



International Tobacco Growers' Association

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[Washington, DC] – May 25 – The International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA) expressed outrage today at the devastating impact that the latest set of recommendations from the World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) would have on the jobs and livelihoods of millions of tobacco growers around the world.

Draft guidelines of articles 9 & 10 of the FCTC recommend a ban of ingredients used in the manufacturing of tobacco products. If implemented this would virtually eliminate traditional blended cigarettes which account for approximately half of the global market. The impact on growers who supply the tobacco varieties used in these products would be dramatic.

“These recommendations have been made by bureaucrats, mostly from wealthy countries who know nothing about tobacco growing. Their recommendations could wipe out the livelihoods of millions of tobacco growers all over the world,” said António Abrunhosa, CEO of the ITGA. “For some inexplicable reason, tobacco growers, the very people most affected by the guidelines, are officially excluded from any discussions. Even ministries of agriculture or economy seem unaware of the discussions taking place within the FCTC. There doesn't seem to be any balanced form of representation whatsoever.”

Numerous countries, including some of the poorest nations, such as Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Tanzania now face the prospect of seeing millions of jobs lost and a huge decline in the export of tobacco. Tobacco cultivation is critical for the economy in these countries and one of the few agricultural activities to have remained buoyant during the recent worldwide economic crisis. The latest guidelines drafted by bureaucrats in Geneva threaten to undo that for no clear benefit.

“These guidelines are just plain wrong whichever way you look at them. Nobody has explained to me how banning some cigarette products and ignoring others will have any benefit for people's health,” said Roger Quarles, President of the ITGA. “It will just be a disaster for those growers who grow leaf for traditional blended products.”

“It's not just tobacco growers whose livelihoods are threatened here,” continues Abrunhosa. “In some parts of the world, entire communities depend on the tobacco growing sector. I want to know what these bureaucrats have to say to the people whose lives they are going to ruin for no good reason whatsoever.”

ITGA represents more than thirty million tobacco growers across Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America. “We call on governments all over the world to support growers by adopting a common sense approach and discarding these irrational and potentially economically devastating guidelines.”

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