

Under the Cover of Night

Child Labor in Oriental Tobacco



Evidence from Western Türkiye

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Dedication

Our report is dedicated to changemakers, especially those within government and multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations, with the power to end the reliance of tobacco products on the labor of children.

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kalkinmaatolyesi

kalkinmatolyesi

List of Abbreviations

BAT	British American Tobacco
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ECLT	Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing Foundation
ENAG	Inflation Research Group
FAO STAT	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCTC	Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
FSFW	Foundation for a Smoke-Free World
GTS	Green Tobacco Sickness
IGTA	International Tobacco Growers Association
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NCI	National Cancer Institute
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PMI	Philip Morris International
STOP	Supporting Transformational Opportunities for People
TAPDK	Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Authority
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Türkiye
TEKEL	General Directorate of Tobacco, Tobacco Products, Salt and Alcohol Enterprises
TL	Turkish Lira
TURK-IS	Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions
TURKSTAT	Turkish Statistical Institute
US	United States
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present evidence regarding child labor in growing Turkish tobacco, a fact that is not universally recognized.¹ Our findings, however, show the practice to be both evident and widespread within the scope of unpaid family work. We also document important contemporary dynamics in Turkish tobacco cultivation to provide high-quality information for policymakers, civil society, not-for-profits, and others seeking to improve the circumstances of families and individuals who farm tobacco in Türkiye.

Growing tobacco is one of the worst forms of child labor, and not only because tobacco leaves are toxic.² An added factor in Türkiye is that children labor in tobacco leaf harvesting *at night*. Due to the sleep deprivation it generates, this way of labor has a detrimental effect on children's physical, social, and intellectual development. The tobacco industry has relied on tobacco leaves grown with child labor in the production of cigarettes since the 1940s, even though they are against child labor in tobacco growing.

Data collection for this report involved a field study in Tavas Ovası, a fertile plain in the western Turkish province of Denizli, as well as surveys conducted over the phone. More than twenty families engaged in tobacco cultivation were consulted for this report during roughly eight days of fieldwork in the summer of 2022. When the researchers were in the region for observation in May and June 2019, their field notes on tobacco cultivation and child labor were also compiled and included in this report as an insight.

¹ Notably, the U.S. Department of labor's list of goods produced by child labor does not include Turkish tobacco.

² Green tobacco disease is a well-known form of cutaneous nicotine poisoning. It is one of the most common diseases in children and adults in tobacco cultivation. It is caused by working with bare hands while harvesting and/or drying tobacco leaves. Usually, green tobacco leaves that have been picked for drying are held in the hands and armpits. Often the green tobacco leaves are wet, and nicotine is absorbed into the body through the skin.

In Tavas Ovası, tobacco cultivation depends on contracts that often pressure the entire family -including children, the infirm, and the elderly-to perform heavy agricultural labor. The prices for crops specified in contracts at the beginning of the growing season require farmers to supply the required labor at as low a cost as possible. This means that farmers frequently rely on their children or the children of relatives to provide labor at no cost in order to earn a high income from growing tobacco. Manufacturers of cigarettes and other tobacco products are accountable for preventing child labor in their lucrative supply chains. Tobacco product manufacturers purchasing the delicate Oriental tobacco grown in Türkiye, which is famous for its special flavor, have this responsibility.

This report evidences that, despite having taken formal steps to prevent such instances, tobacco leaf processing firms working for manufacturers of tobacco products still rely upon tobacco growth by child labor. What will it take for regulators, policymakers, and civil society to finally eliminate child labor in tobacco cultivation? How will the obligation for multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations to legally monitor their supply chains, report, be responsible for adverse events and develop solutions affect the tobacco market and actors in Türkiye? The report addresses these multidimensional and multi-stakeholder questions and focuses on change in a solution-oriented, data-driven and interdisciplinary perspective.

FOREWORD

Tobacco field in the evening. Denizli/Tavas, August 2022



Agricultural work is the most prevalent form of child labor and one that is particularly detrimental to healthy growth and development. Child labor is quite common in Türkiye, as it is virtually everywhere in the world, across various stages and types of crop cultivation and across geographical locations. Seasonal migrant agricultural work³, is the most commonly observed form of child labor in agricultural activities. Generally, these children are not able to continue their education and suffer from living and working in poor conditions. Compelled by circumstance, families unwittingly reproduce the cycle of poverty in despair when their children begin to labor in the fields.

According to data from 2022, tobacco is grown in roughly one-third of Türkiye's 81 provinces by about 45 thousand farmers. While some of this labor force is made up of local⁴ and seasonal migrant agricultural workers, most of the work is performed

³ Workers who leave their permanent place of residence (province, district, village, neighborhood) to travel to another place to earn economic income and participate in the agricultural production process for at least one day, but do not work in this job permanently (temporarily).

⁴ TA worker who participates in the agricultural production process to earn economic income; works in the field/garden in the province, district, village, or neighborhood where he/she is residing, and returns to his/her home in the evening.

by unpaid family members.⁵ Without the labor of the entire household, tobacco cultivation is simply not a sustainable source of income for most growers. Therefore, child labor becomes almost a necessity in the current reality of tobacco cultivation, making the sector chronically dependent on children's labor.

The Development Workshop has spent nearly 20 years conducting research projects on child labor in Turkish agriculture and disseminating the findings globally. Without funding or in-kind support from any organization, the Development Workshop's experts and volunteers completed this study on child labor in the cultivation of Oriental tobacco in Western Türkiye using entirely their own resources. We aim to make visible the use of child labor in tobacco cultivation, leading to acknowledgement and action from national and international institutions responsible for tobacco supply chains.

Above all, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the many tobacco growers who gave their time throughout the research and shared their knowledge by taking a night-time break from their work. Additionally, we appreciate the open sharing of experiences and ideas by tobacco experts, labor intermediaries, academics, and especially those who have worked-and are still working-in tobacco fields since childhood. We hope this study will improve the difficult lives of children working in tobacco cultivation and contribute to urgent development solutions for this persistent issue.

⁵ Workers consisting of family members or relatives who participate in agricultural production in the owned or rented field/garden and do not receive a wage in return.

Objective of the Study

1

The purpose of this study is to gather and present data on children working in Turkish tobacco fields to the stakeholders of the problem and its solution. By conducting surveys, in-depth interviews, and observations with a certain number of tobacco growing families in Western Türkiye, the report investigates how and why children are pushed into this risky agricultural activity, which includes night work.

Specifically, this report:

- informs the general public about children working in tobacco fields through empirical evidence and documentation of child labor in Western Türkiye
- relates the neo-liberal economic history of contractual Oriental tobacco growing during the last two decades in Türkiye
- documents the current circumstances underpinning child labor in tobacco
- describes the recent demographic changes, mobilisations, and transitions in Turkish tobacco cultivation
- delivers data-driven policy recommendations for the elimination of all forms of child labor and the establishment of decent working conditions and a living wage for tobacco farmers in Türkiye.

2 | Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study proceeded in two methodological phases: a preliminary desk-research stage followed by fieldwork in Western Türkiye. During the desk phase, important data on tobacco farming and child labor in Türkiye and around the world were obtained, along with a review of Turkish and international literature. Collecting data on province-level on cultivation areas, the number of growers, production volume, yield, and sales since 2010 was a particular focus, primarily relying on data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK). Planning for fieldwork, including the development of research instruments such as interview guides and questionnaires, also took place during the desk study phase.

Fieldwork was organized with families that cultivate tobacco as well as key informants and institutions. The Tavas district of the province of Denizli, as well as the nearby villages and towns that share the same fertile plain, were chosen for the field study primarily because, according to statistics from 2021, it is the largest area planted with tobacco in the Aegean region. Denizli was also chosen in part because of its close proximity to the research team and an extensive network of informants as a result of numerous earlier studies conducted with other agricultural laborers. The researchers gathered data and information on the circumstances and dynamics of present tobacco growing in Türkiye in addition to documenting the use of child labor, in order to highlight potential avenues for reducing or eliminating the use of child labor. Following the fieldwork, online meetings with international scholars who have studied child labor in the tobacco industry were organized, and data and information were exchanged on suggested solutions.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Two research trips were taken to the Tavas Plain region in the province of Denizli in western Türkiye in addition to phone surveys and virtual interviews with academic experts. In total, this study spoke with 10 key informants and 38 tobacco-growing households (see table 1). The first fieldwork took place in the Tavas district, where Oriental tobacco is the predominant crop. Over twenty individuals were interviewed, including members of five households. Interviews were also conduc-

ted with two tobacco experts, one labor intermediary, one village man (*köy adamı*),⁶ one village headman, one pesticide dealer, and two agricultural engineers. All interviews were conducted face-to-face by the research team between 3 and 7 August 2022. The second fieldwork was carried out in the Gülbağlık neighborhood of the Kale district of Denizli between 7 and 10 November 2022. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight tobacco-growing families in the post-harvest period.

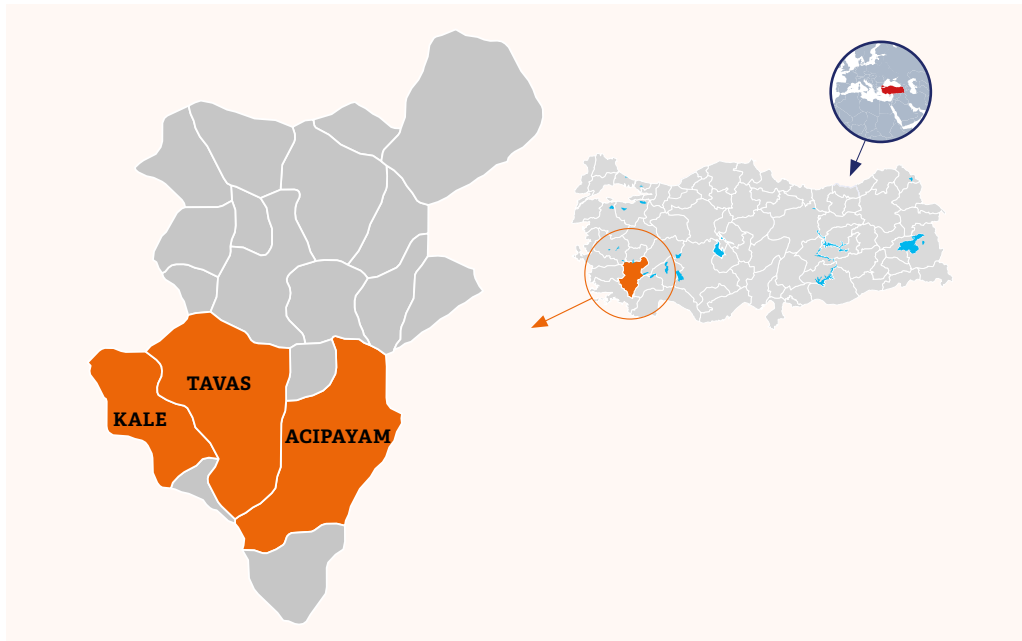
Table 1: Location and frequency of data collection

Data Collection	Locations	Key Informant Interviews	In-depth interviews	Survey	Total #
Fieldwork 1	Tavas (Ebecik, Medet, Nikfer)	6	8	-	14
Fieldwork 2	Kale (Gülbağlık)	-	8	-	8
Phone Interviews	Acıpayam; Tavas (Medet, Garipköy); Kale (Narlı, Gülbağlık)	-	-	22	22
Video Interviews	-	2	-	-	2
Total #		8	16	22	46

At the beginning of December 2022, twenty-two households were consulted for the phone survey. Both in-depth interviews and the phone survey with families who cultivate tobacco covered the following topics: tasks in the agricultural calendar (planting, seedling, spraying, care, harvesting, and sales); the type and division of labor used for agricultural activities; detailed work schedules and practices of any child labor, the costs and revenues associated with tobacco cultivation, the non-tobacco agricultural activities and income of the family; and relations between tobacco-growing households, leaf-buying companies, and multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations. In addition to in-person interviews, two international academics were interviewed in order to contextualize child labor in Turkish tobacco within the global picture regarding tobacco farming.

⁶ A village man helps leaf buying companies monitor and supervise tobacco cultivation at the village level.

Map 1: Location of the field study



2.3. Limitations

This study was conducted entirely on the basis of volunteer work, with all time and resources dedicated to research and writing being donated by the research team, colleagues, and friends. No institutional or financial support, including in kind, has been received or solicited to avoid a conflict of interest that could affect the publication of this report. However, funding constraints meant that long-term and large-scale research was infeasible for the current project.

Initial fieldwork was conducted in the heat of the summer during a relatively intense period of the green tobacco harvest. Accordingly, tobacco-growing families were interviewed either during lunchtime or shortly after their work in the field was finished in the evening. One interview was held at night when family members were out in the field working to avoid the heat of the day. Ten domestic and foreign tobacco leaf purchasing firms operating in Türkiye with significant roles in tobacco cultivation were invited to be interviewed, but none of them responded. Türkiye's tobacco cultivation and manufacturing policies can be associated with human rights violations, forms of illegal labor, and unlawful business processes. While the reasons for this situation can be understood, it is hoped that it will change with a solution-oriented and collaborative approach.

Global Overview: Child Labor in Tobacco Cultivation

3

This chapter provides historical details and interpretative context on the global tobacco industry, tobacco cultivation, and child labor in tobacco cultivation. In the first chapter, the research examines the historical development and impacts of the global tobacco industry and focuses on tobacco production worldwide. Then, the process of cultivation and the evolution of the marketization of Oriental tobacco produced in Türkiye is analyzed in detail. This analysis helps us understand how tobacco cultivation and processing have been shaped throughout history and their current status. Finally, the problem of child labor in tobacco cultivation is addressed, and the working conditions in this field, the risks that child workers are exposed to, and the solutions to this problem are emphasized.

