

November 26th, 2020

International Tobacco Growers' Association 35th Annual General Meeting gathers the world of tobacco growing in a new online setting

The International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) held the 35th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in an online format for the first time in its history. This new experience presented a unique opportunity to open up the session to a wider range of participants. As a result, the event attracted 174 attendees from four continents and 24 countries: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Malawi, North Macedonia, Philippines, Portugal, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda, UK, United Arab Emirates, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

AGM 2020 kicked off with the Finance Committee on Nov 18th, a closed session for ITGA members only, followed by the Issues Day on Nov 24th.

The Issues Day was opened by Malawi's Minister of Agriculture, Robin Lowe, who welcomed the opportunity to debate the challenges and prospects that growers will face in the future as "the world is going through one of the most dramatic experiences in a lifetime" with the global pandemic and deepening economic crisis. Notably, Mr Lowe, reinforced the commitment of the Government of Malawi to the sector and all its stakeholders.

ITGA's President, Abiel Kalima Banda, emphasized the resilience of the tobacco sector and the importance of collaboration throughout the supply chain, while Mr Antonio Abrunhosa, ITGA's CEO, reinforced the mission of the Association, as the only world voice of tobacco growers, to defend the growers from the effects of new regulations that are putting ever more pressure on their daily activities.

The panel consisted of fourteen speakers that covered a wide range of topics, including a global tobacco market overview, innovations for sustainable agriculture, social and environmental good practices among many others.

Ivan Genov, Tobacco Industry Expert at ITGA, analyzed the tobacco leaf market providing the latest production data and forecasts. Despite the prevailing volume declines across multiple markets, Shane MacGuill, Euromonitor's Senior Head of Tobacco Research, noted that the consumption of tobacco products remained stable in the midst of the pandemic. However, the crisis could establish a new, more restrictive normal for tobacco control. Mr MacGuill discussed the emerging demand for new substances and the growth potential of the legal cannabis market. In relation to the



increasing need to diversify, a presentation about opportunities in the hemp industry was presented by Dr William Snell, Co-Director of the Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program.

The Issues Day also included representatives from major tobacco manufacturers, merchants and suppliers such as Vuk Pribic, Leaf Supply Chain Due Diligence Director at Japan Tobacco International, Carlos Palma, Sustainable Agriculture Global Manager at British American Tobacco, Lea Scott, Vice-President of Agronomy Services at Universal Leaf Tobacco Co., Gary Foote, Head of Global Sustainability at Alliance One International.

From growers perspective, presentations were delivered by Przemyslaw Noworyta, UNITAB Secretary General, who discussed the future of tobacco growing in the European Union, Heliodoro Campos Castillo, Manager of the National Tobacco Fund in Colombia (FEDETABACO), who presented the case of resilience of tobacco growing in Colombia, and Mayiwepi Jiti, Founder and President of Zimbabwe Integrated Commercial Farmers Union who shared her view on the agricultural labor practices and challenges in the country.

ITGA's president, Mr Banda, highlighted that child labor is one of the main issues affecting the supply chain's sustainability and the problem was addressed by Karima Jambulatova, Executive Director at ECLT Foundation and Nadia Fengler Solf, Manager at the Growing Up Right Institute.

Finally, with a vision to the future and innovation in the tobacco sector two presentations about e-agriculture companies were delivered by Matija Zulj, AGRIVI CEO, and Rodrigo Tissera, KILIMO Head of Business.

ITGA's vice-president, José Aranda, gave the closing remarks for the day enhancing the importance of working together in collaboration with the public sector as each and every one of us plays an important role in keeping the sector steady.

ITGA's 35th Annual General Meeting concluded on Nov 25th with the Association's General Assembly, where delegates from Member countries shared their views of the present and the future of tobacco growing.