



TOBACCO-FREE Times

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Planet Over Tobacco: Reframing Tobacco as a Climate and Environmental Crisis

Promoting Best Practices in Tobacco Control through GRIP



The Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC) at the Department of Community Medicine and School of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh has made a significant contribution to India's tobacco control journey by documenting and promoting effective practices from across the country. Through the publication of the Compendium on Good, Replicable and Innovative Practices (GRIP) of Tobacco Control in India, RCTC has compiled successful initiatives undertaken by different states and stakeholders under the National Tobacco Control Programme. The first two editions of GRIP have served as valuable knowledge resources, highlighting practical, evidence-based strategies that can be replicated and scaled up in other regions. By disseminating these best practices, the compendium has facilitated cross-learning among policymakers, researchers, program implementers, and public health professionals, thereby strengthening tobacco control efforts nationwide. Building on the success of the earlier editions, RCTC is now developing the third version of GRIP, which aims to further expand the repository of innovative approaches and support more effective implementation of tobacco control interventions in India.

EDITOR'S SPEAK



The 42nd edition of Tobacco Free Times focuses on the theme "Planet Over Tobacco: Reframing Tobacco as a Climate and Environmental Crisis." While tobacco is widely recognized as a major public health threat, its devastating impact on the environment often receives less attention. From deforestation for tobacco cultivation and excessive water use to toxic waste from cigarette butts and pollution caused by manufacturing and packaging, the tobacco industry significantly harms ecosystems and contributes to climate change. This edition highlights the urgent need to view tobacco control through an environmental lens, bringing together insights, evidence, and initiatives that emphasize protecting both human health and the planet by reducing tobacco's ecological footprint.

- Dr Sonu Goel,

Chief Editor, Tobacco Free Times

Director, RCTC, Dept of Community Medicine & School of Public Health

EXPERTS SPEAK

Excellent, exemplary, and dedicated work is being done by the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), PGIMER, Chandigarh in strengthening tobacco control efforts in the country. Through research, knowledge dissemination, and initiatives like Tobacco Free Times, the centre continues to make valuable contributions to public health and the National Tobacco Control Programme. My sincere appreciation to the entire team for their commitment and impactful efforts. Keep up the great work.



Dr. Saurabh Varshney,

Professor & Head (ENT), AIIMS Rishikesh



RCTC continues to do excellent work in advancing research on tobacco products and highlighting the harms associated with tobacco use. Through its evidence-based work and knowledge dissemination, the centre plays an important role in informing and shaping policy decisions that lead to better public health outcomes. Such dedicated efforts significantly contribute to strengthening tobacco control initiatives in the country.

Mr. Ranjit Singh,

Legal Expert - Supreme Court of India



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Release of the 40th Edition of Tobacco Free Times at Youth Conclave 2026– 16 January 2026

The 40th edition of Tobacco Free Times was released during the Youth Conclave 2026, organised by the Global Strategy Alliance (GSA) in collaboration with the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), SIPHER, Vital Strategies, and the Department of Public Health, Panjab University, on 16 January 2026. The release was graced by distinguished dignitaries including Dr. Balbir Singh, Health Minister of Punjab, Prof. (Dr.) Sonu Goel, PGIMER, Dr. Rana J. Singh, Deputy Regional Director (South-East Asia), Vital Strategies, Ms. Opinder Preet Kaur, Director (Programs), GSA, Prof. (Dr.) Sonu Goel, PGIMER, Mr. Vivek Awasthi, Executive Director, UPVHA, Dr. Manoj Kumar, Chairperson, Centre for Public Health, PU, and Dr. Mira B. Aghi, Behaviour Scientist.

This edition focuses on youth-centred tobacco control, highlighting the critical role of young people in prevention, advocacy, digital engagement, and policy action. Drawing on national experiences and global best practices, it underscores youth leadership as a powerful driver for reducing

initiation, countering industry influence, and strengthening community and system-level responses. The edition reinforces the importance of empowering youth as change agents to advance India's tobacco endgame vision and build a sustainable, tobacco-free generation.