3.1. Global Tobacco

The supply chain starts with the cultivation and harvesting of tobacco plants, after which leaves are cured using air, steam, or sun. Primary processing involves the sorting and removal of non-tobacco matter, the separation of stem and leaf, cutting and blending, and possibly the addition of flavors and dyes. The processed leaf is then manufactured into final products such as cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco. After packaging and distribution, tobacco products are delivered to consumers at supermarkets, corner stores, and other vendors across more than 14 million points of sale (PMI 2023).

Innumerable individuals contribute to the tobacco supply chain, but profits concentrate in the hands of a few multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations. It is thought that over 10 million farmers labor to grow tobacco leaves valued at 25 billion USD each year (FAOSTAT, 2020). Processed tobacco leaf is manufactured into final products, mostly cigarettes, by over 1.5 million people, or over 6 million if informal employment is counted (NCI and WHO, 2016: 547–8). By the time tobacco reaches the manufacturing stage, it is valued at around 251 billion USD (PMI, 2019), while the sale of tobacco products generates about 782 billion USD (Insight Partners, 2022).

Fresh and dried tobacco leaves. Denizli/Tavas, August 2022



The largest multinational tobacco manufacturers are Philip Morris International (PMI), Japan Tobacco International (JTI), British American Tobacco (BAT), and Imperial Brands, with a combined market value of over 310 billion USD in 2021 (Eloise, 2023). The Altria Group and China National Tobacco Company (a state-owned and domestic-only operation) are also major corporate actors in the tobacco industry. These companies have immense economic power that they actively employ in lobbying governments and influencing national and supranational regulations to ensure continued sales of their products.

The global “tobacco control” movement dates back to international conferences and exchanges in the 1960s, achieving a key victory in 2003 with the adoption of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Reubi and Berridge, 2016; WHO, 2009). Tobacco control refers to policies and regulations that reduce the consumption of tobacco products to prevent the millions of tobacco-related diseases and deaths that currently occur each year. Implemented at international, national, and local levels, these public health interventions include tobacco tax increases, bans on smoking in workplaces, public information campaigns, and large, direct health warning labels on packaging, bans on tobacco product advertisements, and increased access to tobacco cessation aids (Joossens and Raw, 2014).

The FCTC, whose provisions are legally binding in 181 ratifying countries, is widely recognized to have reduced tobacco use worldwide. According to a study, it is estimated that tobacco control measures prevented 22 million tobacco-related deaths during the first decade of the treaty (Chung-Hall et al., 2019). Smoking prevalence has also decreased, especially where multiple tobacco control policies “act synergistically to shape personal attitudes and societal norms” (Levy et al., 2004: 349). And while there is a lack of agreement on reliable statistics, major reports show an overall decline in tobacco production and the number of individuals involved in tobacco growing (ILO, 2003; 2014: 201; NCI and WHO, 2016)—a key part of the FCTC’s long-term strategy to reduce tobacco use through the supply-side of the equation instead of targeting demand only.

While the FCTC has been an effective tool for transforming norms and regulations regarding tobacco usage around the world, interference from the tobacco industry poses a challenge to tobacco control. There is a long history of political interference in the close-knit tobacco industry. With revenues at historic lows in the 1950s, the industry famously skirted or broke the law in concealing evidence and conducting misinformation campaigns with biased research to obscure the serious health risks of tobacco (Coraiola and Derry, 2019). And plentiful evidence shows that extra-legal activity by multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations is not a thing of the past. For instance, monopolistic control of leaf-buying in Malawi, the

leading cultivator of burley leaf tobacco, set the stage for a well-documented case of price-fixing that denied fair pay to farmers (Otañez et al., 2007; Otañez and Graen, 2014). Increasingly, domestic litigation and international arbitration in low-income and middle-income countries allow companies to continue the very practices tobacco control measures attempt to regulate, such as predatory pricing models and complicity with cigarette smuggling (Gilmore et al., 2015).

The FCTC treaty-making process in the early 2000s brought tobacco industry interference tactics centerstage, with comprehensive guidelines on limiting interference published in 2008 (FCTC, 2008). The WHO's special reports on the issue highlighted six ways that the industry interferes with the legal and regulatory processes: (1) influencing political and legislative processes; (2) overstating the economic importance of the industry; (3) manipulating public opinion to rectify their reputation; (4) crafting support groups; (5) discrediting scientific research; and (6) intimidating governments with litigation (WHO, 2009b, 2012). Documented examples of each type of interference abound.

Under Article 5.3, countries that ratified the FCTC commit to passing legislation to “*protect tobacco control from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.*” A scale developed by scholars and tobacco control practitioners to measure country-level implementation of Article 5.3 cites seven key themes to diagnose the extent of industry interference: corporations' level of participation in policy development, Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) activities, tobacco industry benefits, unnecessary interactions between tobacco and government, transparency, conflict of interest, and preventative policy measures (Assunta and Dorotheo, 2016). Over 70 percent of the 181 FCTC signatories have adopted some measures to limit tobacco industry interference. Encouragingly, a landmark case brought by BAT in Kenya against the Tobacco Control Regulations has been concluded (WHO, 2021). This case was dismissed by the Kenyan High Court in 2019, but recently resulted in a ruling upholding the government's right to limit the tobacco company's public participation and demand additional disclosures to protect public health. In an environment of tobacco industry resistance to regulatory measures, this case can be seen as a step towards prioritizing public health. The outcome is important as an example of efforts to control the activities of multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations and protect the public interest.

Despite increasing attention to and resources for ending tobacco industry interference, the practice persists, especially via increased litigation (Bialous, 2019). There are records of the industry bribing lawmakers, pushing for non-government intervention and self-regulation, evading blame for labor conditions by purchasing through third-party leaf companies, and influencing governments through financial relationships (Bettcher, 2013). A recent case study in Oman details the industry's

ongoing interference in meetings with high-level government officials, local diplomatic missions, regulations to decrease the nicotine and tar content of cigarettes, and restrictions on smoking (Al-Lawati and Bialous, 2021). Another recent case in India revealed a tobacco company's donation to one state revenue department's COVID-19 relief effort, an action that was openly appreciated by the chief minister's office (Kumar et al., 2022). These cases illustrate how the tobacco industry continues to build connections and expand its corporate social responsibility support and donations to influence national and local policy. Moreover, the tobacco industry commonly exaggerates its economic importance to lend urgency and credibility to its demands (WHO, 2012). These tactics fundamentally undermine governments' ability to self-determine and implement tobacco control policies based on accurate considerations in alignment with global public health standards.

The landscape of tobacco control actors -those who provide information and conduct projects to prevent tobacco-related deaths- is crowded and complex. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) coordinate essential tobacco control strategies such as public information campaigns, youth education, and cessation services. Some of these well-known NGOs, including the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW) and the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco-Growing Foundation (ECLT), are in fact funded by tobacco firms. In general, scholars, policymakers, and activists have accused the tobacco industry of using such corporate social responsibility efforts to remedy their reputations, distract and ease government control, and increase the value of the company stock (Hirschhorn, 2004; TobaccoTactics, 2022).

The ILO's partnerships with the ECLT from 2002 and the JTI in 2011 provide an apt example of the perils of collaborating with the tobacco industry and industry-sponsored actors. In 2017, an open letter signed by more than 200 organizations pressed the ILO to abandon its relations with multinational tobacco manufacturing companies (Open Letter to ILO, 2018). The letter criticized the ILO's partnerships with the industry as a violation of the FCTC's Article 5.3, which disallows funding from the tobacco industry. Furthermore, the letter cited evidence from industry documents revealing how the ILO partnerships served as a cover for wrongdoings in their supply chain. The following year, the ILO chose not to renew these partnership contracts due to civil pressures, and the prominence of Article 5.3 along with the problematic nature of the industry's conduct (Framework Convention Alliance, 2018).

3.2. Growing Tobacco

Globally, tobacco cultivation has declined from peak levels in the late 1990s in recent years (Figure 1). In 2020, 5.9 million tonnes of unmanufactured tobacco were produced from 3.2 million hectares (FAOSTAT, 2020). While tobacco is grown in more than 100 countries around the world, the special Oriental variety exported by Türkiye is generally found in the Mediterranean and Balkan countries. One of the most expensive varieties, Oriental tobacco is highly coveted for its distinctive flavor in American blends. American blends, named after its popularity in the United States (US), include a mixture of Virginia (around 70 percent), Burley (20-30 percent), and Oriental (5-10 percent) tobacco (Marina, 2016). Oriental tobacco provides a characteristic taste and consistency to the blend and this blend is used in the most well-known brands. (Kayaalp 2014; Neuburger 2013). Türkiye ranks first in the world's cultivation of Oriental tobacco, which is also grown in Greece, and some Balkan countries.

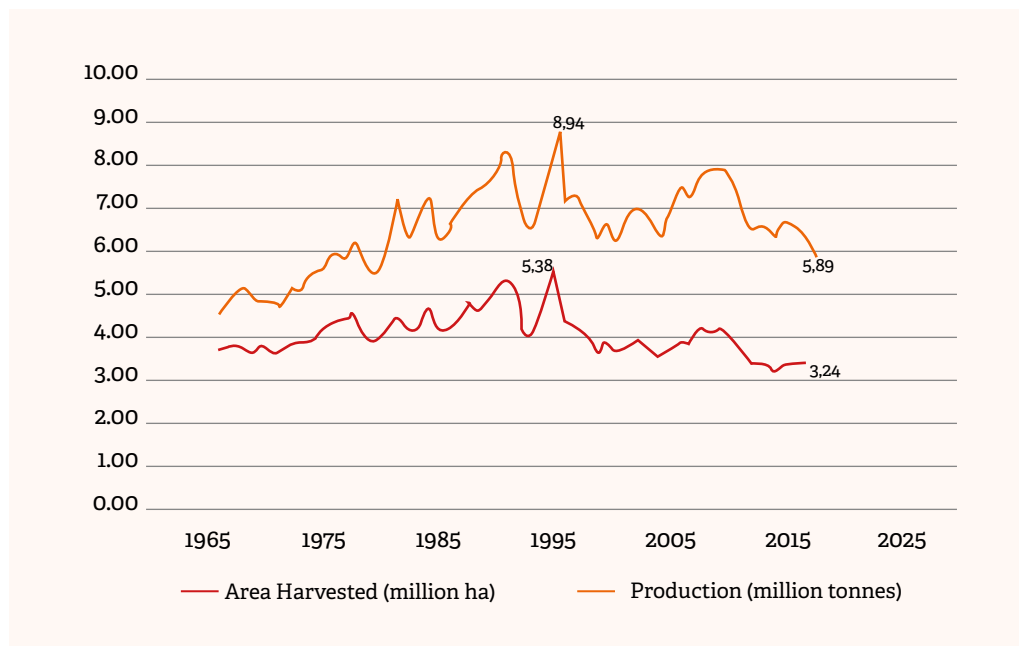
Table 2: Tobacco types, growing areas and qualities

Tobacco Types	Cultivation Zones	Qualities
Virginia	Mainly grown in Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Tanzania, and the US (PMI, 2022).	It has a bright aroma and taste. The color of it is distinctly golden yellow or deep orange (PMI, 2022).
Burley	Mainly grown in Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Malawi, and the US (PMI, 2022).	It has a much stronger taste compared to Virginia as the curing process takes out most of its sugar content. It has a dark-brown color, unlike Virginia and Oriental which typically have golden yellow colors (PMI, 2022).
Oriental	Mainly grown in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, and Türkiye (PMI, 2022).	It is highly aromatic and needs a drier and hotter climate compared to the other two. The leaf size also differs from the rest as it has smaller leaves (Mac Baren, 2022).

The figure of 60 million estimated in a 2003 ILO report continues to be cited by many, including the ILO itself and the industry-associated International Tobacco Growers Association (IGTA, 2023; ILO, 2003, 2017). At the same time, however, scholars warn that the number of tobacco growers may be inflated by industry interest in portraying tobacco farming as indispensable to the global economy. A recent academic estimate for the top ten tobacco product manufacturer nations amounts to less than 7 million workers (Lencucha et al., 2022). Globally, in recent years, the dec-

line in the number of tobacco farmers has been associated with the overall decline in manufacturing of tobacco products as well as increasing productivity in crop yield per hectare and greater mechanization (NCI and WHO, 2016: 550).

Figure 1: World production of unmanufactured tobacco, 1965 - 2020



Source: FOASTAT

The global decline of tobacco production coincides with the rise of “supply-side” tobacco control policies in 2005 when the FCTC, which contains measures to reduce tobacco cultivation, entered into force for ratifying countries. The World Bank’s 2016 investigation into the economics of tobacco control found that the “vast majority” of countries would see no net effect or a small net increase in employment while acknowledging that farmers in a few countries heavily dependent on tobacco exports could experience negative effects (NCI and WHO, 2016: 562).

As part of its supply reduction strategy, Article 17 of the FCTC encourages the development and support of economically viable alternative livelihoods for tobacco growers. The WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) collaborate on large-scale projects to help tobacco farmers establish alternative livelihoods, as do many government and non-profit organizations (Eichborn, 2018; FSFW, 2018; WHO, 2022a). While some tobacco farmers decide to go into wage labor, many choose to remain in agriculture by applying their extensive farming experience to other crops. In Kenya, alternative crops range from millet and sweet potatoes to vegetables such as tomatoes and beans (Clark et al.,

Tobacco leaves are placed on the tray for drying. Denizli/Tavas, August 2022.





