



# ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS TO TOBACCO GROWING

## WHO FCTC Article 17 Support for economically viable alternatives

Parties shall, in cooperation with each other and with competent international and regional intergovernmental organizations, promote, as appropriate, economically viable alternatives for tobacco workers, growers and, as the case may be, individual sellers.

## BACKGROUND

In 2005, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) entered into force. The global health treaty aims to curb tobacco use and its consequences. The more successfully the treaty is implemented, the less tobacco will be needed. That is why the 183 signatory states to the WHO FCTC have committed themselves to supporting alternative income opportunities to replace tobacco cultivation.<sup>1</sup>

Germany imports tobacco leaf from countries such as Brazil (25%) and Malawi (10%), where tobacco is mostly grown by smallholder farming families. In order to be able to earn their living in the long term without growing tobacco, farmers need alternative livelihoods that are economically viable and offer them better living and working conditions.<sup>2</sup>



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## BRAZIL ORGANIC VEGETABLES INSTEAD OF TOBACCO

Eliane Roloff Rutz and her family gave up tobacco farming after 25 years. The farmer attended a government training course on organic farming and was supported in her transition process by the União cooperative and a church foundation. She established a market in her own town where farmers now sell their products: salad, vegetables, fruit, milk, butter, eggs and bread. The establishing of this market strengthens local production and encourages others to change.<sup>7</sup>

„The feeling of not having to work around pesticides anymore, oh my god, you just can't put a price on that.“

## THE VARIETY OF ALTERNATIVES

There are already many farmers who have successfully transitioned from tobacco cultivation to alternative livelihoods.

Here are a few examples:

In Brazil and Kenya, farmers have set up cooperatives or producers' associations. They share farming equipment and work together to gain access to markets where they can sell their soybeans, potatoes or manioc.<sup>3</sup>

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**Why is there no Fairtrade tobacco?**

**Tobacco cultivation destroys the environment and harms tobacco farmers.**

**Products made from tobacco pose a serious threat to consumers' health.**

**For this reason, tobacco cannot be considered a sustainable or ethically acceptable product.**

**Fairtrade companies have therefore decided that tobacco products are not an option for them.<sup>8</sup>**

**CONTINUED > THE VARIETY OF ALTERNATIVES**

In Bangladesh, Tunisia, Malawi, and Brazil, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have supported tobacco farmers in their transition by providing training on cultivation methods and mixed cropping. They also offered seeds for local food crops, and assisted in marketing their products, such as potatoes, beans, groundnuts and oats.<sup>4</sup>

In Uganda, Brazil, and Malaysia, smallholder family farms received government support for switching crops. Governments launched programmes researching alternative sources of income, providing seeds, fertilisers and/or advisory services, and thus promoted kenaf cultivation, poultry and fish farming, as well as fruit production.<sup>5</sup>

Generally speaking, it is important for farmers to expand their sources of income and cultivate different crops (technical term: diversify). This will also help to improve the food situation in the country.<sup>6</sup>



**MALAWI  
MAIZE & AGRO-PRODUCTS  
INSTEAD OF TOBACCO**

Moffat Sambani stopped growing tobacco many years ago due to the low prices he earned for tobacco leaf. Since then, he has been cultivating maize for his own use and for sale. In the off-season, he runs an agro business at the trading centre where farmers can buy seeds, fertilisers and other agricultural products. He used the income from these activities to build a house for his family and invest in the future: in a commercial property, a warehouse and a delivery van.<sup>9</sup>

„Because now any crop we are cultivating will bring more income.“



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Berlin, December 2025

Funded by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL with funds from  Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung

With kind support of   

Supported by Brot für die Welt using Church Development Service funds  

Supported by the Foundation Oskar-Helene-Heim 

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**More alternatives can be found here**



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