RCTC Contribution to Digital and Social Media–Led Tobacco Control at Youth Conclave 2026



During the Youth Conclave 2026 held on 16 January 2026 at Panjab University, Chandigarh, a focused panel discussion on “Harnessing Social Media for Tobacco Control: Opportunities and Challenges” was organised from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Prof. Sonu Goel, Director of Resource Centre for Tobacco Control, participated as a panellist and highlighted the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping youth perceptions and behaviours related to tobacco use. He emphasised the dual role of social media—as a space exploited by the tobacco industry and as a powerful tool for counter-marketing, youth-led advocacy, and policy communication. Prof. Goel underscored the need for evidence-based digital engagement, online monitoring of violations, and capacity building of youth to create credible, impactful content. The session reinforced social media as a critical lever for advancing tobacco control and protecting young populations.

RCTC Exhibition Stall at Youth Conclave, 2026: Showcasing Innovation, Resources & National Outreach

The RCTC Exhibition Stall at Youth Conclave, 2026 attracted remarkable attention and emerged as a key outreach platform for showcasing RCTC's initiatives, innovations, and resource materials. Held on 16 January 2026, the stall engaged over 50 visitors, received 10 written feedback responses, 15 short feedback videos reflecting strong interest from delegates and public health professionals. The exhibition enabled meaningful posts on social media, exchanges with diverse stakeholders, leading to eighteen professionals requesting hard copies of RCTC publications and during the event. Beyond visibility, the stall strengthened awareness about RCTC's digital tools, training modules, and evidence-based strategies for tobacco control. The high level of engagement reinforced RCTC's credibility as a national knowledge hub and highlighted the value of its multisectoral partnerships. Together with the plenary session, the exhibition stall contributed significantly to promoting collaborative learning and advancing India's tobacco-control goals under the National Tobacco Control Programme.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH), AIIMS Raebareli – 30 January–01 February 2026

A total of three high-impact technical sessions were organized by the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), PGIMER Chandigarh, during the 7th NCTOH to advance evidence-based dialogue and strategic action on tobacco control and endgame pathways in India.

A high-level plenary session titled “Community-Led Innovations in Tobacco Control in India” was organized on 30 January 2026 during the 7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH)

at AIIMS Raebareli. The session was moderated by Mr. Rajeev Kumar, with welcome remarks by Prof. Sonu Goel. Distinguished speakers included Dr. Rana J. Singh (Vital Strategies), Dr. P. C. Gupta (Healis–Sekhsaria Institute), Dr. Rakesh Gupta (Rajasthan Cancer Foundation), Ms. Susan Samson (Faith Foundation), Dr. Nirmalya Mukherjee (MANT), Ms. Opinder Preet K. Gill (GSA), Dr. Deepak K. Mishra (SEEDS), Mr. Cyril Alexander (MACT), Dr. Amit Yadav (Vital Strategies), Dr. Shantanu Nath (AIIMS Deoghar), and Dr. Ravinder Kumar (SNO, Himachal Pradesh).



The session, attended by over 150 delegates, focused on community-led models including Tobacco-Free Villages, ToFEI implementation, youth engagement, countering tobacco industry interference, digital monitoring, tribal interventions, vendor licensing, and multisectoral NTCP coordination. The discussions

The third technical Plenary session on “Strengthening Tobacco Taxation: Evidence, Policy, and Global Perspectives” was organized by the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), Department of Community Medicine & SPH, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) during the 7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH) at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Raebareli on 31st December 2026. The session was attended by more than 100 participants. The session was chaired by Dr. Rana J. Singh, Director – Tobacco Control, Vital Strategies, and Dr. P. C. Gupta, Director, Healis–Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health.



emphasized structured community ownership and scalable grassroots innovations to advance India’s tobacco endgame. A high-level panel discussion titled “The Tobacco Endgame: Global Strategies to Achieve a Tobacco-Free Future” was organised on 1st February 2026 at AIIMS Raebareli to examine India’s preparedness to transition from conventional tobacco control toward a decisive endgame framework. The session was chaired by Dr. Manish Singh and Dr. P. C. Gupta, moderated by Prof. Sonu Goel, and featured distinguished experts including Dr. Rakesh Gupta, Dr. Rana J. Singh, Mr. Ranjit Singh, and Ms. Opinder Preet K. Gill. The discussion focused on defining measurable endgame indicators, including achieving zero tobacco prevalence among 15–18 and 19–22-year cohorts, adopting Tobacco-Free Generation policies, vendor licensing, sinking-lid supply mechanisms, and legal reforms to classify tobacco as res extra commercium. The session, attended by over 40 delegates, concluded with a call to draft a comprehensive national tobacco endgame roadmap targeting elimination by 31 December 2030.