2020). A study in Uganda found that growing alternative crops, such as maize, rice, and beans, was more beneficial and lucrative than tobacco farming (Kowa et al., 2019). In Lebanon, herbs for the region's famous za'atar blend were among the crops that farmers were using to diversify their livelihoods (Redwan, 2018). Maize and sweet potatoes are particularly favored alternative crops as they are less labor-intensive than tobacco and can be harvested twice a year.

Nonetheless, scholars find that tobacco farming remains entrenched in many countries despite low profit margins, poor labor conditions, and weak bargaining power (Lencucha et al., 2022). One reason for its persistence is the increasingly mythical "prosperity narrative" that tobacco cultivation is economically profitable. In fact, tobacco is often a low-earning choice among other more profitable alternatives for farmers (Hussain et al., 2020; Magati et al., 2019). Additional reasons for the entrenchment of tobacco farming include challenges to dismantling pro-tobacco policies and difficulties implementing tobacco control at the level of national policy and local institutions (Labonté et al., 2018; Lencucha et al., 2020).

Public information campaigns have contributed to public knowledge about the harms of tobacco, and not only for those who consume tobacco-derived products. Tobacco cultivation is increasingly associated with devastating impacts on climate and the environment, as well as occupational health hazards and food insecurity for growers (De Lorenzo, 2021; Drope et al., 2022). The theme of the WHO's annual World No Tobacco Day in 2022 was "Tobacco: A Threat to Our Environment" (WHO, 2021, 2022b). Nowadays, researchers have identified the harms of tobacco cultivation to human health and ecosystems (Ali et al., 2022; Joardar et al., 2022; Lecours, 2014). Environmental impacts of tobacco farming include the degradation of soil, watershed contamination, and deforestation (Lecours et al., 2012; Sahana, 2020; Testai, 2022; WHO, 2017; Zappe et al., 2020). The WHO estimates that tobacco growing accounts for roughly 5 percent of global deforestation, an activity that accelerates climate change (WHO, 2022b). Not only does tobacco farming negatively impact soil fertility, particularly continuous cropping, but agricultural chemicals, including fertilizers and pesticides, also contaminate the surrounding soil, ground and surface water resources, and watershed. At the same time, land used for tobacco cultivation is unavailable for nutritious crops, which contributes to localized food insecurity. New research also shows that food crops should not be grown in the vicinity of intensive tobacco cultivation because of the transmission of nicotine throughout the ecosystem (Masanotti et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, farmers do face unique occupational health hazards related to growing tobacco. The most well-known hazard is Green Tobacco Sickness (GTS), which is a form of nicotine toxicity that occurs from handling wet, uncured tobacco leaves, resulting in neurological symptoms such as vomiting, headaches, and weakness (Achalli et al., 2012; Bharti et al., 2021). The use of protective clothing and equipment can reduce instances of GTS, but around 8 million individuals suffer from this illness every year (McMahon, 2019). GTS has been shown to damage DNA, which can be related to cancer and accelerated aging (Alves et al., 2020). Little is understood about the long-term or chronic effects of transdermal exposure to nicotine or the consequences of repeated GTS over the life course.

3.3. Child Labor in Growing Tobacco

According to the latest global data as of 2020, approximately 160 million children worldwide, one-tenth of all children, are known to be engaged in child labor (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). There are approximately 1.3 million children working in tobacco cultivation and production worldwide (STOP, 2021). Child labor in Malawi alone has saved the tobacco industry an estimated 10 million USD in a single decade (Baradaran and Barclay, 2011).

The U.S. Department of Labour (USDOL) maintains an annual accounting of forced labor and child labor in supply chains for products sold by American firms.⁷ According to this list, child labor in tobacco cultivation occurs in seventeen countries (see table 3).

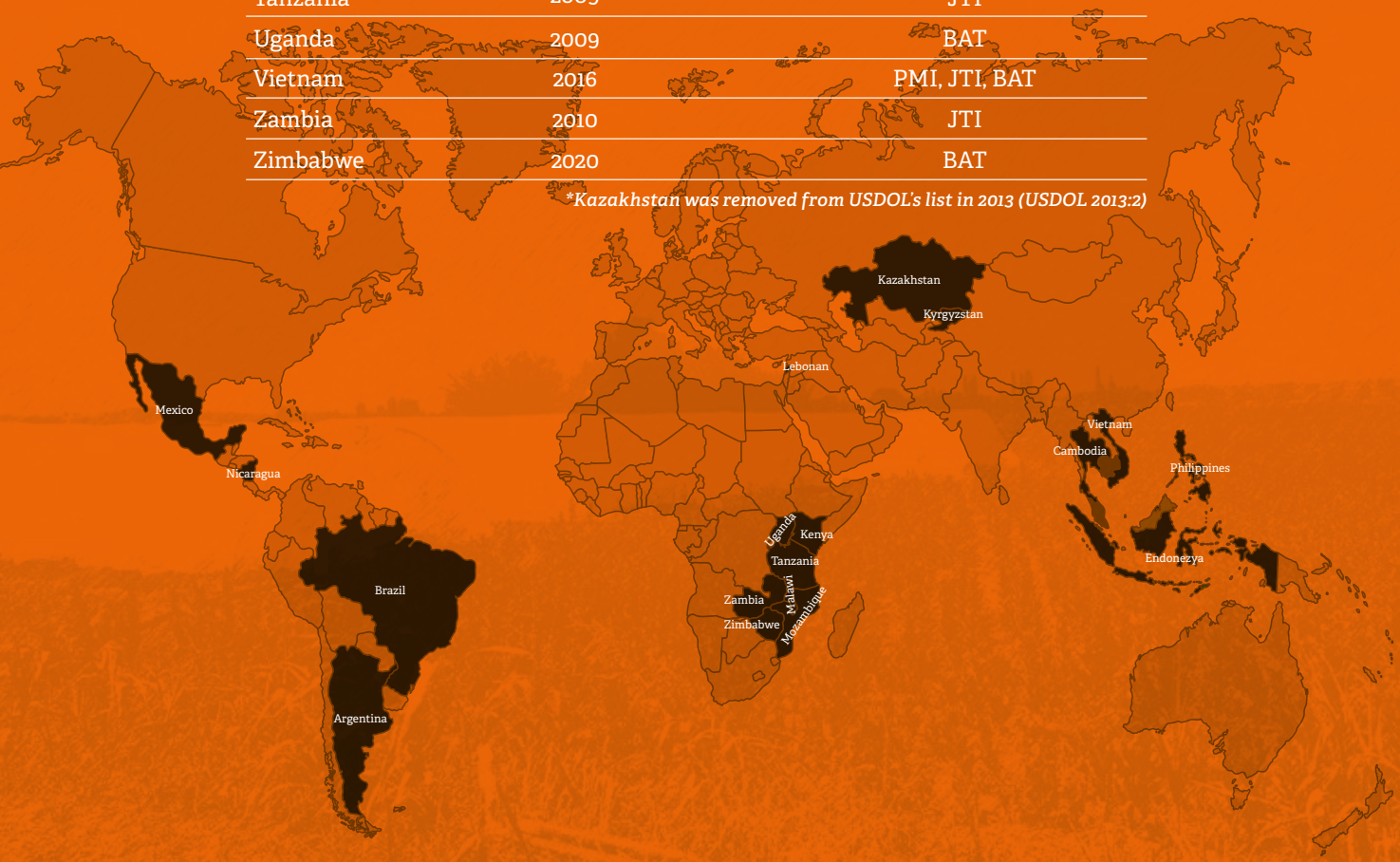
The chronic existence of child labor in tobacco is also known outside the countries listed. For example, numerous credible investigative journalists and human rights reports have documented child labor in tobacco farming in the US (Human Rights Watch 2015). The list also fails to include Türkiye even though, as this report demonstrates, child labor is certainly prevalent and there is no doubt that American firms source tobacco from Türkiye (Kayaalp 2014, 2017). While child labor in Türkiye is identified by USDOL in the supply chains of other commodities, including cotton, cumin, and peanuts, there is no mention of child labor in tobacco.

⁷ List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor. (USDOL) <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods>

Table 3: Countries with child labor in tobacco growing and manufacturing, 2021*

Countries	Date of inclusion	Manufacturing companies
Argentina	2009	PMI, BAT
Brazil	2009	PMI, JTI, BAT
Cambodia	2011	JTI, BAT
Indonesia	2009	PMI, BAT
Kenya	2009	BAT
Kyrgyzstan	2009	JTI
Kazakhstan	2009	PMI, JTI
Lebanon	2009	PMI, JTI
Malawi	2009	JTI
Mexico	2009	PMI, JTI, BAT
Mozambique	2010	BAT
Philippines	2009	PMI, JTI
Nicaragua	2009	JTI
Tanzania	2009	JTI
Uganda	2009	BAT
Vietnam	2016	PMI, JTI, BAT
Zambia	2010	JTI
Zimbabwe	2020	BAT

*Kazakhstan was removed from USDOL's list in 2013 (USDOL 2013:2)



Child labor in tobacco cultivation around the world is usually concentrated during the harvest period. This process usually occurs in the summer months in northern countries, and child laborers work on contract farms or agricultural land owned or rented by the family. In contract farming, smallholder farmers and leaf-buying companies reach an agreement guaranteeing the sale price for crops of certain characteristics, such as leaf quality, before production begins. Low profit margins drive a cycle of debt in which the farmers are obliged to rely on loans or advance payments to sustain their livelihoods. This results in a practice of engaging cheap or free labor from family members, including children (Mango and Kugedera, 2022; Otañez et al., 2006). In the US, a different dynamic is documented: the children of migrant laborers work alongside their parents and siblings in tobacco fields owned by third parties to support the basic needs of their families or to be able to buy essential items like clothing and school supplies (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Child labor in tobacco is an immensely pressing problem, as the adverse effects of working in the fields are not only acute but long-term. Children need to be protected from working inhumane hours in unsafe conditions that endanger their physical health and safety as well as their mental and emotional development. Under Article 3 of ILO Recommendation No.190, child labor that includes any kind of abuse, unsafe environments, dangerous machinery, unhealthy environments (e.g., hazardous substances, high noise levels), or difficult conditions (e.g., long hours, night shifts) is deemed a special priority for state action, including prohibition, prevention, and protection.

Tobacco cultivation falls under this guidance on the worst forms of child labor due to hazardous conditions that significantly impact children's physical and psychological health. Children are particularly vulnerable to the harsh conditions of the field as their physical development is still underway. In the US, 73 percent of children interviewed describe being nauseous, having headaches, contracting respiratory illnesses, and having skin conditions while working in tobacco fields (Human Rights Watch 2014: 3). In addition to immense fatigue, back pain, and sleep deprivation, 66 percent of children have also reported symptoms of nicotine poisoning from GTS. Long hours of work lead to various health-related complications, as do hours worked late at night or early in the morning to avoid detection by authorities or mitigate the effects of a hot climate. Prolonged work in the fields may lead to a higher risk of cancer, reproductive health issues, and psychological conditions such as mood disorders (Ramos 2018: 238). Pesticide exposure during long hours of labor-intensive work is also a significant factor that hinders and damages children's development.

The tobacco industry's response to the issue of child labor is primarily channeled through corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects that involve education and raising awareness. Multinational companies manufacturing tobacco products on a global scale have made pledges to end child labor in their supply chains. For instance, PMI aims to abolish child labor in its supply chain by 2025 (PMI, 2022). Similarly, BAT plans to achieve zero child labor by 2025 (British American Tobacco, 2022). Despite promises, child labor remains widespread in underdeveloped or developing communities based on income level (ILO, 2017).

Starting in 2014, companies manufacturing tobacco products have shifted their supply methods from direct contracts to third-party leaf purchasing companies, purportedly to increase accountability and supervision over the standards on the fields. This practice has solely worked for the benefit of the multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations, allowing them to evade responsibility for monitoring and stopping child labor by pushing this task under the formal supervision of leaf wholesalers. However, there is a dire need for multinational manufacturing corporations to monitor the global supply chain in the tobacco industry, collect data with transparency, and provide solutions (Ramos, 2018).

Companies manufacturing tobacco products have continued to fund corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to combat child labor, such as through an industry-funded initiative called the ECLT Foundation. Founded in 2000 as an "independent" organization, ECLT raises awareness of child labor and its dangers and builds capacities in communities with programmes such as engaging women in the economy, and increases access to education and skills training. Tobacco multinationals also sponsor initiatives against child labor individually. PMI, for instance, sponsors efforts to prevent child labor by raising awareness among the parents about the dangers of child labor and training, improving school access and providing vocational training (PMI, 2022). Similarly, BAT funds work to raise awareness and to make education more accessible to children as an alternative to labor. Such initiatives undoubtedly serve as positive public relations for multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations and the industry as a whole.

Child labor is often caused by root causes such as economic hardship and poverty of families, which are associated with multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations. Therefore, the industry's social responsibility efforts are insufficient in combat child labor. Multidimensional approaches are required, such as companies giving up some of their revenues, improving the economic conditions of tobacco-growing families, providing educational opportunities, taking social security measures, and increasing society's general awareness against child labor.

The Human Rights Watch found that in the US, almost all of the children interviewed attended school while working in the fields predominantly during the summer and on weekends (Human Rights Watch, 2014). For the most part, children work because their families cannot afford to hire other workers- not due to lack of awareness or lack of access to education. To combat child labor, however, public awareness and education campaigns are not sufficient on their own. For instance, Otanez finds that while community awareness and educational initiatives have helped to some degree, the overall impact of such initiatives on the issue of child labor in Malawi has been negligible (2006). Instead of funding projects that solely engage with the issue on a shallow level, such as increasing access to schools, scholars and activists encourage multinational tobacco manufacturing corporations to introduce new or enforce existing no-buy policies to farmers who utilize child labor (Van Der Eijk et al. 2018).

