

# Malawi passes medical cannabis legislation

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Malawi on Thursday became the latest African country to legalise the growing of cannabis, a crop that could supplement the tobacco industry, which has been the country's economic mainstay.

Lawmakers unanimously passed the new law legalising the farming, importing and exporting of [cannabis](#) for medicinal and [industrial use](#), according to documents seen by AFP.

Malawi is one of the [poorest countries](#) in the world and has long relied on tobacco which brings in around 60 percent of foreign exchange earnings.

Several countries have decriminalised the growing and use of medicinal cannabis.

The new law establishes a regulatory authority which will be tasked with issuing licences to cultivate, process, store, sell, export and distribute cannabis.

The law also requires that cannabis will be grown under strict practices, including prohibiting children in the sector.

Malawi was last December forced to confront child labour practices after the US restricted tobacco imports from the impoverished nation over allegations workers including children were being exploited.

Cannabis has for many years been illegally grown in remote parts of

Malawi and smuggled out of the country.

The grade is popularly known as "Malawi gold".

Financial crimes expert Jai Banda lauded parliament's decision as government has for years lost out on valuable tax revenue.

"Cannabis is mainly cultivated in [remote areas](#), mainly for export to surrounding countries such as South Africa, Kenya and the overseas market. Trade is organised by professional traffickers," Banda told AFP.

"It has been a long journey but here we are. I guess we will be able to export and thereby earn the much needed forex. This is a path in the right direction."

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