Prof. Sonu Goel presented economic evidence highlighting the health and revenue benefits of higher tobacco taxation. Dr. Upendra Bhojani traced four centuries of tobacco taxation, drawing lessons for modern tobacco control. Dr. Rijo M. John discussed gaps in India’s GST framework on tobacco products, while Dr. Puneet Chahar shared global best practices in effective tobacco tax policy.

The session concluded with an engaging discussion, emphasizing the importance of strengthening tobacco taxation as a key strategy for advancing India’s tobacco control agenda.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Scientific Oral Presentations by RCTC Team at the 7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH)

The Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), PGIMER Chandigarh, actively participated in the 7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH) through multiple oral presentations delivered during the scientific sessions of the conference.



Mr. Rajeev Kumar:

Abstract ID: ABS00000110

Title: Strengthening Tobacco Control in India Through Capacity Building, Policy Support, and Multi-Sectoral Partnerships: The Role of the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control

Abstract ID: ABS00000110

Title: Strengthening Tobacco Control in India Through Capacity Building, Policy Support, and Multi-Sectoral Partnerships: The Role of the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control



Dr. Sonu Goel:

Abstract ID: ABS00000016

Title: Digital Tobacco Control Intervention: Adoption and Implementation Dynamics for Large-Scale Rollout in India



Dr. Ravita Yadav:

Abstract ID: ABS00000018

Title: Determinants of Tobacco Product Sales Near Educational Institutions in Telangana and Meghalaya, India



Dr. Jatina Vij:

Abstract ID: ABS00000017

Title: Role of NGOs in Tobacco Control in India: An MPOWER-Based Mixed Method Study

Panel Discussion on AI for a Tobacco-Free Generation at PHASECON 2026, 13 February 2026

The Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), PGIMER Chandigarh, organized a panel discussion titled "AI for a Tobacco-Free Generation: Empowering Youth to Lead the Change" during PHASECON 2026 on 13 February 2026. Attended by 80 delegates, the session explored the role of artificial intelligence and youth leadership in advancing tobacco control. Prof. Sonu Goel delivered the keynote address, emphasizing technology-driven cessation strategies and interdisciplinary collaboration and the session was moderated by Dr. Jatina Vij. Prof.



Sonu Goel highlighted the integration of AI within NTCP and mCessation to enhance coverage, predictive monitoring, and quit success rates. Dr. Shalini Bassi discussed engaging youth as co-creators through innovation labs and skill-building in digital public health. Prof. Veenu Mangat elaborated on multidimensional AI models combining clinical, behavioural, and digital data, while addressing cybersecurity safeguards for a secure national tobacco surveillance platform.

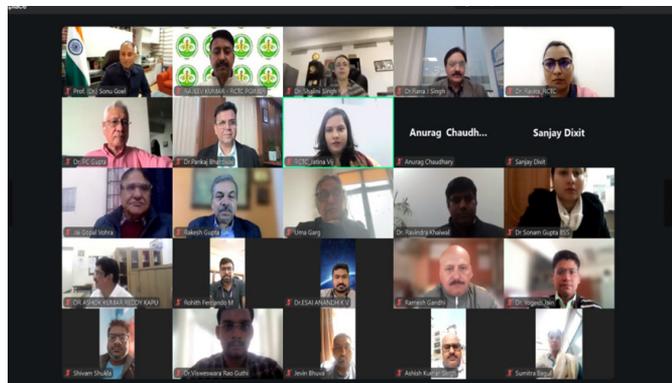


PROJECT ACTIVITIES

National Webinar on Planet Over Tobacco: Health, Environment & Climate – Tobacco Control for a Sustainable Future, 27th January, 2026

