ECLA Foundation Statement for World Tobacco Growers' Day 2026

On World Tobacco Growers' Day, the Eliminating Child Labour in Agriculture (ECLA) Foundation joins the International Tobacco Growers' Association in recognizing the contributions of growers, their families and farming communities.

Our long relationship with ITGA has reinforced an important lesson from more than two decades of work in tobacco-growing communities: if we want to change the conditions that put children at risk of child labour, we must understand the realities of the families and farms around them.

Those realities are complex. Farming households must navigate changing markets and production costs, uncertain incomes and harvests, access to labour and finance, and, increasingly, climate pressures. At the same time, families share aspirations that are universal: to grow a commodity they choose to, earn a decent standard of living from their work and to give their children an education, security and the opportunity to build their own future.

Listening to farmers therefore means more than inviting their voices into the conversation. It means allowing their knowledge and experience to shape the policies, programmes and business practices that affect their lives.

This matters particularly in addressing child labour. Policies and standards are essential, but they can only lead to meaningful change when accompanied by the conditions that enable families to put them into practice: living incomes, viable livelihoods, decent work, access to education, resilient communities and systems that do not depend on children's labour.

As the Foundation evolves from ECLT to ECLA, expanding its mandate across agriculture, we carry this lesson forward, guided by the conviction that farmers' knowledge and perspectives must shape the decisions and actions that affect their livelihoods, their communities and their children's futures.

"Our Reality. Our Voice. Our Future." is therefore more than a theme for this day. It expresses a principle that should guide rural development itself: the people whose lives are most affected by decisions about agriculture must have a meaningful role in shaping them.

Dr Innocent Mugwagwa
Executive Director
ECLA Foundation

ECLA Foundation is the new name of ECLT Foundation. As our new digital platforms are being launched, information about our work continues to be available through ECLT Foundation's existing website and social media channels.