A small but significant step in effectively combating child labor has been the lawsuit filed in the United Kingdom in 2020 on behalf of thousands of Malawian farmers against BAT and Imperial Brands, which are accused of egregious exploitation, including child labor and forced labor through debt bondage (Bosely, 2021). An attempt by the plaintiffs to persuade the High Court to dismiss the case was found by the judge to be “misconceived” and the case has been allowed to proceed (Bosely, 2021). The outcome of this trial could be a consequential legal cornerstone to eliminating child labor in tobacco since plaintiffs are seeking for two of the world’s largest cigarette manufacturing companies to admit and accept punishment for their misdoings in the global supply chain.

4

Overview of Tobacco in Türkiye

4.1. History of Tobacco Cultivation

Tobacco was a significant source of state revenue during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire through the early years of the Turkish nation-state. When the Turkish Republic was declared in 1923 following a war of independence, the state monopoly on tobacco cultivation, manufacturing, and market development continued largely as it had during the Ottoman Empire: the state regulated the tobacco industry through the General Directorate of Tobacco, Tobacco Products, Salt and Alcohol Enterprises (TEKEL) until it was abolished in 2008.⁸ TEKEL's monopoly meant that only they could purchase tobacco, process tobacco, and sell tobacco-derived products. All transportation, storage facilities and production factories related to tobacco were owned and operated by TEKEL, and all cigarettes sold in Türkiye were produced by TEKEL with 100 percent Oriental tobacco. There were no foreign cigarettes sold in the country until the early 1990s. In the same period, TEKEL began to produce cigarettes using 85 percent American and 15 percent Turkish tobacco. Before it was privatized, the most significant aspect of the TEKEL system was that virtually all of the tobacco grown in Türkiye was bought regardless of quality, meaning that there was no production planning.

The 1980s marked the beginnings of liberalization in the Turkish economy and integration into global markets. Tobacco cultivation declined due to structural changes, including the elimination of the state monopoly on tobacco production. To engage the global market and incentivize foreign investment, in 1986 TEKEL announced the beginning of public-private partnerships, which allowed domestic and foreign capital to manufacture tobacco products through cooperation with TEKEL (Law No. 3291). The majority of tobacco cultivated in Türkiye, however, was still purchased by TEKEL.

⁸ TEKEL was created by the nationalization of the tobacco industry in 1925, following the legacy of Régie, “La Société de la Régie co-intéressée des tabacs de l’Empire Ottoman”, which had been set up following the ban on tobacco leaf imports in 1875 during the Ottoman Empire.

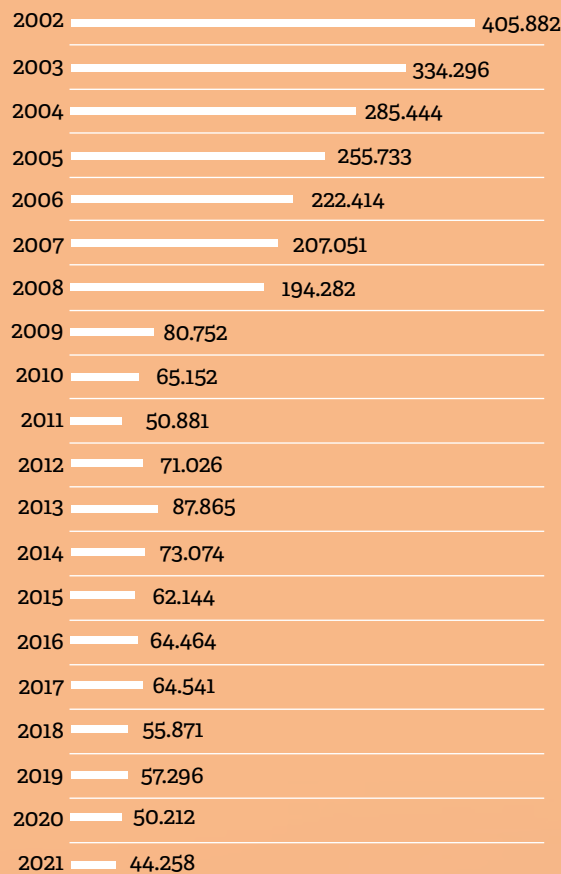
Market liberalization in Türkiye continued in the 1990s. In 1991, TEKEL lifted the requirement for partnership in the production of tobacco goods, and foreign tobacco manufacturing companies established factories in Türkiye. Another seismic change in tobacco production was the quota system put into place following a 1994 agreement with the World Trade Organization (WTO). The quota system was implemented to limit the amount of tobacco cultivated by individual farmers, reducing the overall amount of tobacco that TEKEL would be obligated to purchase- a direct response to the costly problem of overproduction. The impact of this quota system on farmers cannot be understated: it shocked the tobacco market in Türkiye by drastically reducing the amount of income individual farmers could earn growing tobacco. For this reason, tobacco growers received regular quota compensation payments (TBMM 2001) and TEKEL eliminated the unpopular quota system at the 1999 national elections. During the 1990s, the state also started to restrict tobacco cultivation to certain geographic regions, another strategy to reduce the overproduction that continues today. Despite these far-reaching changes and the transformation of tobacco markets, the number of tobacco cultivators remained between 500 and 600 thousand throughout the 1990s (Şahin and Taşlıgil, 2014).

Türkiye's tobacco industry was completely incorporated into the free market in the 2000s. The liberalization that began in the 1980s was hastened by the economic crisis of February 2001, which played a significant role in abolishing the state's monopoly entirely. With the financial and political assistance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a new era of economic restructuring began. Kemal Derviş, a former vice president at the World Bank, was appointed as the Ministry of State in charge of Economy by January 2002, a number of comprehensive laws known as the "fifteen laws in fifteen days" were passed, including new regulations for the tobacco industry (Law No. 4733). In accordance with the new law, TEKEL was handed over to the Privatization Administration, undergoing a joint stock company transition in 2003 and finishing privatization in 2008. State subsidies and state purchases of tobacco were also eliminated by the new law. In short, tobacco growing was liberalized (Şahin and Taşlıgil 2014), and the state's role as a protector and supporter of tobacco ended. The new law established the Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Authority (TAPDK) to regulate tobacco production and trade as an autonomous institution. In 2017, TAPDK was closed and its authority transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Tobacco and Alcohol Department. Thus, the process of liberalization of tobacco markets, which started in the 1980s, was actually completed in about 30 years.

One additional and extremely important effect of the 2001 reforms was the transition of tobacco cultivation to the contract farming model.⁹ Contract agriculture was presented as a solution to the overproduction and stock problem during the TEKEL period, suddenly turning tobacco farmers who relied on the state for all stages of cultivation into sellers constrained by market conditions (Kayaalp, 2016). “Contractual agriculture is defined as an agreement-based production and marketing model between leaf-buying companies and producers before planting, planting or growing the product, in which the farmer undertakes the responsibility of carrying out a certain cultivation area and production, but the leaf-buying companies guarantee to receive the product to be obtained under certain conditions” (Özçelik et al., 1999). In other words, farmers sign contracts with leaf-buying companies prior to the beginning of the growing season that guarantee the purchase of

⁹ In 2008, a regulation determined how contract farming would be applied not only in tobacco cultivation but also in general. The source of this regulation is the 13th article of Agriculture Law No. 5488 enacted in 2006. This regulation defines production or agriculture as “a form of agricultural production carried out by written agreements between producers and cultivators and other real and legal persons based on mutual benefit principles” (Communiqué No: 2018/48 on the Procedures and Principles Regarding the Purchase and Sale of Tobacco Produced on the Basis of Written Contract and the Type of Contract to be Used in this Purchase-Sale, Official Gazette, 2018). The type of contract has been determined in accordance with Article 10 of the “Regulation on Procedures and Principles Regarding Tobacco Production, Processing, Domestic and Foreign Trade” (Official Gazette number 27637, 2010).

Figure 2: Number of tobacco growers between 2002-2021



Source: Data between 2002 and 2009 show the number of tobacco growers contracting Oriental and foreign-origin tobacco. For the years between 2010-2021, data shows the exact number of contracted and non-contracted tobacco growers between these years. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Tobacco and Alcohol Department.

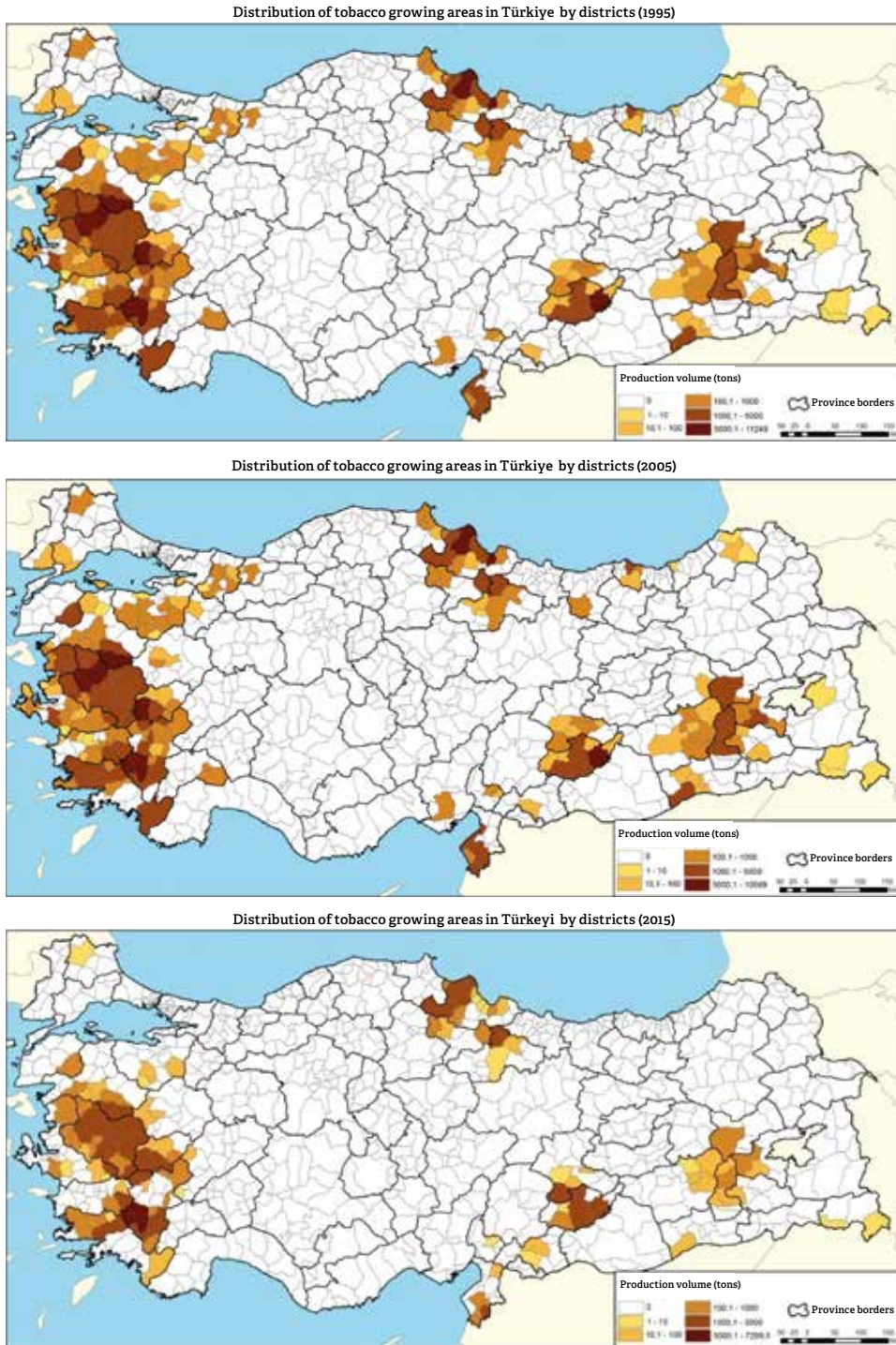
tobacco at fixed prices for certain quality grades. After the start of contract farming in 2002, the number of tobacco growers fell from 478,000 to just over 405,000—a decline of approximately 16 percent in the span of only one year. This decline has continued, with just 44,258 tobacco growers as of 2021 (see figure 2).

To summarize, the following factors have contributed to the marked decline of tobacco growers in Türkiye during the past two decades (see figure 3; see map 2 and 3):

- the termination of government support and incentives for tobacco cultivation through the eventual elimination of TEKEL;
- the reduction of Oriental tobacco in cigarette blends due to the high unit price and plant-based alternatives to the unique flavor of Oriental tobacco;
- the decline in profitability from tobacco crops as a result of shifting market conditions;
- the state-supported alternative agricultural crop program for tobacco growers implemented in the 2000s, which is no longer ongoing;
- the limitation of tobacco growing fields by the state;
- and the increasing public awareness of the health risks of tobacco products.

Following the privatization of TEKEL, a wide range of actors have emerged to buy tobacco leaves from Turkish farmers, including domestic and foreign companies of various sizes, and cooperatives. For example, as of 2023, 158 firms have a Tobacco Trade License issued by the Tobacco and Alcohol Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (TADB 2023).