The National Webinar titled “Planet Over Tobacco: Health, Environment & Climate – Tobacco Control for a Sustainable Future” was conducted on 27th January 2026 (11:00 AM–1:00 PM) and was jointly organised by the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), PGIMER Chandigarh, in collaboration with Vital Strategies. The webinar witnessed participation from over 180 attendees representing academia, public health institutions, research organisations, civil society groups, and policy bodies across India. The event aimed to reposition tobacco control within the frameworks of planetary health, climate action, and sustainable development. Distinguished experts including Dr. Pankaj Bhardwaj (Chief Guest), Dr. Rana J. Singh, Dr. Shalini Singh, Dr. Prakash C. Gupta, Prof. Ravindra Khaiwal, and Dr. Yogesh Jain provided critical insights. Discussions focused on tobacco’s environmental footprint, waste management challenges, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), ESG accountability, and integration of tobacco

control into environmental governance. The webinar strengthened multisectoral dialogue and reinforced the urgency of aligning tobacco control with sustainability and climate priorities in India.



Release of Key Knowledge Document at the 7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH)

During the 7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH), the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), PGIMER Chandigarh, marked a significant milestone with the formal release of key knowledge products by the Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Keshav Prasad Maurya. The release underscored RCTC's continued commitment to strengthening evidence-based tobacco control initiatives in India. The documents released included:

1. Tobacco Control Priorities in India – Progress, Challenges and Solutions (Volume II)
2. Report: World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) 2025 – Activity Report of the Medical Colleges Consortium under RCTC, PGIMER
3. Report: World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) 2025 – Activity Report by the Indian Association of Preventive & Social Medicine (IAPSM)
4. 38th Edition of Tobacco Free Times focussing on the theme ‘India at the Crossroads: Are We Ready for the Tobacco Endgame?’

5. 39th Edition of Tobacco Free Times focussing on the theme ‘Towards a Tobacco-Free India: The Role of Taxation in Curbing the Epidemic’

The release ceremony was graced by distinguished leaders in tobacco control, including Prof. Sonu Goel, Dr. Rana J. Singh, Dr. P. C. Gupta, Dr. Saurabh Paul, Dr. Avinash Sunthalia from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, Dr. Bhola Nath, Head of the Department of Community Medicine, AIIMS Raebareli, and the Director, AIIMS Raebareli. The event was attended by senior public health experts, academicians, policymakers, and delegates from across the country, highlighting strong national engagement and collaborative commitment toward advancing tobacco control efforts.



RCTC Exhibition Stall at NCTOH, AIIMS Raebareli 2026 and PHASECON 2026: Showcasing Innovation, Resources & National Outreach

The Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (RCTC), PGIMER Chandigarh, set up impactful exhibition stalls at both the 7th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH) at AIIMS Raebareli (30 January–1 February 2026) and PHASECON 2026 (13–14 February 2026), serving as dynamic platforms for outreach, engagement, and knowledge dissemination.

At NCTOH, the stall attracted over 157 visitors, generated 20 written feedback responses, and recorded 31 video testimonials from delegates and public health professionals. Interactive activities such as the “Journey to Quit Smoking”



Snake and Ladder game, Spin-the-Wheel engagement, a tobacco-free oath signature campaign, and 87 motivational postcards encouraged active participation and advocacy. Delegates also engaged in themed social media outreach, amplifying tobacco control messages.

Similarly, at PHASECON 2026, the RCTC stall showcased key publications, digital tools, training modules, and evidence-based strategies. Interactive awareness activities and stakeholder interactions strengthened visibility, fostered collaborative learning, and reinforced RCTC's role as a national knowledge hub under the National Tobacco Control Programme.



Planet Over Tobacco: Reframing Tobacco as a Climate and Environmental Crisis

For decades, tobacco control has been framed primarily as a public health imperative—grounded in its role as a leading cause of preventable death, disease, and economic loss. This framing remains valid and indispensable. However, it represents only a partial accounting of tobacco’s full societal cost. Tobacco is not solely a health issue. It is also a significant environmental and climate concern.

Across its entire lifecycle—from cultivation and curing to manufacturing, distribution, consumption, and post-consumer disposal—tobacco imposes sustained and cumulative pressure on land, water, forests, air quality, and waste management systems. These impacts extend well beyond individual users, affecting ecosystems, biodiversity, water security, climate resilience, and long-term sustainability.

