

# Chapter 1.

## The Commission and Its Guiding Principles

### Formation and Purpose of the Commission

Two critical factors led to the formation of this Commission. First, the unprecedented economic hardship that now faces tobacco farmers and their communities and is likely to continue into the future. Second, recognition that more needs to be done to reduce the harms to public health that are caused by use of tobacco products.

In response to these concerns, Executive Order 13168 established the Commission in September 2000 (*Appendix A*) and required us to advise the President on:

*“changes occurring in the tobacco farming economy and recommend such measures as may be necessary to improve economic opportunity and development in communities that are dependent on tobacco production, while protecting consumers, particularly children, from hazards associated with smoking.”*

The Executive Order also responds to a remarkable dialogue between public health representatives and tobacco growers that began in the mid-1980s. Concerned about the growing economic plight of tobacco farmers and their communities and tobacco-caused harms to public health, that group in 1998 agreed on 10 core principles to help resolve the primary issues.

Approximately 80 public health and agricultural organizations, including major tobacco grower associations, supported the core principles (*Appendix B*). The core principles served as the

basis for the Commission’s initial discussions.

This document is the final report of the Commission. It summarizes the Commission’s findings (*Chapter 2*), then discusses challenges and opportunities related to easing the economic plight of tobacco farmers and their communities and ensuring less harmful tobacco products in the interests of public health (*Chapter 3*).

Chapter 4 summarizes the Commission’s recommendations to:

- (a) reduce tobacco farmers’ economic dependence on tobacco and assist them to cope with changing economic circumstances,
- (b) improve economic opportunities in tobacco-dependent communities and
- (c) protect public health. The full recommendations, stemming from reports of the Commission’s subcommittees and adopted in full by the Commission, are found in Chapter 5.

**More than 450 tobacco farmers, representatives of farm groups, health officials, community leaders and other interested people attended the Commission’s public forums in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Louisville, Kentucky (November 9 and November 10, 2000, respectively).**

**In addition, the Commission gathered comments on its preliminary report and reviewed reports from myriad federal, state and academic sources and from tobacco and health organizations.**

## Guiding Principles

This report builds on the 10 core principles agreed to by health and agricultural organizations. The report also incorporates the following set of principles that the Commission adopted to guide its deliberations.

- The Commission's recommendations should both protect the public health and the economic security and stability of tobacco farmers and their communities.
- Both short-term and long-term assistance are warranted for family tobacco farmers and their communities because of two factors: (1) past federal policies that have led many tobacco farmers to a heavy, if not total, dependence on this crop and way of life and (2) the dramatic reduction in the purchase of U.S. tobacco leaf in recent years as the result of a complex set of trends that are both long term and global in nature.
- The preservation of a tobacco program that controls supply, maintains price, moves production permits into the hands of growers and incorporates health and safety protection is in the best interests of tobacco farmers and the public health.
- Solutions to the problems facing tobacco farmers should protect family farms, of which a significant number are small farms and owned by members of minority groups.
- Policies should be adopted to ensure that any system of direct contracting between manufacturers and U.S. tobacco farmers does not undermine the protections for family farms and the public health that are provided by the tobacco program.
- Any changes in the tobacco program should focus on long-term solutions to the problems facing tobacco farmers, not on short-term quick fixes.
- Tobacco farmers should be fairly and equitably compensated for their quota to address their current crisis and reduce their dependency on tobacco, an action which is in the best interests of tobacco growers and the public health.
- Economic development assistance to tobacco-growing communities is in the best interests of tobacco farmers, their communities and public health. The Commission should consider the broadest range of economic actions to assist tobacco farmers, tobacco farm families and their communities in promoting their prosperity, stability and way of life during this period of transition, including:
  - locally driven assistance to tobacco-growing communities for economic redevelopment and diversification;
  - support for supplemental crops (*particularly those requiring specialized tobacco farming skills*) and livestock and for the infrastructure necessary to produce and process the crops, develop new markets and bring these commodities to market; and

- continued research into the development of non-harmful uses of tobacco products.
- The U.S. tobacco farmer and the public should be protected against unfair foreign competition. For example, increased and expanded inspections for non-approved pesticides on imported tobacco are in the best interest of tobacco growers, their communities and the public health.
- More must be done to prevent the harm caused by tobacco products, as acknowledged even by some tobacco product manufacturers. Comprehensive programs, such as those suggested in the August 2000 Report of the Surgeon General, to reduce tobacco use and the harm caused by tobacco products should be adopted by the public and private sectors, with a special emphasis on the problems facing tobacco-growing states.
- Tobacco products should be regulated. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should have authority to establish fair and equitable regulatory controls over the manufacture, sale, distribution and labeling of tobacco products, comparable to regulations established for other products that the FDA regulates. The regulations should aim to protect public health. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should retain authority to set safety standards governing tobacco farms and tobacco growing.
- Measures to fund the Commission's recommendations must be reliable, long-term and consistent with the best interests of tobacco farming communities and the public health.