Map 2: Distribution of tobacco cultivation areas in Türkiye by districts and changes over the years (1995-2005-2015)



Source: Kerime Karabacak (2017), Türkiye’de Tütün Tarımı ve Coğrafi Dağılışı (Tobacco agriculture and geographical distribution in Turkey), <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/690641>

Map 3: Distribution of tobacco production in Türkiye by districts and change over the years (1995-2005-2015)

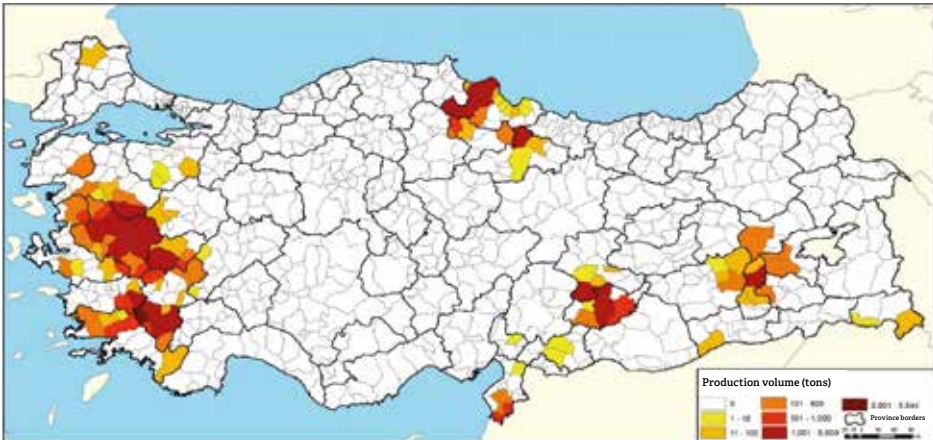
Distribution of tobacco production in Türkiye by districts (1995)



Distribution of tobacco production in Türkiye by districts (2005)



Distribution of tobacco production in Türkiye by districts (2005)

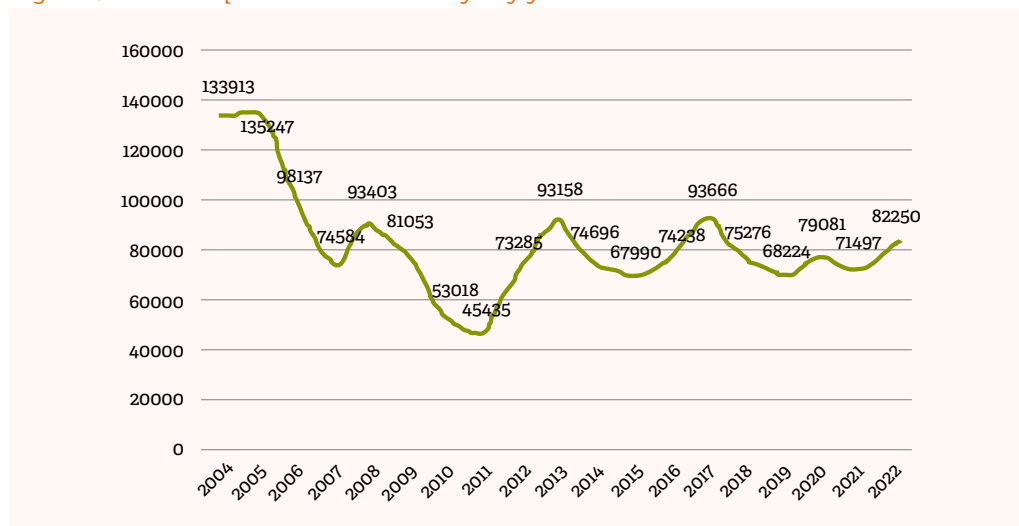


Source: Kerime Karabacak (2017), Türkiye’de Tütün Tarımı ve Coğrafi Dağılışı (Tobacco agriculture and geoFiguireical distribution in Türkiye), <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/690641>



Farmers returning from a tobacco field in the late evening. Denizli/Tavas, August 2022

Figure 3: Tobacco production in Türkiye by years



Source: TurkStat Crop Production Statistics, 2023

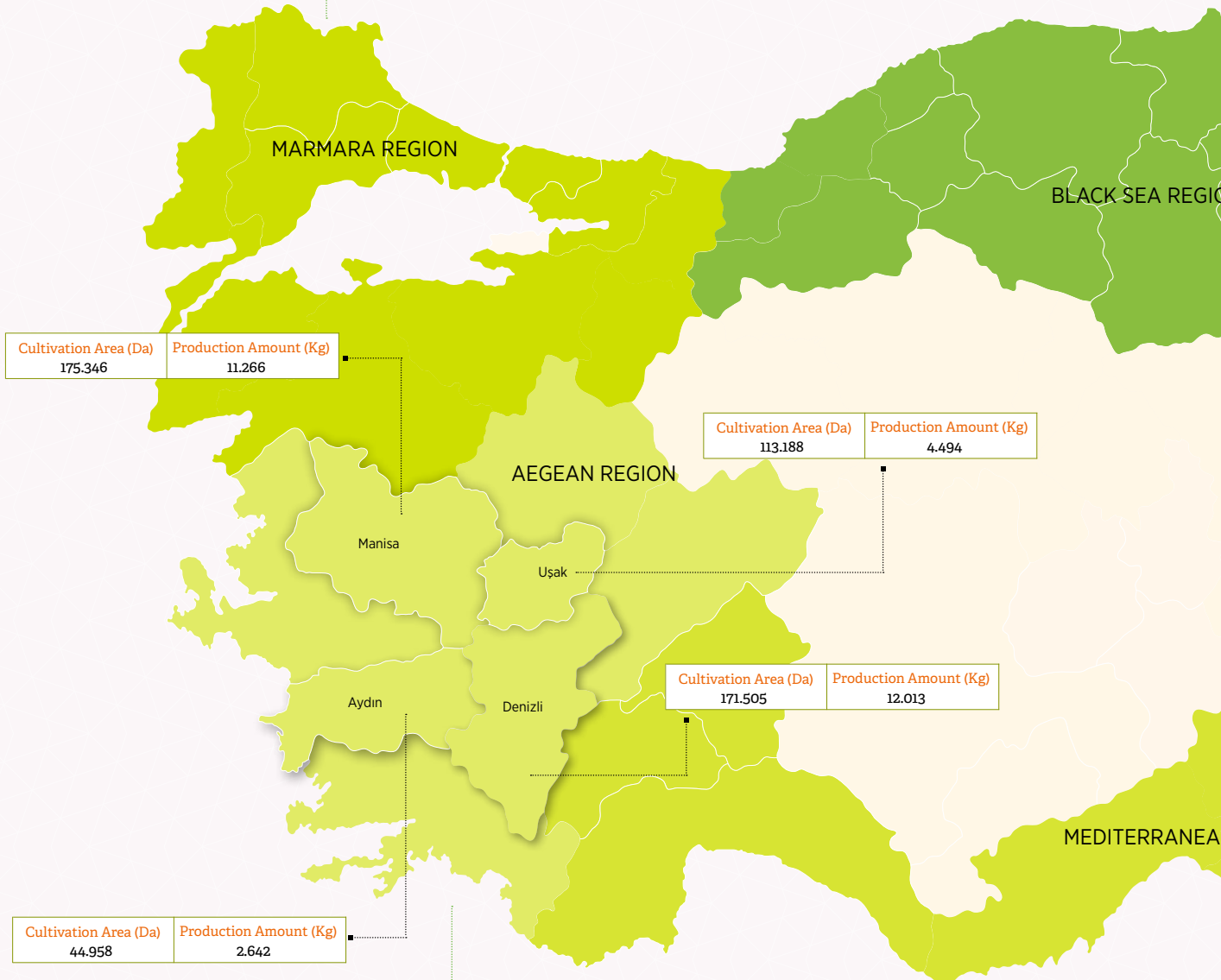
“Authorization certificate” is required for companies to legally sign production contracts with Turkish tobacco farmers, to process the tobacco purchased from the farmer, and to trade that tobacco within Türkiye and abroad (Department of Tobacco and Alcohol). The majority of these leaf merchants are Turkish companies or cooperatives, and a group of roughly 20 larger firms have considerable market power.

In 2020, a new law implemented the requirement that all tobacco-products manufactured in Türkiye and all tobacco imported to must contain a minimum percentage of Turkish tobacco, which was aimed to increase demand for this domestic crop.¹⁰ According to this framework, the rate of domestic tobacco use is planned to increase to 17 percent in 2022, 21 percent in 2023, 25 percent in 2024, and finally 30 percent in 2025. Furthermore, the President is authorized to adjust this rate to between 15 and 45 percent. Prior to this law, while the rate of domestic tobacco use by multinational tobacco manufacturing companies in Türkiye was 42 percent in 2003 and 35 percent in 2006, this rate decreased to 11 percent in 2020 with the privatization of TEKEL’s cigarette unit in 2008 and the subsequent elimination of the tobacco fund (Tütün Eksperleri Derneği, 2020). With the new regulation, an increase of 7 million kilograms is expected in the demand for domestic tobacco within three years (Tütün Eksperleri Derneği 2020). The number of tobacco growers might therefore increase in the coming years if conditions are favorable.

¹⁰ Law on Regulation of Tobacco, Tobacco Products and Alcohol Market. Law Number: 4733 Date of Adoption: January 3, 2002; Official Gazette Published: 9 January 2002, no: 24635. The law states: «(Additional twelfth paragraph: 28/10/2020-7255/12 Art.) At least thirty percent of the total tobacco used by tobacco manufacturers in the categories of cigarettes, hookah tobacco products, rolled tobacco products, and pipe tobacco products, which they produce and import for supply to the domestic market within a calendar year, must be tobacco produced in Türkiye. The President is authorized to increase this rate up to forty-five percent.»

Map 4: Tobacco cultivation regions in Türkiye

Production Model	Region	Number of Cultivators	Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
Contracted	Marmara	808	10.999	1.035,500



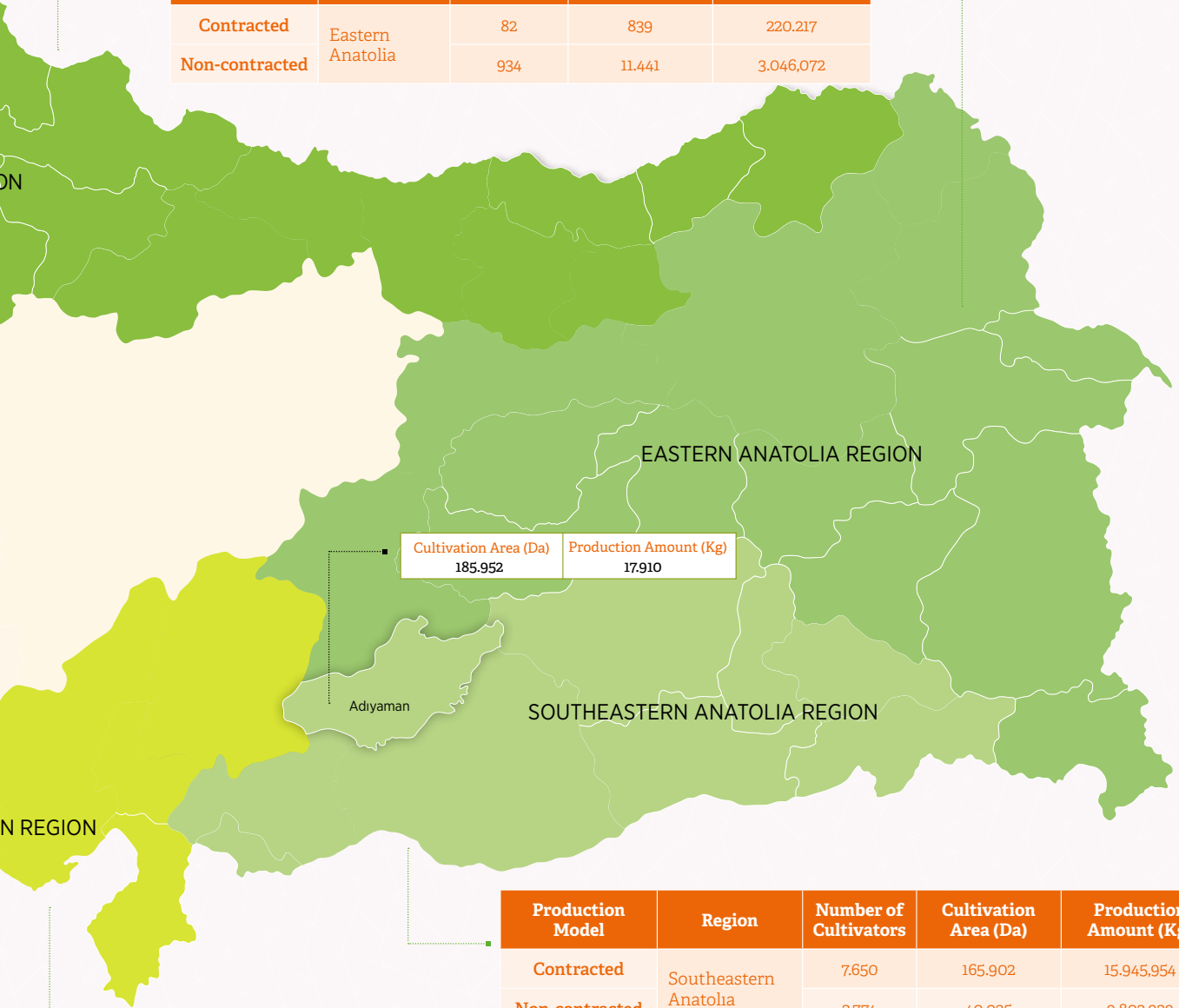
Production Model	Region	Number of Cultivators	Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
Contracted	Aegean	26.033	537.038	32.663,449



Source: TADB, 2021

Production Model	Region	Number of Cultivators	Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
Contracted	Black Sea	5.221	56.094	7.142,182

Production Model	Region	Number of Cultivators	Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
Contracted	Eastern Anatolia	82	839	220.217
Non-contracted		934	11.441	3.046,072



Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
185.952	17.910

Production Model	Region	Number of Cultivators	Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
Contracted	Southeastern Anatolia	7.650	165.902	15.945,954
Non-contracted		2.774	40.035	9.803,929

Production Model	Region	Number of Cultivators	Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
Contracted	Mediterranean	755	8.818	1.639,288
Non-contracted		1	1	360

4.2. Tobacco Cultivation in Modern Türkiye

Tobacco cultivation has traditionally been a major source of income for many families in Türkiye, especially in rural areas. While the number of growers has declined since 2001, tobacco has continued to provide employment for both farmers and workers in manufacturing. Tobacco is still grown today in all seven regions of Türkiye with the exception of Central Anatolia. Data from 2021 show the Aegean Region leads in terms of tobacco growers, cultivated land, and production volume, followed by Southeastern Anatolia. In total, there are about 44 thousand who grow tobacco in Türkiye (see map 4) out of over two million Turkish farmers.

