



ITGA President re-states his commitment during country visits in Africa calling to attention growers' viability in a key message to Governments

José Javier Aranda, ITGA President, made a tour in tobacco growing countries in Africa, meeting growers' associations and stakeholders to convey his commitment to the region: *"Sustainability starts by securing viability to growers. Without it, the very pillar of the sector is at risk."*

Mr. Aranda, a fifth-generation tobacco grower in Salta, Argentina, shared examples that have been successfully implemented in his home country to improve social and environmental conditions in tobacco growing and explained the unique case of the 'Special Tobacco Fund' in Argentina, which, according to him, is the legal tool allowing growers in Argentina to remain viable and re-invest in social, economic and environmental initiatives.

During his visits, ITGA President attended TAMA Farmers' Trust Annual General Meeting in Lilongwe, Malawi. The meeting was officially opened by the Hon. Sam Dalitso Kawale, Minister of Agriculture of Malawi. Mr. Aranda conveyed the key messages to him, on behalf of ITGA member associations and the millions of farmers ITGA represents: *"We need to reinforce the commitment between growers' bodies and governments against the demonization of our sector."*

Another key point of discussion was the WHO FCTC COP10, which will take place in Panama the coming November. ITGA President is in a crusade to raise awareness of the false claims raised by WHO about tobacco farming and about the economic viability of alternative crops (Article 17):

"WHO FCTC operates against its own rules of procedure and under Article 5.3 is deliberately excluding the tobacco farmers' voice and other tobacco sector key players from the discussion. This is the main reason why Article 17 (economically viable alternatives to tobacco growing) has not seen any evolution."

"Article 17 has not provided any results in the search of viable alternative crops in the great majority of tobacco growing countries. Growers are already planting complementary crops whenever the conditions are provided. We urge the WHO FCTC to apply a pragmatic approach towards this issue. ITGA and its member associations are ready to cooperate."



In Harare, Zimbabwe, ITGA attended Zimbabwe Tobacco Association (ZTA) Annual General Meeting and conducted its 2023 Africa Regional Meeting, officially opened by Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Anxious J. Masuka. Four leading tobacco growing countries attended these meetings: Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, while the public session was joined by key partners and stakeholders in the sector.

During the ITGA Africa Regional Meeting closed session, growers' representatives presented reports highlighting the key dynamics in their respective markets:

- Tobacco growers in **Malawi** have strengthened their efforts in producing a compliant crop, which is the pillar of the country's export revenue generation.
- In **Tanzania**, tobacco is one of the five strategic crops and among the three top commodities in term of foreign exchange earnings.
- Tobacco also has a very positive socio-economic contributor to the economy in **Zambia** where focus is primarily on compliance and sustainable production.
- In **Zimbabwe**, the current sustainability focus is on curing fuels, agricultural labour practices and traceability.

Earlier in June, ITGA CEO Mercedes Vázquez had been involved in several meetings in Tanzania hosted by Tobacco Cooperative Joint Enterprise (TCJE), attending meetings with the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Hussein M. Bashe (MP) who stated the importance of tobacco growing in Tanzania and his commitment to support ITGA in its efforts to help growers build their capacity towards sustainable tobacco production. Mrs. Vázquez also met with main partners and stakeholders and presented market trends during a session with the TCJE board members and the Tanzania Tobacco Board.

The visits and ITGA meetings concluded with the reinforcement of ITGA coalition in African countries. It was agreed to work according to the main issues and with a common strategic approach. ITGA President, José Javier Aranda was further empowered by Africa tobacco growing countries to represent tobacco growers and defend their interests.