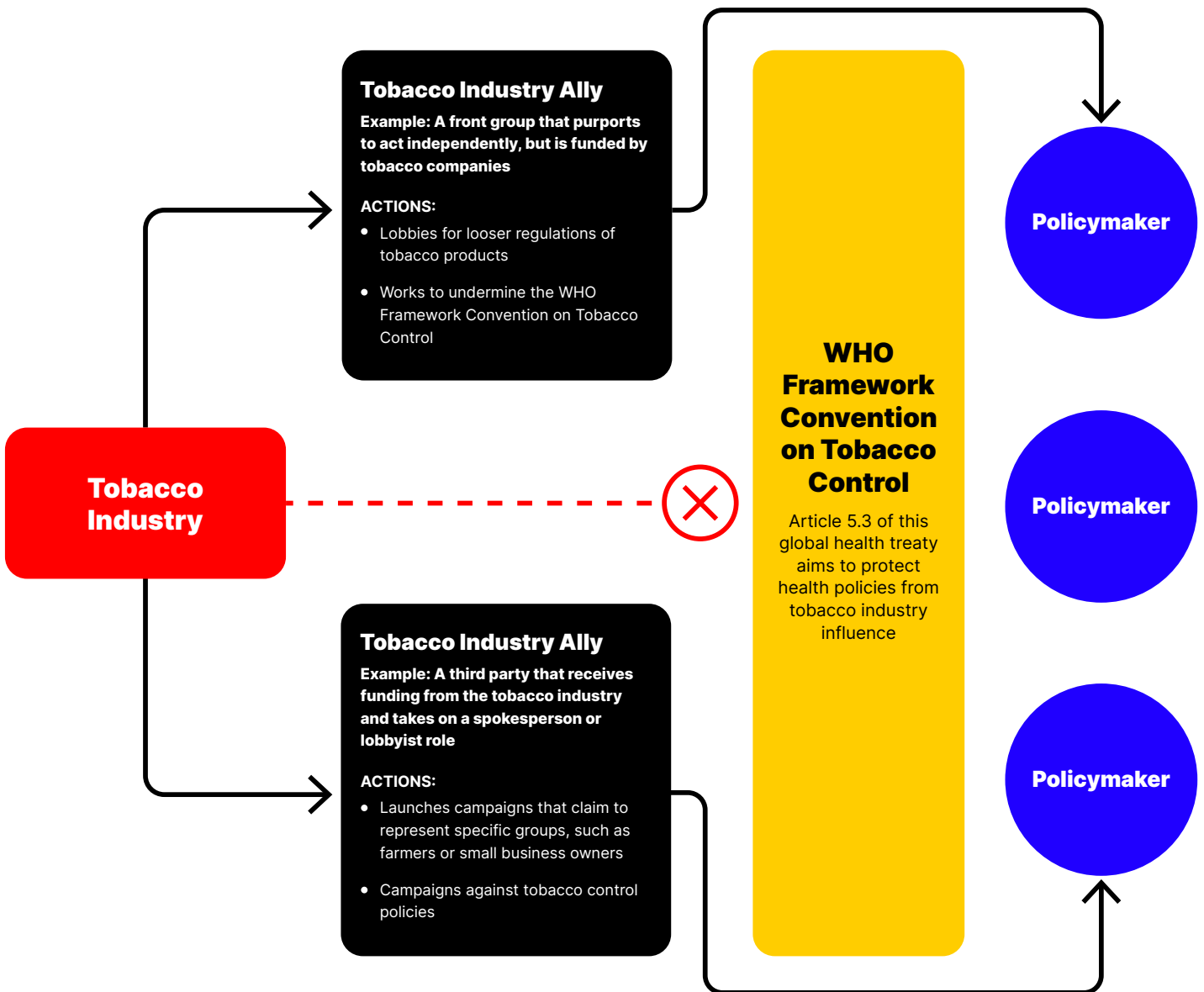


How the Tobacco Industry Uses Farmers to Influence Policy

The tobacco industry works both behind the scenes and in the public eye to block regulations that would help people reduce, quit or never start using tobacco.

