

TOBACCO CONTROL – SWITCHING FROM TOBACCO TO ALTERNATIVE CROPS

The WHO African Region has made great progress in reducing demand for tobacco products through the MPOWER Package, providing technical support to countries to develop tobacco control laws and regulations to enforce smoke-free laws, and to address the rising use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and heated tobacco products.

Other areas of support include:

- Capacity building for enforcement and compliance.
- Tobacco taxation policy reforms applying WHO Tax Simulation Model (WHO TaxSiM).
- Packaging and labelling of tobacco products, including plain packaging.

WHO AFRO is now scaling up technical support to countries to reduce the supply of tobacco products, through implementation of the following interventions:

- Preventing illicit trade in tobacco products by improving tax administration, track-and-trace systems.
- Support for farmers to switch from tobacco growing to alternative crops.

In Kenya and Zambia, for example, farmers are being supported through WHO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN World Food Programme, the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the Governments of Kenya and Zambia to adopt alternative livelihoods to tobacco farming.

The objectives of these efforts are to:

- Develop a market system that supports smallholder farmers transition from tobacco growing to alternative livelihoods.
- Create awareness on the associated harms of tobacco growing and economic viability of alternative value chains to influence households to make the decision to transition effectively.
- Build evidence on alternative livelihoods for advocacy and policy formulation on tobacco control.
- Promote optimal dietary diversity strategies that support nutrition knowledge and practices of tobacco farming households.

To date, more than 2000 Kenyan farmers have shifted from tobacco growing, and over 500 of their Zambian counterparts are expected to make the shift by the end of 2023.

The direct benefits include:

- Better nutrition and food security.
- Increased household income for farmers.
- Reduced child labour.
- Improved school attendance.
- Improved environmental conservation and overall population health protection.