At the provincial level, tobacco is cultivated in 28 provinces in Türkiye, roughly one-third of the total 81 provinces. The province of Adıyaman ranks first in both cultivated area and production amount, which are 185,952 decares and 17,910 tons respectively. Our field research site of Denizli ranks third with 171,505 acres of cultivated area and second with 12,013 tons of tobacco produced annually. The top three provinces of Adıyaman, Denizli and Manisa account for almost 60 percent of all tobacco production in Türkiye.

Table 4: Provinces with the highest tobacco cultivation in Türkiye, 2021

Province	Cultivation Area (Da)	Production Amount (Kg)
Adıyaman	185.952	17.910
Manisa	175.346	11.266
Denizli	171.505	12.013
Uşak	113.188	4.494
Aydın	44.958	2.642

Source: TurkStat Crop Production Statistics, 2022



In the province of Denizli, where the study's assessment of child labor was carried out, tobacco is cultivated in a majority of districts including Acıpayam, Baklan, Bekilli, Beyağaç, Buldan, Çameli, Çivril, Güney, Kale, Tavas, Bozkurt, Pamukkale, and Serinhisar. According to data from Denizli's Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry, however, just four districts—Tavas, Kale, Acıpayam and Beyağaç—produce approximately 80 percent of the province's tobacco (Denizli İl tarım ve Orman Müdürlüğü, 2022). Only Oriental tobacco is grown in Denizli.

The contract signed between leaf-buying companies and tobacco growers consists of ten articles covering the obligations of buyers and growers, quality assessment, pricing, delivery of tobacco and payment terms. It is usually signed by the parties in January or February each year. The contract specifies the tobacco growing area and the tobacco varieties to be grown, as well as the quantity of dried tobacco leaves to be purchased by the leaf-buying company at the end of the growing season.¹¹ Contracts may also require the use of pesticides on the tobacco crop, or even certain amounts of pesticides, and leaf-buying companies deploy technical staff to the fields throughout the year for inspection and technical support to ensure compliance. Leaf-buying companies are guaranteed the right to take samples for quality testing up to four times, and if there is evidence of contract violations, leaf-buying companies also have the right to unilaterally terminate contracts with farmers during the tobacco growing season.

Farmers are responsible for the entire cost of growing tobacco, including seeds, pesticides, machinery, and land. However, contracts may stipulate that leaf-buying companies will provide agricultural support to farmers, either with or without a fee- farmers in Denizli, for instance, are usually given tobacco seeds free of charge by the leaf-buying companies with whom they sign contracts. It should also be noted that farmers and tobacco experts interviewed in the field study indicated that technical support is provided by the technical staff of leaf-buying companies on an ongoing basis at every stage of cultivation, and that capacity-building studies are carried out on various issues such as good agricultural practices.

Depending on their relationship with the leaf-buying companies, farmers receive a certain amount of their payment in advance as soon as the contract is signed. This advance payment is a crucial motivation for growing tobacco compared to the vast majority of crops in Türkiye that are not governed by the contract model, which only applies to a few crops including sugar beets and poppies. Farmers receive the remainder of the payment stipulated in the contract within ten working days after the tobacco is received and checked for quality. In light of these advance payments, both leaf-buying companies and tobacco farmers prefer a long-term contractual relationship. On the farmer's side, long-term engagement with leaf-buying companies can lead to greater quantities and varieties of technical and financial assistance. "Village men" are important actors in the contractual relationships between leaf-buying companies and farmers. An informal and unpaid role, village men have no official ties to leaf-buying companies. However, they play a facilitating role in helping establish relations between farmers and leaf-buying companies and assis-

¹¹ There is a 10 percent margin of error in the quantity of dried tobacco leaves. For example, if the contract states that the farmer has 1000 kg of dried tobacco leaves, the leaf-buying company will purchase between 900 and 1100 kg of dried tobacco leaves

Woman farmer stringing tobacco leaves, Denizli/Tavas, August 2022





ting leaf-buying companies in the monitoring and supervision of tobacco cultivation at the village level. They receive high advances in return for their work from the leaf-buying companies, and the tobacco they grow is processed and priced almost always at the highest quality.

When farmers sign contracts, they agree to abide by national and international standards on safe working environments, fair working conditions, and child labor in tobacco farming. As for child labor in Türkiye, according to labor Law No. 4857 in force in Türkiye, employment of children under the age of 15 is prohibited. Children between the ages of 15 and 18 may work in jobs that do not jeopardize their education and where their health and safety are fully guaranteed. Tobacco cultivation is within the scope of hazardous work in the “List of Hazard Classes Regarding Occupational Health and Safety” and, it is forbidden for those under the age of 18 to work. Moreover, Article 69 of labor Law No. 4857, prohibits employing workers under the age of 18 from working at night, which is common in Oriental tobacco cultivation. The contracts signed by tobacco farmers state that workers under the age of 18 years old cannot work in heavy and hazardous work. Nevertheless, it is not clear in the contract that tobacco cultivation is classified as hazardous work under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Tobacco leaf drying greenhouse. Aydın/Karacasu, July 2022



5 Findings

5.1. Dependency on Family Labor

In the context of our research, we illuminate the inherent structural dependency on child labor within the tobacco cultivation in Tavas Ovası, serving as a case study within the framework of subcontracting. We conducted interviews with 116 people from 22 tobacco growing households, working with families who have been involved in the crop for an average of two decades. In Tavas Ovası, families cultivate approximately 40 acres of land on average, equivalent to around 6.5 tons of tobacco. Part of the families surveyed rent the land upon which they farm, paying an average of around 1,600 TL (85 USD) per acre in August 2022. In our sample, we found that all families inherited their occupation from a previous generation of tobacco farmers. In other words, tobacco growing is passed on from parents to children.

During our research, we met children working in almost every tobacco field. More than 10 percent of the sample workforce were under the age of 18 at the time the research was conducted. Our interviews revealed that 14 of the 24 children in our sample, or around 60 percent, had begun working in tobacco fields between the ages of 9 and 13 years old. As previously discussed, this clearly violates national and international law.

In Tavas Ovası, tobacco farming families sign contracts with leaf buying companies in February and become financially dependent on post-harvest payments, which are usually made the following January, to cover their many expenses or debts for the costs of cultivation, including drying and storage. Within the fixed prices of the contract system, farming families are incentivized to minimize their expenses to earn higher returns from crop sales. Accordingly, immediate and even extended family members, including children and the elderly, are mobilized to contribute to this labor-intensive tobacco cultivation, especially between the months of June and August every year, during the harvest, in order to avoid cash outlays for hiring the necessary labor. Table 6 below provides an estimate of the labor required in a typical tobacco growing cycle, each season.

To demonstrate how the costs of tobacco farming structurally lead to child labor in tobacco farming, we will follow the Yalçinkaya household, a family consisting of a mother, father and four daughters aged 16 to 26, through their 2022 crop cycle.¹² The family is from the small mountain village of Gülbağlık, near Tavas Ovası, where 400 households make their living growing tobacco and olives. Since the area around the village itself is steep and unsuitable for tobacco, most villagers rent land in the plain, which takes 45 minutes to an hour from the village by vehicle. Families generally stay in tents next to their tobacco fields during the harvest season, which requires intense labor especially at night, to save money by reducing transportation costs despite the limited access to safe drinking water, electricity, and sanitary toilets and bathrooms. Despite this, families continue to gather around the tobacco fields in tents, spending their time sleeping, cooking and socializing with relatives and friends to cut costs and get on with the harvest. When we arrived at the tent, we found Münevver Yalçinkaya working alongside her two youngest daughters, Cansu and Ceren, who initially started working in the tobacco fields when they were between the ages of 10 and 12. Cansu, now a 19 year-old young woman, was in the process of choosing a university to attend after receiving impressive scores on the national entrance exam, using her cellphone to consult the Internet and her former teachers about university and department choices in her scant spare time.

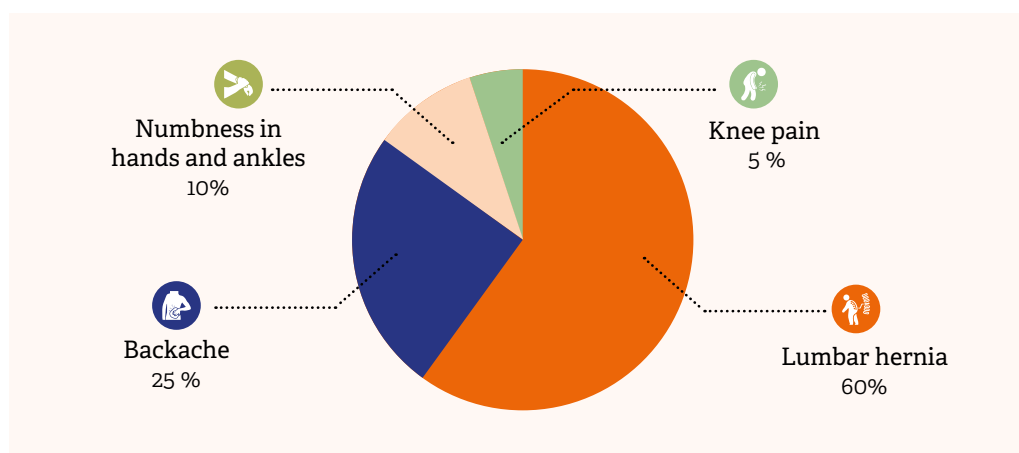
Each year, the Yalçinkaya family rents about 35 decares, or 35,000 square meters, of fields suitable for tobacco growing that are manageable with three or four dedicated laborers. Sadly, Yusuf Yalçinkaya now suffers from chronic back pain as a result of years of working in fields for many years, and his two oldest daughters have moved away to the urban center for employment. In our research, we identified that Yusuf's experience was not an isolated case, as 22 out of 84 study participants reported suffering from discomfort, and in some cases, disability stemming from issues such as back and knee pain, lumbar hernia, and numbness in the hands, wrists, and ankles, which they attributed to their involvement in tobacco cultivation (Figure 4).

¹² Key details about this family, including their surname, have been changed to protect the privacy of research participants.

Kin working side by side. Denizli/Tavas, August 2022



Figure 4: Major health problems caused by tobacco farming



For the 2022 growing season, the Yalçinkaya household has signed a contract to supply 5 tonnes of high quality tobacco to a local leaf buying company, which will in turn sell the tobacco to a well-known international tobacco manufacturer. Assuming a successful crop of the promised quality, the final payment on receipt of the tobacco brings the total income for the 2022 growing season to around TL 275,000. Upon signing the contract, the Yalçinkayas received an advance payment of TL 150,000 from a leaf-buying company. The advance payment helps the Yalçinkaya household cover the many costs of growing tobacco. The largest single expense for the growing season is the cost of renting land, which is approximately TL 60,000 for the 2022 growing season. Other expenses include pesticides, fertilizer, water, electricity, gasoline, and agro-plastic materials, such as greenhouse tunnels and drip irrigation pipes. When all expenses are totaled, they equal roughly 150,000 TL- the amount of the Yalçinkaya household's advance payment and roughly 55 percent of their expected revenue for the year (see table 5).

This list of costs is incomplete, however, because it does not account for the amount of labor required to plant, tend and harvest the so-called "high-quality" tobacco crop. Together with the Yalçinkaya household, our research team sat down to calculate the labor necessary to harvest 5 tons of tobacco. We estimated that a total of 279 days of full-time labor would be required, beginning with seedling preparation in November 2021 and ending with the sale of dried leaves in January 2023 (see table 6). The most intensive parts of cultivation -the stages at which additional labor is most often needed- are transplanting tobacco seedlings once they reach sufficient maturity and harvesting the crop between June to August. It is calculated that an adult worker can harvest the equivalent of 25-30 kg of cured tobacco leaves per day. In this context, if all the labor were supplied externally at the standard Denizli rate

Table 5: Costs of tobacco farming on 35 decares of land in Tavas Ovası, 2021

Expenses	Cost (TL)
Field Rental	56.000
Seedlings (all materials)	16.000
Fertilizer	30.000
Water	30.000
Pesticides	5.000
Gasoline (for farm equipment)	10.000
Total Cost	147.000

of TL 350 per person per day, the total labor cost of growing and selling tobacco would be almost 100,000 for the 2022 growing season. The Yalçınkaya household would be left with just 25,000 TL, an insufficient sum to support the family for an entire year. It should be remembered here that, according to the figures of the Turkish Trade Union Confederation (Türk-İş) of February 2002, the poverty line for a household of four in Türkiye was 4,522 TL per month. Many of the tobacco farming families we interviewed, either in person or over the phone, shared expenses similar to those of the Yalçınkaya household, resulting in consistent cost and income calculations and persistent structural underpayment.

