

ITGA Press Release

31st May – World Understanding Tobacco Farming Day

On 31st May, the International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) is carrying out the **World Understanding Tobacco Farming Day** campaign. This is a call from ITGA's President José Javier Aranda, on behalf of ITGA Members around the world, to get the sector together in raising awareness about the realities of tobacco farming and to stop the false claims by the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in their World No Tobacco Day.

"It is time to stand up together and request the support of governments against the demonization of our sector. For more than 15 years, tobacco growing and growers have been subjected to false arguments that put tobacco farming as the main enemy to all sustainable development goals. The real evidence is completely ignored. The reality is that no viable alternatives to tobacco growing have been found and the implementation of WHO FCTC Article 17 (economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing) has not provided any tangible results. This is due to the exclusion of the main actors in this debate – the tobacco growers. We will never achieve sustainable transition, where growers' livelihoods are guaranteed, if we don't look at the issue from all relevant perspectives."

Today, the ITGA is making information about tobacco growing available, including its socio-economic impact and importance for local communities.

Many tobacco growers have already diversified their production. Crop rotation is a standard routine for farmers around the world. However, diversification is not an option for most cases as market realities and the funding required to move away to other economically viable crops are not there. The example of Kenya, the diversification pilot project of WHO FCTC, has no meaningful significance in the global context (0,0005% of the total tobacco production). To reach pragmatic solutions for most tobacco growers, farmers must be included in the debate.

The ITGA calls on governments to protect tobacco farmers and consider all arguments during meetings when decisions about growers' future are being made. Governments have to make sure these discussions are inclusive, and growers are part of them. If this was the case in the last 17 years, since the working group for Articles 17&18 started, the evolution in the sustainable transition to other crops would be in a much more advanced stage.

José Javier Aranda
ITGA President