated in other African tobacco growing countries. The session touched on every aspect of the cultivation process: from land optimizing to soil conservation to the final crop handling. The





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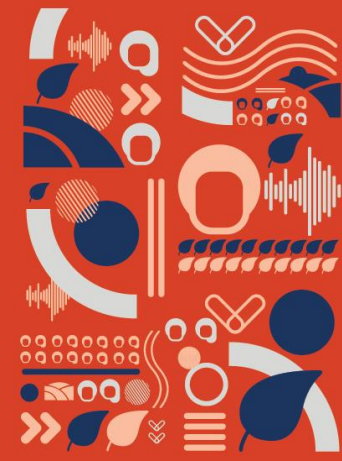


conversation was enriched by the high-level expertise gathered in the room and the exchange of ideas and perspectives.



On June 28th, ITGA Delegates were received at Tombwe facilities where a demo session was held with different examples of pilot projects, including growing of bamboo trees, nursery setting, efficient barn construction methods, use of protective equipment and application of fertilizers, followed by an informal discussion tying up the key findings.

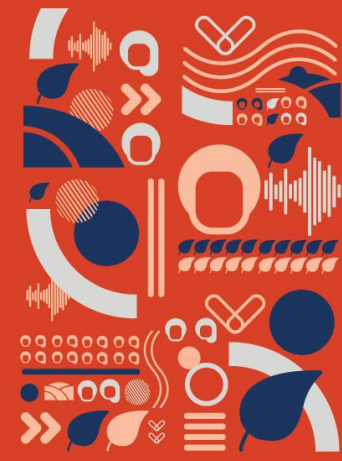




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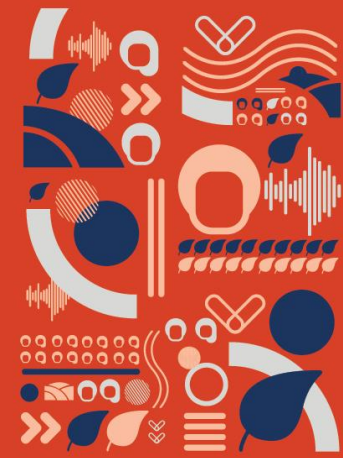




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By the end of ITGA 2024 Africa Regional Meeting, a follow up strategy for the region was drafted. The Vice President of ITGA and President of Tobacco Association of Zambia (TAZ), Zvhikonyo Mahombe, wrapped up the meeting: *“I feel there is a common agreement about the way forward and this way forward is one that brings together the sector to work in the concerns we all share. Now theory needs to be translated into practice, where the supply chain gets together with governments, understanding that investing in tobacco farmers needs to be at the center of this conversation. Some of the challenges cannot be controlled like the case of climate change. Nevertheless, if we believe in the continuity of this sector, those within our control will have to be solved or at least mitigated in the best possible way. ITGA will make the farm productivity conversation a priority in the long-term vision of our association.”*