In an era characterised by climate instability, accelerating plastic pollution, and increasing resource scarcity, examining tobacco through an environmental lens is no longer optional; it is imperative. Reframing tobacco as a planetary health issue shifts the discourse from individual behaviour to systemic harm. It reinforces a foundational principle of sustainable development: the protection of human health and the protection of environmental systems are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing.



Global Environmental Footprint of Tobacco

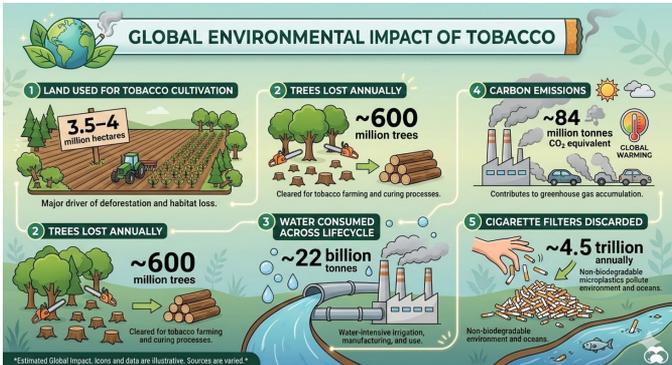
Before examining each stage of the tobacco lifecycle, it is useful to summarise the overall environmental footprint associated with tobacco production and consumption.

Lifecycle Stage	Environmental Dimension	Key Evidence / Quantitative Estimate	Environmental Implication
Cultivation (Land Use)	Deforestation and land conversion	3.5–4 million hectares of land used globally for tobacco; ~200,000 hectares cleared annually	Loss of forests, biodiversity decline, reduced carbon sequestration
Fuelwood for Curing	Forest resource depletion	~600 million trees lost annually for tobacco farming and curing	Forest degradation and ecosystem damage
Soil Health	Nutrient depletion	1 tonne of tobacco removes ~24.4 kg N, 15 kg P, and 9.8 kg K from soil; phosphorus decline up to 49%	Reduced soil fertility and long-term agricultural productivity
Agrochemical Use	Pesticide and fertiliser dependency	Tobacco often requires higher pesticide application per hectare than many food crops	Soil contamination and occupational exposure among farm workers
Water Use	Agricultural and processing water demand	~22 billion tonnes of water consumed annually across the tobacco lifecycle	Competition with food crops and community water needs
Industrial Processing	Energy use and emissions	Curing, processing, and manufacturing require significant biomass and fossil fuel energy	Increased greenhouse gas emissions
Carbon Emissions	Climate impact	~84 million tonnes CO ₂ equivalent emitted annually	Contribution to global climate change
Consumption	Air pollution	Smoking produces >7,000 chemicals; indoor PM _{2.5} can reach 300–1000 µg/m ³	Severe indoor air pollution and health hazards



Post-consumer Waste	Plastic pollution	~4.5 trillion cigarette filters discarded annually	Largest source of global plastic litter and microplastics
Waste Management	Municipal environmental burden	Cigarette butts consistently among top items in urban litter audits	Cleanup costs transferred to public authorities

Global Environmental Impact of Tobacco



These figures illustrate that tobacco production and consumption generate environmental pressures comparable to several major industrial sectors, despite producing a commodity that provides no nutritional or developmental necessity.

The Tobacco Lifecycle: Environmental Impacts from Cultivation to Disposal

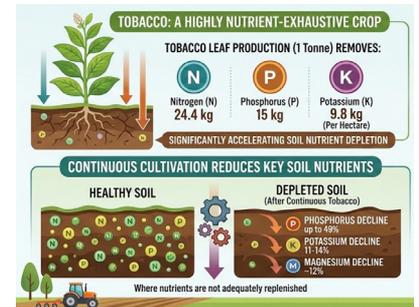
Tobacco Cultivation and Global Deforestation: Land Use Implications

