



EUROPEAN LEAF TOBACCO INTERBRANCH ORGANIZATION

Rome, 22 May 2017 – Gathering more than 65,000 growers, 350,000 workers and tens of thousands of jobs in first processing and associated business in Europe, tobacco production is the most labour intensive crop and agro-business. It contributes to maintain high levels of employment and social cohesion in our rural areas, in particular now that the whole European agriculture is struggling and its sustainability is at risk.

While more and more restrictive regulations lead to fear that tobacco product manufacturers may withdraw from the European leaf production, the total suppression of the Common Organization of Markets in tobacco has had serious consequences for the sector.

Taking into account the marginalization of the sector by the European institutions which only leads to increased imports from other countries and considering strong common interests, the growers and first processors in the EU have decided to join forces and to create a transnational Interbranch organization. Today ELTI – European Leaf Tobacco Interbranch – has held its first general assembly in Rome under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture.

ELTI brings together the European tobacco growers of UNITAB (International union of tobacco growers) and the first processors of FETRATAB (European federation of first processors): among the European agro-industrial sectors it is the first and only transnational interbranch organization in conformity with the new Common Agricultural Policy.

Once again the tobacco sector leads the way to strengthen European agriculture, in particular for those disadvantaged rural areas which have few or no economic or employment alternatives. ELTI is at the forefront of the fight in the interest of the whole EU agriculture, victimized by excessive liberalization and over-exploitation which damage its competitiveness and the vitality of our territories.

The relations with the manufacturers and the authorities are often difficult: ELTI is the new tool which will help protect the whole European tobacco sector's value in all EU producing countries and at EU and international level.

For ELTI the priority is to achieve recognition by the national and European authorities pursuant to the Commission delegated Reg. (EU) 2016/232 and to relaunch cooperation among the Ministries of producing countries.

ELTI also has the objective of making the sector more transparent by redefining the roles of the organizations of growers and first processors, facilitating the setup of interbranch organizations and agreements in all countries, and promoting investments for quality improvement and product integrity, restructuring tobacco farms and modernizing production. ELTI will actively take part in the discussion on post 2020 CAP reforms, which will have to pay more attention to family farming and sustainability.

ELTI's members, UNITAB and FETRATAB, are the European federations of national associations of organizations of tobacco growers and first processors in Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Belgium and Switzerland and together they represent the absolute majority of tobacco grown and processed in Europe.