Table 6: The labor cost of tobacco farming on 35 decares of land

Task	Days of labor
Seedling preparation	2
Seedling fertilization	3
Seed planting	3
Seed watering	15
Soil tending	3
Seedling transplantation	7
Seedling watering	2
Pesticide application	2
Soil fertilization	3
Harvest	178
Transportation	24
Curing	16
Packaging	18
Storage	3
Total	279

Within this framework, the cost structure of growing Oriental tobacco in Türkiye simply translates into families earning roughly as much as the value of the labor they put into the tobacco production cycle. We observed that agricultural families subsist by minimizing the cost of external labor and maximizing the use of family labor, which we propose here as a structural reason for the chronicity of child labor in Turkish tobacco. Yusuf, who has worked in the tobacco field since childhood and now relies on the labor of his own children, describes the situation as follows:

We may appear to be farmers, but we are not. We're halfway between a farmer and wage labor. We earn as much as we put into farming as a family. So, we all have to work. However, we are in charge of the entire execution and bear all of the risks and dangers. What if a pest gets into our tobacco? We fall short. Who is to blame? It is us. We will only benefit if the tobacco companies raise the contract price and make our conditions less precarious, encouraging us to supply more tobacco.

According to the results of the phone survey, 90 percent of the families in Tavas Ovası continue to grow tobacco for their livelihood, although they do not intend to continue growing tobacco in the future. In only five of the 22 tobacco-growing families, 10 family members above the age of 18 are employed as wage earners. The primary driver for some tobacco growers to consider exiting the industry is the escalating burden of debt, exacerbated by rising input costs, increasing credit obligations and meager incomes. For instance, in 2022, the daily wage rate stood at 350 TL, but by 2023, it had surged to 800 TL. Simultaneously, land prices experienced a rapid escalation. As previously mentioned, the Yalçınkaya family secured the lease of their land at a rate of 1,600 TL per acre in 2022, which soared to 4,000 TL per acre in 2023. This signifies a staggering 228 percent increase in daily wage rates and a remarkable 400 percent surge in land prices per decare. In contrast to the rising costs, the family had previously agreed to receive 70 TL per kilogram of tobacco for 2022, while the latest contract for 2023 requires 115 TL for each kilogram, which represents a more modest 65 percent rise in price of the tobacco leaf.

In this context, our case study shows that 60 percent of families reported being in debt, with several families claiming to be heavily indebted. It should be pointed out that this indebtedness encompasses not only advance payments from leaf-buying companies, but also debts owed to banks, relatives, friends and family. When it comes to straining family budgets, the top three inflationary pressures for tobacco growing households are the cost of gasoline, land, and fertilizer. Households are making efforts to stay afloat in the face of swiftly escalating galloping inflation, which has even fluctuated from double to third-digit inflation. As of 2017, the Turkish economy has begun to experience double-digit inflation. The government-run Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) reported an annual inflation rate of 84.39 percent in November 2022, but the independent inflation monitoring organization Inflation Research Group (ENAG) estimated the rate to be 170.70 percent. According to Türk-İş, Türkiye's poverty line¹³ rose to 26,483 liras which is nearly five times the country's minimum income of 5,500 liras in December, 2022.



¹³ The total amount of food expenditure and other compulsory monthly expenses for clothing, housing (rent, electricity, water, fuel), transportation, education, health and similar needs for a family of four.

Table 7: Tobacco cultivation tasks over time

Activities	E ¹⁴	K ¹⁵	Ç ¹⁶	A ¹⁷	Y ¹⁸	Jan		Feb		March		April		May		June		July		August		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec	
						1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4	1/2	3/4
Contract making and advance payment								X																				X	
Seed supply and gathering							X																						
Leveling seedbeds in field 1							X		X		X		X																
Pesticide and fertilizer intake							X		X		X		X																
Planting seeds								X		X																			
Watering								X		X																			
Soil leveling in field 2											X		X																
Transplanting from field 1 to field 2														X															
Pesticide and fertiliser intake														X															
Plant cultivation (watering, inoculation, weeding, hoeing)														X															
Harvesting																													
Curing, storing, and packaging																													
Expert appraisal, negotiation and sale																													
School calendar																													

¹⁴ Men

¹⁵ Women

¹⁶ Child

¹⁷ Family labor

¹⁸ External Wage labor



A plastic container with harvested tobacco leaves. Denizli/Tavas, August 2022

In Tavas Ovası, we witnessed children as young as 10-12 years old working in tobacco fields, carrying trays used to transport tobacco leaves. Some of the children carry plastic containers to adult laborers, where tobacco leaves are collected and transferred to stands. While the most physically demanding task, harvest, is completed during the summer months when school is out, many pre-and post-harvest activities such as leveling seedbeds, curing, and packaging coincide with the school calendar (see table 7).

Cansu, who has worked as a child laborer in the tobacco fields since she was ten, discusses the typical night work she does below. Despite being a university student, she still works in the tobacco fields in her hometown. Following the devastating earthquake in southern Türkiye in February 2023, universities had switched to online learning, so she returned to her village and resumed her online classes while continuing to assist her family with the tobacco farming she had been doing for over a decade.

Following a couple of hours of work in the evening, we'd go to the tent after dark for a half-hour of drinking tea and resting, then we would go back to the fields for another round of work which would end around midnight. Everyone was equipped with a headlight. Earlier, my mother used to set up a gaslight in the middle of the field and harvest the tobacco leaves around it. Everyone in the field was following a certain sequence to make the task easier and more efficient. We used to work as a family, although the children had fewer workloads at night. We used to walk around at night with the little lights we wore on our heads, cut the tobacco leaves and put them on the needles we stuck in our armpits. The following day, we would wake up at around 6.30 in the morning and start working again. To pass the time, my siblings and I used to ask my mother to tell us stories while we work. Mom used to recount the bioFigureies of all the prophets my grandpa had taught her, as well as tales from Keloğlan and the One 1001 Nights. In order to avoid recurring themes and be creative to capture our attention, my mother eventually began making up stories. When the stories were finished, we would become bored with our duties and turn to the night to see if any stars were shooting, in an effort to make a wish. I've seen way too many shooting stars and wished way too much, and some of those things have come true today.

During our field research, we found that children were mostly family members, including extended family, or neighbors with whom the tobacco farming family had a long-standing relationship. At times, families would promptly compensate their neighbors for their work upon its completion, while in other instances, day labor would be reciprocated through a more extended exchange mechanism. For instance, we interviewed six workers: four family laborers and two laborers from a neighboring village who also cultivate tobacco. The first family will reciprocate the two days of labor later in the season to repay the borrowed labor. Since harvest timing varies slightly depending on local conditions, there is some degree of flexibility for labor exchanges to take place- a desirable option that limits the need for cash transactions and dependence on the labor market.

5.2. Loss of Family labor, Transition, and Possibilities

During our research, we discovered that several tobacco-growing families are considering shifting to less labor-intensive crops, such as olive, thyme, melon, sunflower, or corn, to compensate for the outmigration of young family members, which reduces the reserve of unpaid family labor. The predominant trend in migration involves individuals aged between 20 and 24, primarily driven by the pursuit of education. The majority of young people we interviewed see tobacco farming- and agriculture in general- as unpromising, prefer to move to urban areas and perceive university education as a way out of farming. For those unable to access higher education, especially women, marrying someone from an urban area is seen as a means to escape rural life and the physically demanding labor associated with tobacco cultivation.

In all ten tobacco-growing families we interviewed in Tavas Ovası, we found that at minimum two immediate family members had either departed or were departing, resulting in diverse degrees and types of workforce scarcities. For example, in the Yalçinkaya household in Gülbağlık, the two eldest sisters permanently left the village after completing university when they secured employment in an urban town. This has resulted in a labor shortage in the family, increasing the workload for the rest of the children. When Cansu went to university, causing a further loss of family labor, the Yalçinkaya family decided to reduce the amount of land they farmed for tobacco, worried about the cost of hiring external labor, which is expected to rise to around 800 TL per person per day by the summer of 2023. In the absence of her three daughters, who live outside the town, the mother, Münevver, who is now left only with the youngest daughter, describes below how she began to feel anxi-

ous and pressured to manage costs and work non-stop in the absence of her three daughters, in order to reduce costs and increase returns from tobacco sales.

I'm not sure how I'm going to manage the tobacco fields without my daughters. We wouldn't be able to make money if we couldn't work as a family. One possibility is to plant fewer tobacco crops this year than we did last year and to provide ourselves with the help of our daughters as much as possible. I'm concerned about the transition and keeping in mind the possibilities.

Cansu, who has worked in tobacco farming since she was ten years old and recently enrolled in university, described below the struggles she faced and her motivation for leaving her hometown and moving to Istanbul for education in order to save her parents from the demanding work of tobacco in the summertime:

Things get hectic around the beginning of July every year. Almost every day for the next two months would be the same. Everyone would be stressed and exhausted from harvesting tobacco all day. Since school started in September, we wanted to finish tobacco cultivation as soon as possible. So, I remember happy times with my family mostly during the cold, winter time when the tobacco harvest is over. I used to imagine getting my family out of tobacco harvest during the best months of the year so we could all enjoy our summers together as a family.

Children working in tobacco harvesting. Denizli/Tavas, August 2023



As younger family members leave the villages, older people who remain dependent on family care come under pressure to work. These older members of tobacco-growing families have worked in the fields for many years, so they have the know-how and are therefore easily driven into the fields. Elderly people sometimes feel obliged to fill the labor gap left by younger family members, like Fatma Nene (grandmother), 85, whom we met during the night harvest. Taking a break from gathering tobacco leaves with three generations of her family, Fatma Nene explained why she still returns to the fields in her old age:

I have been working since I was ten years old and am the eldest person in our family. Our family has long relied on the sale of tobacco to pay the bills and ensure the growth of my children and grandchildren, as well as our household. This leaf has ensured our survival, and for that I am grateful. The youth desire to flee the community. What happens if they leave? Who will handle the duties in these circumstances? We all become desperate if we do not work as a family.

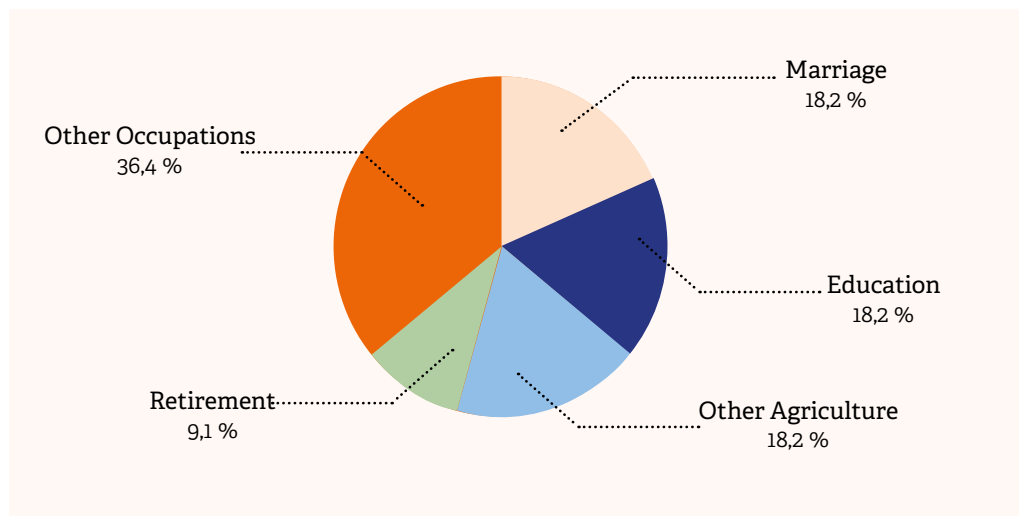
According to our research, the elderly suffer from a range of health complications after working in the fields, including back pain, exhaustion and loss of appetite, often in addition to chronic agriculture-related illnesses such as wrist numbness and lumbar hernia. While working in the fields may decrease the costs of tobacco farming, it can also harm the health and well-being of older people. As long as tobacco prices require the use of unpaid labor, both children and the elderly will continue to participate in tobacco cultivation in Türkiye. This practice will persist as long as tobacco prices stay low and families seek to decrease their expenses and increase their income through unpaid family labor.

During our field research, we observed that a significant number of tobacco-growing families we interviewed were either shifting to alternative crops or supplementing their tobacco farming with wage-employment opportunities. This transition was primarily driven by the rising costs associated with farming inputs.¹⁹

¹⁹ See how 'rainfall shocks' affect the transition from tobacco-growing (which has the lowest return per acre) to alternative crops in Indonesia (Sahadevo 2020); how tobacco farming causes soil erosion and degradation as well as biodiversity loss in Lebanon (Redwan 2018); and how rain forests are being lost in Tanzania (Kagaruki 2018).

See Clark and et al. 2020 for an explanation of how crop disease and the rising cost of pesticides create obstacles in the transition from tobacco to other crops such as sorghum, millet, sweet potatoes, and cassava in Kenya.