Globally, tobacco cultivation occupies an estimated 3.5–4 million hectares of land annually, with approximately 200,000 hectares cleared each year to support tobacco growing and curing activities. Tobacco production is associated with the loss of an estimated 600 million trees per year, driven by both land conversion and the use of fuelwood in curing processes. Forest ecosystems play a critical role in carbon sequestration, soil stabilisation, watershed protection, and biodiversity conservation. Their diversion to tobacco cultivation weakens ecological resilience and accelerates environmental degradation. While the scale and pathways of impact vary by region and production practice, converging global assessments from organisations such as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization demonstrate that tobacco cultivation contributes meaningfully to avoidable deforestation and habitat loss. In countries such as India—where agricultural land must simultaneously support food security, livelihoods, and environmental sustainability—the allocation of fertile land to a non-food, non-essential crop raises fundamental policy questions. India is the second-largest producer of tobacco globally, cultivating approximately 450,000 hectares of land and supporting millions of livelihoods across several states. The opportunity cost is therefore not only economic but ecological, with direct implications for climate resilience and sustainable land management.



Soil Nutrient Depletion and Agrochemical Dependency in Tobacco Farming

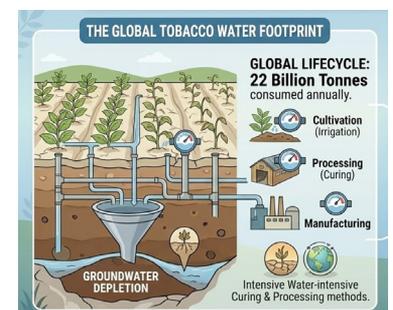
Tobacco is a highly nutrient-exhaustive crop that rapidly depletes soil reserves of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Producing one tonne of tobacco leaf removes approximately 24.4 kg of nitrogen, 15 kg of phosphorus, and 9.8 kg of potassium per



hectare, significantly accelerating soil nutrient depletion compared with many other crops. Continuous cultivation can reduce key soil nutrients, with studies reporting declines of up to 49% in phosphorus, 11–14% in potassium, and about 12% in magnesium where nutrients are not adequately replenished. Tobacco plants are also highly susceptible to pests and fungal diseases, leading to intensive pesticide use. In many settings, pesticide application per hectare is higher than that used for staple food crops, increasing the risk of soil and water contamination as well as occupational exposure among farm workers. In regions already facing soil degradation, tobacco cultivation further undermines long-term soil fertility and agricultural sustainability.

Tobacco's Water Footprint and Agricultural Resource Competition

The global tobacco lifecycle is estimated to consume approximately 22 billion tonnes of water annually, encompassing cultivation, processing, and manufacturing stages. In water-stressed regions, irrigation for tobacco directly competes with food crops and essential community needs, while chemical runoff further contaminates groundwater and surface water systems.



Water-intensive curing and processing methods further increase the total resource burden associated with tobacco production. In regions facing increasing drought frequency and groundwater depletion, the environmental sustainability of tobacco cultivation becomes increasingly difficult to justify within long-term agricultural planning frameworks.

For India—where groundwater depletion, climate variability, and increasing demand shape agricultural planning—crop choices are inseparable from water security. Tobacco production must therefore be evaluated within broader frameworks of resource governance, climate adaptation, and sustainable agriculture.



Industrial Tobacco Production and Carbon Emissions

Environmental impacts do not end at the farm gate. Tobacco curing, processing, manufacturing, packaging, and global distribution contribute substantially to greenhouse gas emissions. Globally, the tobacco sector generates an estimated 84 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent each year.

Curing processes frequently rely on biomass burning or fossil fuels, while manufacturing facilities consume significant electricity and thermal energy. International transport networks further add to the sector's carbon footprint.

Although tobacco production does not match the emissions profile of heavy industries such as steel or cement manufacturing, its climate impact is substantial for a product that provides no essential societal or economic function beyond commercial consumption.

Tobacco Waste and the Global Plastic Pollution Crisis



If upstream environmental impacts are significant, tobacco's downstream waste burden is particularly acute. An estimated 4.5 trillion cigarette filters are discarded globally each year, making them the single most littered item worldwide. Cigarette filters are composed primarily of cellulose acetate, a form of single-use plastic that does not biodegrade but fragments into microplastics.

Municipal litter audits in many countries consistently identify cigarette filters as one of the most common components of urban waste streams. The financial burden of managing tobacco-related litter therefore falls largely on public authorities rather than tobacco manufacturers.

Beyond filters, tobacco-related waste includes multilayer packaging, foil linings, plastic overwraps, matches, lighters, and an expanding category of electronic nicotine delivery systems. These products introduce batteries, heavy metals, and electronic components into waste streams that are already under strain.

