

## **PRESS RELEASE**

*Brussels, 18 December 2025*

### **Masiello (Vice President of Coldiretti, President of UNITAB Europe and of ONT Italia): European agriculture and raw tobacco producers united against unbalanced policies that put jobs, rural areas and supply chains at risk**

Today's demonstration in Brussels marked an extraordinary and broad-based moment of participation by agricultural systems from across Europe, united in calling on the European Commission for agricultural, trade, fiscal and budgetary policies that are fairer, more coherent and respectful of farmers' work. This was stated by Gennarino Masiello, Vice President of Coldiretti and President of UNITAB Europe, on the sidelines of the mobilization that brought thousands of Italian and European farmers in front of the EU institutions.

For the raw tobacco sector, Masiello continued, participation was particularly significant. European producing countries, with Italy at the forefront, chose to stand alongside other agricultural sectors to denounce an approach that we consider penalizing. This applies not only to agricultural policies, where raw tobacco continues to face unjustified discrimination within the CAP, but also to fiscal policies, through the proposed revision of the Directive on the structure and rates of excise duty applied to tobacco and related products, which places an excessive burden on the raw tobacco sector.

The extension of fiscal and bureaucratic treatment to raw tobacco, together with substantial increases in excise duties, Masiello added, risks creating disproportionate costs for growers and the entire supply chain, distorting competition in favor of imports from non-EU countries that operate under lower social and environmental standards.

It must be stated clearly, Masiello stressed, that raw tobacco is an agricultural product in every respect. It generates employment, supports legal, transparent and competitive supply chains, and is a sector that has made concrete investments in recent years in innovation, environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

According to the President of UNITAB Europe, unbalanced sectoral policies that fail to consider their full range of impacts risk producing the opposite effect to that intended: encouraging imports of raw tobacco from non-EU countries, fueling illicit markets for finished products, discouraging employment and supply-chain investment, and undermining the economic and social stability of many rural areas across Europe.

There is also a generational issue that cannot be ignored, Masiello concluded. Many young people have chosen to remain in agriculture and invest in raw tobacco precisely because they are part of organized, forward-looking supply chains. If economic and regulatory certainty is removed, the possibility of ensuring generational renewal in rural areas is also lost.

European agriculture and tobacco farming are calling for fair, non-ideological rules and for a genuine assessment of the impact of political choices on employment, competitiveness and rural cohesion. Today's demonstration sends a clear message: without farmers, there can be no sustainability, no territorial stewardship and no future for Europe.