

**HELLENIC ASSOCIATION
OF TOBACCO PROCESSING INDUSTRIES**

PRESS RELEASE

The European Confederation of Tobacco Growers UNITAB is organizing a pan-european tobacco demonstration in Brussels on November 17 with representatives from all the tobacco producing countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Austria, Poland, Hungary) in order to protest against the European Commission proposals for the reform of the Common Market Organisation of the tobacco sector.

Thousands of growers, workers and employees in the sector of tobacco will raise their voice – at the same time that the Council of Ministers of Agriculture is meeting – against these proposals, which will lead to the abandonment of tobacco cultivation and will put in danger the incomes and the employment of hundreds of thousands of growers and workers.

The Hellenic Association of Tobacco Processing Industries, together with the corresponding Associations from the other member countries, which make up our European Federation FETRATAB, will actively participate in this demonstration and calls on all the organisations of the people working in the sector, as well as all those who are involved in the production, movement, processing and exportation of the tobacco, to participate in this top action of the European tobacco growers, aiming at overturning the unacceptable proposals of the Commission.

This, because Greece is one of the most important tobacco producing countries in the E.U. with 55.000 tobacco growers producing some of the most famous tobaccos in the world. Because from the exports alone of these tobaccos the national economy earns every year 300 million Euros. Because the Greek transformation industry with its 20 industrial tobacco-processing plants that operate in the regions, with investments of over 150 million Euros, employs 10.000 workers and employees, whose jobs and economic survival is being put in question.

Because the Commission proposals will mathematically lead to:

- The abandonment of the cultivation
- The desertification of the country side
- The loss of tens of thousands of jobs
- The deterioration of the balance of payments

We call on everyone concerned to be present next Monday in Brussels and to declare:

- NO to the decoupling of the tobacco subsidies from production and to the policy of money handouts**
- NO to the loss of another 500.000 jobs in Europe**
- NO to the closure of dozens of factories**
- NO to the economic decline of our rural communities**

The Hellenic Association of Tobacco Processing Industries

Athens, 11 November 2003