



**UNITAB**

## **37<sup>TH</sup> UNITAB CONGRESS**

### **ORIENTATION RAPORT – Sofia, Bulgaria 26.10.2023**

The 37<sup>TH</sup> UNITAB Congress in Sofia took place after a long break due to the pandemic crisis. The main motto of the Congress concerned, on the one hand, the beautiful 70-years history of the organization, and on the other hand, it pointed to the need to adjust the functioning of UNITAB to the changing reality. Back in 2020, we hoped to be able to push through the restoration of tobacco subsidies in EU member states for which tobacco cultivation is of great economic, environmental or social importance as part of the CAP reform. Despite the commitment of UNITAB members to promote the relevant amendments to the strategic plans in the European Parliament and the ample support of MEPs from various countries, it was unfortunately not possible to obtain a majority for the possibility of returning to tobacco payments. That is why today we calculate our revenues only on the market value of our tobacco. European tobacco has advantages resulting from restrictive phytosanitary regulations regarding cultivation, implementation of the highest standards of Good Agricultural Practices and Good Employment Practices, respect for the natural environment and climate.

- We appeal to our customers, manufacturers of final tobacco products, partners from global tobacco industry not to reduce their interest in purchasing European tobacco, and to maintain the proper profitability of tobacco cultivation! The purchasing policy of tobacco companies must take into account the specificity of tobacco cultivation in the EU, its

advantages and the fact that we produce tobacco here in Europe under specific economic and political conditions.

- At a time when we are threatened by the increasingly insistent policies of the World Health Organization, which seek to annihilate the tobacco sector, without respect for consumer's freedom of choice, we need to consolidate our forces throughout the tobacco chain. First of all, the European Commission should be demanded to respect good standards of European law-making and not to succumb to the pressure of the WHO lobby!!
- We, the European growers, are ready to support and enforce the demands of the entire tobacco industry against the public authorities "wrong policy". At the same time, we note with some dissatisfaction that the discussions we have held with tobacco companies in recent years, i.e. 2019-2021, on increasing the amount of purchase volume have not fully met our expectations. That is why we want to continue the dialogue with our business partners, tobacco companies, in order to develop long-term solutions that are beneficial to both parties. We look forward to the resumption of talks based on dialogue and mutual respect.
- We see the potential of the new smokeless tobacco sector as an opportunity for the near future. We believe that it is in the interests of public health, tobacco consumers and future generations to implement the *harm reduction* strategy, which brings tangible benefits in several countries that apply this policy. The implementation by the European Commission of the so-called Tobacco Smoke-Free Generation Policy by 2040 is also related to the conversion of society, or rather adult consumers, to alternative tobacco products. Such a policy proposed by Brussels would bring tangible benefits to the health of EU citizens, but it would also certainly allow tobacco cultivation to be maintained.
- As pointed out during the debate on the future of the tobacco sector. The general problems of today in tobacco cultivation are related to a large shortage of labor. Unfortunately, in many EU countries we are dealing with the so-called *ageing* of tobacco growers and the lack of involvement of young farmers. Tobacco cultivation in Europe is also strongly affected by a significant increase in production costs, which significantly reduces

the profitability of tobacco cultivation. Visible climate change is also important.

- UNITAB must participate in all legislative change processes that have just begun or will be implemented in the future. We are facing a change in the Tobacco Excise Directive, which, depending on the European Commission's proposal, may have a significant impact on our future. The Commission is already taking stock of the functioning of the existing Tobacco Product Directive in order to further strengthen the legislative solutions. All this contributes to the growth of the black market in tobacco products and, as a consequence, affects our situation. UNITAB has been involved in all initiatives and activities that have a real impact on the condition of the tobacco growing sector in Europe.

We came here to beautiful Sofia to unite our forces, define our goals and implement intensive action. The Bulgarian Presidency of UNITAB is about to enter into 2 years cadency.

Through all the delegates, we send greetings and good wishes for the best harvests for the tobacco growers of all tobacco growing Member State. We have a lot of work to do to fill the beautiful 70-year history of UNITAB and write a new pages of the UNITAB story!!!

**Sofia, 26.10.2023**

***Delegate Secretary  
Przemysław Noworyta***