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For Immediate Release

U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Participates in Social Responsibility in Tobacco Production (SRTP) Program

Raleigh, NC - U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Inc., an industry leader in growing, processing and manufacturing flue-cured tobacco, is now a participant in the Social Responsibility in Tobacco Production (SRTP) program. The SRTP program ensures and recognizes that industry standards are being adhered to throughout the product cycle from seed to final delivery. SRTP balances tobacco production with positive environmental management, soil and water conservation and appropriate use of agrochemicals. In addition, environmental and health and safety standards are also factors in the program.

USTC became a supplier participant in SRTP in December 2015. "We reviewed every aspect of our business model; from how our growers manage the process from seed to harvest, to the processing of our tobacco leaf at the stemmery, to producing high-quality tobacco products. If it is part of the business cycle, we analyzed it". Said U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Chief Executive Officer Stuart Thompson.

Tobacco growers that are members of USTC are required to act in accordance with the SRTP program. This includes but is not limited to farmer training and education, integrated pest management, soil and water conservation, farm safety, seed selection and variety performance, to the elimination of non-tobacco related material on the farm. SRTP also addresses various social and economic factors in the production of tobacco by protecting living standards, wages and any labor issues with a focus on eliminating any child labor that would be in violation of state or federal laws.

At the same time an in depth review of processing and manufacturing is undertaken to ensure a safe working environment by factoring in the environmental impact on the community and creating plans to rectify potential issues through awareness and training programs. "USTC provides appropriate support for all employees to ensure safety and a good working environment" said Thompson.

SRTP is based on regular self-assessment and third party audits by AB Sustain. It has become the industry standard in tobacco production, providing guidance and support, validation, and a step based approach to facilitate continuous improvement. The SRTP program is used globally by tobacco companies to encourage clear and consistent standards across the industry.

For more information on U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Inc., visit www.usleaf.com.

About AB Sustain.

AB Sustain, based in the United Kingdom, specializes in working with clients to design, develop and deliver sustainable agricultural supply chain solutions. AB Sustain has a wealth of experience, working in over 60 countries and since 2000 its team has been addressing the challenges faced in relation to corporate responsibility, within the diverse supply chains of primary agricultural commodities and dependent products.

About U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Inc.

U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Inc. (USTC) is a grower owned marketing cooperative located in Raleigh, North Carolina. The cooperative produces U.S. flue-cured tobacco grown by 850 member growers in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia. Member grower tobacco is processed and sold as raw materials to cigarette manufacturers worldwide. USTC also produces consumer products for the U.S. market under brand names of Wildhorse, 1839, Shield, 1st Class, Ultra Buy and Traffic.