In countries where policymakers are not allowed to interact with the tobacco industry, or where the industry wants to promote its interests through other organizations, it uses [front groups, third parties and astroturf \(fake grassroots\) organizations](#).



The industry uses tobacco farmers and industry allies representing them to **FURTHER ITS AGENDA...**

It serves the tobacco industry's interests to reframe policies designed to reduce tobacco use, as policies that could harm the livelihoods of tobacco farmers. So it produces misleading figures and statements about the impact of tobacco control legislation on farmers' jobs. The industry publicizes these arguments itself or through its grower-focused allies.

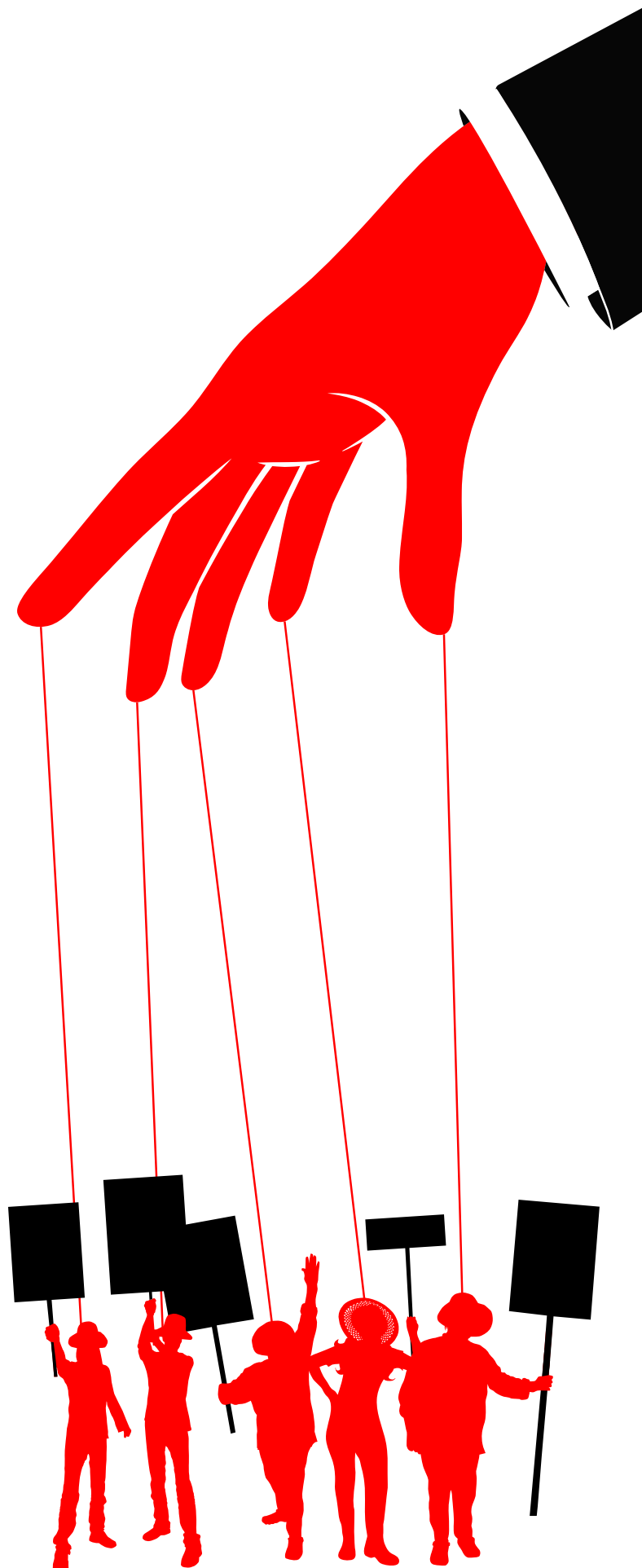
...WHILE TRAPPING FARMERS in a cycle of poverty, creating conditions that perpetuate child labor and using farmers as collateral when lobbying governments.