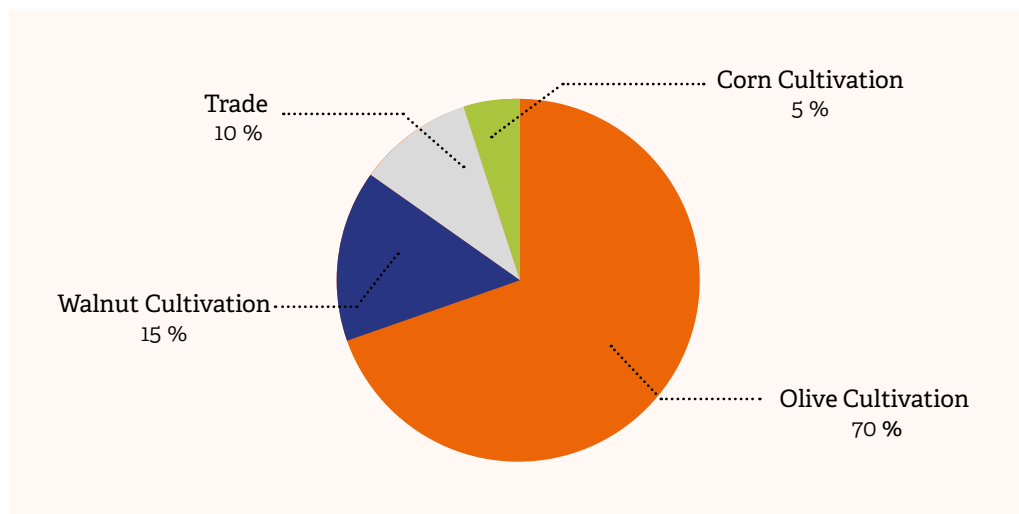
Figure 5: Reasons why individuals leave tobacco-growing households



Especially with younger family members leaving, families who grow tobacco are struggling to lower expenses and increase income to subsist. The decisions of farmers to transition away from tobacco farming are significantly influenced by factors such as access to credit, training, and technical assistance, as well as the availability of institutions for information-sharing. Contrastingly, the main challenge faced by farmers in Türkiye is that alternative crops are not typically cultivated under the contract system, where the purchase of crops at the end of the growing season is assured. Additionally, the labor-intensive characteristics of tobacco cultivation, coupled with the limited mechanization in the industry, compel family members to remain in the fields, constraining their ability to explore alternative income opportunities. For instance, bamboo requires an average of just 179 days of labor per season compared to tobacco's 227, leaving bamboo farming communities in Kenya with 48 additional days to invest in diversifying into other income-generating activities (Magati, 2012).

In the Turkish case, we observed that families who own more assets, such as land holdings and farming equipment, are less affected by the departure of family labor as they are more likely to be able to cover the cost of external labor. They are also more likely to pursue diversification strategies that combine tobacco cultivation with other sources of income, such as revenue from renting land or farming olives, figs, and walnuts. As in Kenya, larger landholdings amongst our study participants increased the likelihood of families growing alternative crops (Mbaye et al. 2014). Because of the relatively low profits of tobacco, families frequently prefer to supplement ongoing tobacco farming with additional crops- a dynamic that is also observed with Indian tobacco farmers (Kumar et al. 2010).

Figure 6: Alternative sources of income utilized by tobacco-growing households



Growers acknowledge that tobacco farming is unlikely to be profitable in an inflationary environment like Türkiye because contracts establish a fixed price at the beginning of the season that is challenging to renegotiate. However, they also recognize the relative security of tobacco cultivation owing to the guaranteed purchase arrangement. Drawing from their years of established relationships with farmers, local tobacco leaf-buying companies offer a range of support, including advance payments, certified seeds, and technical assistance. Additionally, they extend extra loans to help farmers cope with economic shocks when necessary. Indeed, many tobacco-growing families first entered the industry as a direct result of these benefits in the absence of start-up capital, access to credit, and knowledge of alternative economic activities.

With younger members of tobacco-growing families migrating to urban centers for education and employment, opportunities for alternative sources of funding assistance, information, and capabilities tend to increase. For example, the Yalçinkaya family is considering switching from tobacco to olive and olive oil production, which requires less labor. This change would require less manual labor and is a viable option, particularly as their daughters are pursuing education and are unlikely to return to work in the tobacco fields. Now educated with university degrees, the daughters can contribute to the family by building websites, conducting basic market research, managing online product sales, engaging in business communication, formulating business strategies, and even exploring online resources related to olive farming in Spain. This has instilled a greater sense of security in the parents regarding the family's future.

Under this structural transition into contract farming in 2001, as tobacco-growing families pursue plans to diversify their income or to exit the market altogether by quitting tobacco cultivation, local tobacco leaf traders are looking for new ways to keep farmers in the field to maintain production levels. In December 2022, we discovered that some local tobacco leaf traders had already advanced farmers the full amount for their anticipated crop in 2023 at the beginning of the cultivation cycle. During our field visit in November 2022, a prominent topic of discussion was if crop prices would keep pace with rampant inflation. In response to the notable levels of inflation, a series of extensive protests were organized by tobacco growers in Denizli during the month of January 2023. Due to increasing prices for gasoline, fertilizer, living and labor costs, thousands of tobacco workers protested for weeks against the price of their contracts, which they had originally agreed to at 55 TL per kilogram when they signed them in early 2022. However, due to mounting inflationary pressures and persistent demonstrations, farmers managed to secure 70 TL per kilogram for their harvest in early 2022, even though they had initially requested 100 TL for one kilogram of tobacco leaf for their contracted production in that same year. To compare, for the 2023 season, a standard contract for first-quality tobacco was established at 115 TL per kilogram. Given the ongoing inflationary economic conditions in Türkiye, the negotiation and adjustment of contract prices will continue to present a significant challenge for both Oriental tobacco growing farmers and the industry at large in the years to come.



A family working in a tobacco field. Denizli/Tavas, August 2022



6 | Concluding Insights

This report plays a pivotal role in addressing the structural conditions that lead children to labor in Oriental tobacco fields in Western Türkiye. It serves a timely purpose by providing essential insights for stakeholders, documenting the prevailing circumstances, and, most importantly, mobilizing them to take necessary actions. By conducting surveys, field observations, and in-depth interviews involving more than 20 tobacco-growing families in Tavas Ovası, Denizli, this report elucidates the reasons and mechanisms by which children as young as 10 to 12 years old become involved in labor within the tobacco fields, primarily working alongside their immediate family members. In this concluding section, we summarize the key findings and insights of the study, and offer evidence-based policy recommendations for action to transform the conditions that underpin child labor and create decent working conditions for Oriental tobacco growers in Türkiye.

Our findings reveal a persistent dependence on child labor within contract farming tobacco-growing families in Western Türkiye. Child labor was commonly observed in Tavas Ovası, with children often working alongside their parents, who had themselves engaged in child labor when they were young. Under the contract system, multinational tobacco manufacturing companies transfer the risks and costs associated with tobacco cultivation to rural tobacco growers in an inflationary environment through binding contractual agreements with third-party leaf merchants. Due to the low contract prices, tobacco-growing families rely on minimizing labor expenses and maintaining labor wages within the family to increase their income. In this context, the utilization of children's labor becomes a coping strategy for families. To elaborate, children within tobacco-growing families serve as a readily available and cheap labor force within the existing structural and market framework. Nonetheless, child labor within Oriental tobacco fields constitutes more than a mere breach of children's fundamental human rights; it entails dangerous work, sometimes conducted at night, in chemically contaminated environments, with enduring consequences for their health, education, and overall well-being. Hence, children working in these Oriental tobacco fields are classified as victims of "the worst forms of child labor", which necessitates urgent recognition and solution.

Even though tobacco cultivation continues year-round, from cultivating seedlings to transplanting and making them ready for sale, children are especially mobilized during the labor-intensive harvest period between early June and late August. As evident from our field observations, the majority of working children concur-

rently pursue their education, as it is perceived as a pathway to upward mobility and is consequently supported by their parents. Since the harvest season coincides with summer vacation, working children do not miss the standard compulsory public-school education from September to May. Nevertheless, the involvement of children in agricultural labor persists throughout the school year, albeit to a lesser extent. Their tasks during this period may include activities like transplanting, tending to seedlings, watering, and packaging. Additionally, children might contribute to supplementary livelihood endeavors, such as olive cultivation, with harvesting typically occurring in September, October, and November.

While almost all of the families we interviewed plan to quit cultivating tobacco under the current contract system, they do find it a relatively secure source of income. Tobacco-growing families face challenges transitioning to another livelihood due to a lack of information, limited access to credit for investment, and the recently experienced inflationary pressures. Our study findings indicate that young individuals from tobacco-growing families in the region often opt to discontinue tobacco farming, pursuing opportunities such as university education or seeking alternative employment in urban areas. Conversely, among women, marriage to partners from urban areas is a prevalent strategy employed to exit tobacco cultivation. Consequently, numerous tobacco-growing families grapple with escalating labor costs under the contract system, primarily stemming from the absence of unpaid family labor. Faced with this predicament, tobacco growers are compelled to either decrease the allocated land due to the unavailability of affordable labor or opt for transitioning to less labor-intensive crops, such as walnuts, olives, or thyme.

Contemporary tobacco cultivation in Türkiye is influenced by two opposing forces. On one hand, tobacco production is expected to decrease due to the diminishing availability of family members willing to work in the tobacco fields. This is because younger generations tend to pursue education and seek alternative employment opportunities in urban areas. This trend suggests that tobacco-growing families will have less labor force in the near future, and therefore tobacco cultivation will gradually decline. On the other hand, a recently enacted legal mandate necessitating an increase in the proportion of Oriental tobacco used in cigarettes sold in Türkiye, from 17 percent in 2022 to 30 percent by 2025, is expected to generate heightened demand for Turkish tobacco in the forthcoming years. In this context, our observations reveal that tobacco merchants have initiated the practice of offering larger advances to tobacco-growing households for the 2023 harvest to sustain current production levels. This corporate strategy is likely to persist, although it does not tackle the underlying factors responsible for households perpetuating the longstanding practice of child labor.

7 | Recommendations

The children who work in the tobacco fields, often at night during the summer, as did their parents and grandparents, are trapped in a cycle of structural deprivation performing one of “the worst forms of labor” according to the ILO. Multinational tobacco manufacturing companies, standing at the apex of tobacco’s supply and value chain, benefit immensely from the externalization of the risks -and many costs- of tobacco cultivation. These influential stakeholders bear the responsibility for eradicating child labor in tobacco fields. As key partners in tobacco cultivation, they need to take urgent steps to ensure decent working conditions and fair living wages. This is an important step to protect the rights of children working in tobacco fields and provide them with an education and a healthy future. Change in the fields necessitates action by the multinational tobacco manufacturing companies that dominate the industry and ultimately depend on, as well as profit from, the cheap labor of children.

The evidence presented in this report regarding child labor in the cultivation of Oriental tobacco in Türkiye serves as a foundational step for subsequent research and actionable measures. There is currently no baseline survey on the extent of child labor in Turkish tobacco, nor is there a comprehensive account of the working conditions of children in tobacco cultivation. Without this fundamental understanding, it is challenging to formulate practical, reliable, and evidence-based policy suggestions. It is recommended that a broad survey be immediately carried out in Türkiye to diagnose the current situation of child labor and night work in tobacco cultivation with special attention to regional and geoFigureic as well as ethnic and cultural variations in cultivation practices.

A key recommendation of this report is that the contract system should be revised to pay farmers a fair price that reflects the true cost of the inputs for growing tobacco, that provides a living wage for tobacco-growing households, and that is responsive to the reality of inflationary pressures. In this context, conducting an analysis of the expenses borne by farmers during the tobacco cultivation process is indispensable for enabling tobacco growers to transition from relying on unpaid child labor to employing paid adult workers. Such a study must contain an income-expenditure analysis and take into account a variety of parameters including the size of the land, yield, daily wage, contract terms, and product pricing. This comprehensive understanding will facilitate the establishment of equitable prices for sustainable tobacco cultivation at the outset of the growing season when contracts are finalized.

Unforeseeable crises may necessitate price adjustments during the contracting process. Factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, inflationary pressures, or natural disasters have the potential to adversely impact the financial stability of tobacco growers. Therefore, it is imperative that contractual arrangements incorporate provisions of offering flexibility to address crises. Under the current system, tobacco-growing households shoulder all the risks associated with tobacco cultivation, thereby heightening the probability that tobacco farmers may resort to child labor practices when encountering crises.

A key route to much-needed structural reform in the market for Turkish tobacco is the systematic and transparent involvement and collaboration with tobacco farmers at every level of production. Tobacco growers should be afforded direct participation in decision-making processes that impact the regulation and marketing of tobacco. In Türkiye, this can be facilitated through “chambers of agriculture,” which are small, localized institutions that offer resources and support to farmers in their respective areas. Not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations can also play an important role in organizing tobacco-growers for advocacy and partnership with public institutions and other key stakeholders.

A multi-stakeholder coordination board should be established at the national and local levels to monitor and address child labor in tobacco farming. Informed by the broad survey of child labor practices suggested above, the coordination board should be developed in partnership with public institutions, businesses, professional associations, and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, companies involved in the procurement of tobacco leaf and the production of tobacco products should adhere to supply chain due diligence regulations introduced at the European Union level, beginning with Germany in 2023, as part of their commitment to business and human rights. Through such measures, companies operating in the tobacco sector are compelled to rigorously monitor and report on various aspects including their production processes, labor conditions, environmental effects, and other pertinent social risks and concerns. Within this framework, all actors in the tobacco supply chain work together to promote fair and sustainable practices while mitigating negative impacts along the supply chain.

These evidence-based recommendations should serve as an initial step in assessing, reducing, and ultimately eradicating child labor while reforming the conditions of Oriental tobacco cultivation in Türkiye. We fervently hope that these recommendations are embraced and promptly implemented, aiming to serve as a model to inspire wider research and transformative initiative, particularly for multinational tobacco manufacturing companies operating and profiting within Türkiye.

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