



**Open Assembly of the “Città del Tabacco” Association**

*Seminar on the on the future of raw tobacco in the EU*

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies

Rome, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017

**Position paper of the Mayors and Representatives of the local Authorities of the Italian and European Tobacco Towns and Villages**

We, Mayors and Representatives of the local Authorities of the Tobacco Towns and Villages in the EU, are aware that in all our Countries tobacco growing represents sometimes only a little share of the total national agricultural production; however, for our specialized municipalities and districts, we testify that:

- tobacco exceeds 50% and sometimes represents almost 100% of the local agricultural production;
- many other agricultural products and activities, including high quality specialties, are still sustainable only because they are complementary to tobacco farming: if left alone they will all suffer or even disappear;
- at the local level there are currently no comparable alternatives to tobacco production in terms of general economics and employment in any significant scale. If tobacco cultivation declines or ends, the entire agricultural sector in our territories will face challenges or even vanish, causing also land abandonment, desertification and massive drawbacks to the environment;
- tobacco has been for many centuries the main economic engine of our rural areas and municipalities and has allowed our people to improve their living conditions, to send their children to school and university, to reduce unemployment and refrain people from emigrating to large cities or even abroad.

We, Mayors and Representatives of the local Authorities, in support of our fellow citizens, farmers and workers who produce a legal crop, cannot accept without reacting:

- to see our municipalities in Italy, Spain or France which are wealthy today become poor;
- to witness the wiping off the maps of our small tobacco villages of Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and Croatia, simply because they are “small” and their economy depends on the production of leaf tobacco.



We, Mayors and Representatives of the local Authorities, are standing alongside our fellow citizens, the whole tobacco supply chain, the Regions and Governments of the producing Countries, and we ask national, regional and even world institutions to stop thinking only about statistics and figures at national level for a moment and to look more carefully and in depth at our territories and at their diversity, which represents the real richness of our Countries.

Our rural areas cannot be destroyed without any valid reason, just because there are legislative regulations or proposals: these clearly must be changed at least until viable alternatives are not effectively available at a reasonable scale and do not provide at least the same level of livelihood, economic stability and employment to all our citizens involved in tobacco farming, processing and in all the activities and associated businesses up and downstream.

We, Mayors and Representatives of the local Authorities, express our satisfaction at the creation of Interbranch Organizations among farmers and first processors at national and European level, in coordination with the trade unions, in order to enhance the sustainability and to optimise the cooperation along the supply chain.

On behalf of tens of thousands of Mayors and Representatives of the local Authorities of the Tobacco Towns and Villages and millions of their fellow citizens around the EU.

#### Signatories

Methi Sali – Mayor of Yassenkovo, Bulgaria

Raul Miranda Manzano – Mayor of Talayuela, Spain

Andrzej Placek – Mayor of Obsza County, Poland

József Szabó – Mayor of Geszteréd, Hungary

Sándor Tóth – Mayor of Ófehértó, Hungary

Giuliana Falaschi – Mayor of Citerna, Italy

Luciano Bacchetta – Mayor of Città di Castello, Italy

Emilietto Mirandola – Mayor of Bovolone, Italy

Gaetano Tessitore – Mayor of Francolise, Italy

Paolo Fratini – Mayor of San Giustino Umbro, Italy

Mirco Rinaldi – Mayor of Montone, Italy

Alfio Todini – Mayor of Marsciano, Italy

Francesco Damiano – Mayor of Montesarchio, Italy

Domenico Vessicchelli – Mayor of Paduli, Italy