The industry and its allies claim to support farmers' livelihoods. Yet conditions created by the industry keep many growers impoverished and encourage the use of child labor. For example, in Malawi, where tobacco is the country's top agricultural export,¹ most tobacco farmers live in poverty. In 2020, a *Guardian* investigation found that British American Tobacco and Imperial Brands profited from child labor in the country.² In 2022, the UN stated that cases of human rights abuses affecting over 7,000 adults and 3,000 children had been reported within the tobacco-growing sector in Malawi.³

The industry also seems quick to abandon the farmers it claims to care about when it needs "bargaining" collateral. In 2014, British American Tobacco Uganda sent a Member of Parliament a letter naming 709 farmers in the MP's constituency that it would refuse to do business with if the MP supported the Uganda Tobacco Control Bill.⁴

The Consequences of Tobacco Farming

- **It contributes to global food insecurity.** Tobacco crops take up valuable fertile land that could be used for growing food.
- **It damages the environment.** Growing tobacco causes about 200,000 hectares of deforestation every year, and leads to higher soil nutrient depletion than other major crops.⁵
- **It makes farmers sick.** One in 4 farmers experiences nicotine poisoning, or green tobacco sickness, and those who work in the curing phase routinely inhale large amounts of smoke.⁶
- **It fuels a cycle of poverty.** The industry uses loans and predatory contracts to trap some farmers in debt. Smallholder tobacco farmers typically earn very little for their long hours and difficult work.⁷ When farmers cannot afford to hire help, some recruit family members, including children, to help grow tobacco, impacting their education and contributing to generational poverty.⁸



Examples of Industry Allies That Exploit Farmers' Interests

International Tobacco Growers Association

- Supported by tobacco companies including British American Tobacco, Imperial Brands, Japan Tobacco International and Philip Morris International⁹
- Lobbied in Indonesia against a proposed ban on ingredients used in the manufacturing of tobacco products, claiming that the livelihoods of farmers would be harmed
- Mobilized tobacco farmers in Uruguay to protest provisions in the global tobacco treaty, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), that would effectively regulate tobacco products and promote alternatives to tobacco growing

The Association of Brazilian Tobacco Farmers (AFUBRA)

- Member of the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA)
- Lobbied governmental authorities in cities where manufacturing plants were located to allow cigarette production in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic¹¹
- Delivered 250,000 petitions from tobacco producers, workers and community members protesting a proposed ban on additives in tobacco products¹²
- Hosted a press conference with the ITGA calling for grower (and therefore industry) representation at the 2023 Conference of the Parties (COP10)¹³

Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation

- Founded and governed by members including British American Tobacco, Imperial Brands, Japan Tobacco International and Philip Morris International
- Promotes work related to removing children from tobacco farming and sending children to school and vocational training, yet has not addressed the problems that create the need for child labor: low leaf prices and a predatory contract structure that exploits growers

Asosiasi Petani Tembakau Indonesia (Indonesian Tobacco Farmers Association)

- Mobilizes tobacco farmers to oppose and protest against measures to reduce tobacco use
- Lobbies against increases in tobacco tax
- Has spoken out against the FCTC and has urged the Indonesian government not to ratify the treaty

When farmers speak for themselves, the narrative changes.

In 2017, TOAWUM, the Malawi tobacco farmers' union, asked the International Labour Organization on behalf of "hundreds of thousands of Malawi farmers" to ban partnerships with the industry. TOAWUM said the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation (ECLT) had not sufficiently addressed the "root causes of tobacco-related child labour, which is endemic poverty among tobacco farmers."¹⁰ The letter stated that the ECLT "is a charity program focusing on the issues the industry has on its agenda, rather than local farmers."

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About STOP (Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products)

STOP is a global tobacco industry watchdog whose mission is to expose the tobacco industry tactics that undermine public health. Comprised of a network of academic and public health organizations, STOP researches and monitors the tobacco industry, shares intelligence to counter its tactics, and exposes its misdeeds to a global audience. STOP is funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of the [Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use](#). For more information, visit exposetobacco.org.