



## **FCA RECOMMENDATIONS: ECONOMICALLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO TOBACCO – THE STUDY GROUP ON ALTERNATIVE CROPS<sup>1</sup>**

### **Background**

The Framework Convention Alliance supports the work of the Study Group on Alternative Crops, created by Decision FCTC/COP1(17) of the first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The objectives of the Study Group are:

- to summarize the uptake of existing economically viable alternatives for tobacco workers, growers and, as the case may be, individual sellers;
- to recommend to the COP mechanisms to assess the impact over time of the tobacco companies' practices;
- to report on initiatives that are being taken at national level in accordance with Article 17 of the FCTC (Provision of support for economically viable alternative activities); and
- to recommend cost-effective diversification initiatives.

The Study Group should continue its efforts to achieve the objectives outlined in its mandate, with a view to avoiding future hardship for families engaged in tobacco agriculture due to an anticipated eventual decrease in global demand for tobacco products.

The Study Group's objectives will take time to achieve, and will require it to engage in an ongoing and gradual process of research and consultations. In order to achieve its mandate, the Study Group will need to work – in partnership with Parties and competent intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations – to collate existing research on the complex issues associated with agricultural diversification and crop alternatives to tobacco, and then to stimulate further research.

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<sup>1</sup> This document outlines FCA's recommendations to the COP in relation to the ongoing work of the Study Group on Alternative Crops, and to Parties in relation to the promotion of economically viable alternatives to tobacco cultivation. Further information may be found in the FCA briefing paper 'Economically Viable Alternatives to Tobacco: the Study Group on Alternative Crops', available online at [www.fctc.org](http://www.fctc.org).

## **Recommendations to the second session of the Conference of the Parties in relation to the ongoing work of the Study Group**

The COP should request the Study Group to continue its efforts to achieve the objectives outlined in Decision FCTC/COP1(17) as follows:

- 1. In order to summarize the uptake of existing economically viable alternatives for tobacco growers, the Study Group will need to develop a systematic method for collection of the relevant data from current and former tobacco producing countries. As a summary of the uptake of existing alternatives was set as the objective for the first meeting of the Study Group and has not yet been fulfilled, collection of the relevant data should be given priority in the ongoing work of the Study Group.**
- 2. In order to report on initiatives that are being taken at national level in accordance with Article 17 of the FCTC, the Study Group will need to develop a systematic method for collection of data relating to initiatives being taken by Parties to ‘promote, as appropriate, economically viable alternatives for tobacco workers, growers and, as the case may be, individual sellers’.**
- 3. In order to place itself in a position to make useful recommendations to the COP on: (i) mechanisms to assess the impact over time of the tobacco companies’ practices; and (ii) cost-effective diversification initiatives, the Study Group will need to coordinate the carrying out of further research into the complex issues surrounding tobacco cultivation and its alternatives. Such research should be comprehensive, multisectoral, and based on standardised methodologies so as to ensure comparability of data. Particular issues requiring further investigation include:**
  - Impacts of unconscionable tobacco industry practices**  
Close monitoring of the impact of tobacco industry practices on tobacco farmers and tobacco producing countries will be essential to the achievement of the Study Group’s mandate to ‘recommend to the COP mechanisms to assess the impact over time of the tobacco companies’ practices’.
  - Links between tobacco cultivation and poverty**  
Current evidence indicates that many small tobacco farmers struggle to make a living. Comprehensive research analysing the economic costs and benefits of tobacco growing in comparison to alternative livelihoods will be essential to place the Study Group in a position to recommend cost-effective diversification initiatives to the COP, and will assist Parties in implementing Article 17.
  - Links between tobacco cultivation and malnutrition**  
In very poor countries, where fertile land is used to grow tobacco rather than food, tobacco cultivation contributes directly to hunger and malnutrition. Further research should be undertaken to better understand the links between tobacco

cultivation and malnutrition, which will be an important factor for consideration by the Study Group in making its recommendations to the COP on cost-effective diversification initiatives. Sustainable food crops should be privileged in the search for economically viable alternatives to tobacco cultivation.

- **Negative health effects on people engaged in tobacco cultivation**

Tobacco farming has deleterious consequences upon the health of those who are engaged in it, including ‘green tobacco sickness’ and negative effects caused by frequent contact with large quantities of pesticides. Further research is necessary to better understand the negative health impacts of tobacco growing, and to monitor their extent and incidence. Such research will be essential to place the Study Group in a position to recommend cost-effective diversification initiatives to the COP, and will assist Parties in implementing Article 17.

- **Negative effects of tobacco cultivation on the environment**

Tobacco cultivation has negative effects on the environment, including depletion of soil nutrients, pollution from pesticides and fertilisers, and deforestation. This is an important factor by which tobacco cultivation should be measured against alternatives, especially as Parties have agreed under Article 18 to have due regard to the protection of the environment in carrying out their obligations under the FCTC. Further research to understand and monitor the effects of tobacco cultivation on the environment will be useful to the Study Group, the COP, and Parties in their discussions on economically viable alternatives to tobacco cultivation.

- 4. In carrying out its mandate, the Study Group is required to work closely with competent international organizations, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank, and to cooperate with the UN Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control. The Study Group should work actively to build concrete partnerships with these and other relevant organizations and institutions, which may provide it with significant assistance in the carrying out of its research and in the development of practical diversification initiatives.**
- 5. In accordance with WHA Resolution 54.18 and Article 5.3 of the FCTC, the Study Group should protect its work from influence by commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.**

### **Recommendations to Parties in relation to the promotion of economically viable alternatives to tobacco cultivation**

Parties should work with other Parties, with the Study Group, and with competent intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations to promote economically viable alternatives to tobacco cultivation. FCA recommends the following:

- 1. The paramount consideration of Parties in all discussions taking place under the FCTC, including discussions about agricultural diversification and crop alternatives to tobacco, should be the achievement of the objective outlined in Article 3 of the Convention: to ‘protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke by providing a framework for tobacco control measures to be implemented by the Parties at the national, regional and international levels in order to reduce continually and substantially the prevalence of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke’.**
- 2. Parties which produce tobacco should take measures at the national level to explore economically viable alternatives to tobacco crops, encourage diversification and develop mechanisms to promote alternative livelihoods, in accordance with their obligations under Articles 17 and 20 of the Convention.**
- 3. Parties which produce tobacco should take measures available to them to reduce dependence on tobacco cultivation. This includes identifying and curtailing support measures that currently prop up tobacco cultivation, often in spite of its non-feasibility for the economies concerned.**
- 4. All Parties should ensure that there is policy coherence between their various departments on this issue so that, for example, one department is not encouraging crop diversification while another is supporting tobacco growing as a development strategy. In order for the promotion of economically viable alternatives to tobacco cultivation to be successful, it is essential that Parties adopt a whole of government approach to the issue.**
- 5. All Parties should cooperate, pursuant to their obligations under Article 22, in strengthening the capacity of tobacco producing Parties to fulfil their obligations in respect of the promotion of economically viable alternatives.**
- 6. All Parties should support practical measures designed to encourage crop diversification, such as work on identification and development of markets, development of infrastructure at local and regional levels, and education and training programs for people engaged in tobacco cultivation. Parties should not support impractical measures such as paying farmers not to grow tobacco or paying compensation to countries for future losses from tobacco growing, which would be both impractical as a means of promoting economically viable alternative activities, and unsuitable as a use of important public health resources.**
- 7. All Parties should protect their policies in this area from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry, in accordance with World Health Assembly resolution 54.18 and Article 5.3 of the FCTC.**