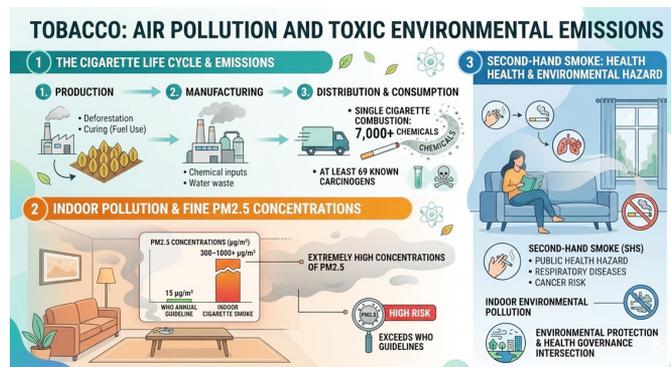
Tobacco, Plastics, and Global Environmental Governance

Cigarette filters are increasingly recognised within global plastics governance frameworks. The United Nations Environment Programme has identified cigarette filters as a form of single-use plastic, placing tobacco waste firmly within international plastic pollution discourse.

As negotiations on the global plastics treaty progress through the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, policy options such as bans, phase-outs, and extended producer responsibility mechanisms are under consideration.

Within this context, cigarette filters represent a particularly compelling regulatory case: they are non-biodegradable, widely littered, environmentally persistent, and provide no demonstrated health protection for smokers.

Air Pollution and Toxic Environmental Emissions

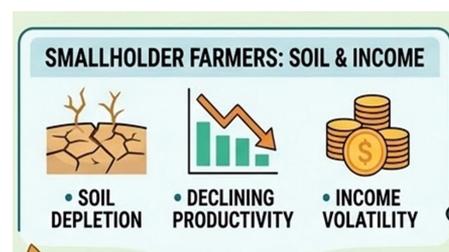


Tobacco contributes to air pollution at multiple stages of its lifecycle. The combustion of a single cigarette releases more than 7,000 chemicals, including at least 69 known carcinogens. Research have demonstrated that indoor cigarette smoking can generate extremely high concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), in some cases exceeding 300–1000 µg/m³, far above the 15 µg/m³ annual guideline recommended by the World Health Organization.

Second-hand smoke therefore represents both a public health hazard and a form of indoor environmental pollution, reinforcing the intersection between environmental protection and health governance.

Environmental Equity and Occupational Burden

The environmental costs of tobacco are unevenly distributed. Smallholder farmers experience soil depletion, declining productivity, and income volatility.



Agricultural workers face pesticide exposure and conditions such as green tobacco sickness, caused by dermal absorption of nicotine.

Communities located near tobacco curing facilities or poorly managed waste sites may experience cumulative environmental exposure, while economic benefits remain largely concentrated in manufacturing and distribution segments of the global supply chain.

Recognising tobacco as an environmental issue therefore strengthens not only the health rationale for regulation but also the environmental justice case for policy action.



Tobacco, Climate Commitments, and Sustainable Development

Tobacco intersects directly with multiple sustainability priorities:

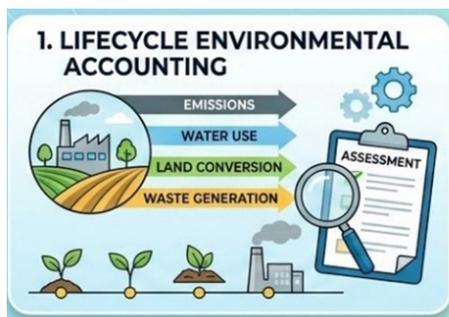
- Climate mitigation and carbon reduction
- Water conservation and security
- Sustainable agriculture
- Plastic waste reduction
- Biodiversity protection

For India—one of the world’s largest producers and consumers of tobacco—integrating environmental considerations into tobacco control enhances policy coherence.

Climate action plans, water conservation initiatives, plastic waste management regulations, and agricultural diversification strategies can align more effectively when tobacco’s ecological footprint is explicitly acknowledged.

Policy Recommendations for Integrated Environmental Tobacco Governance

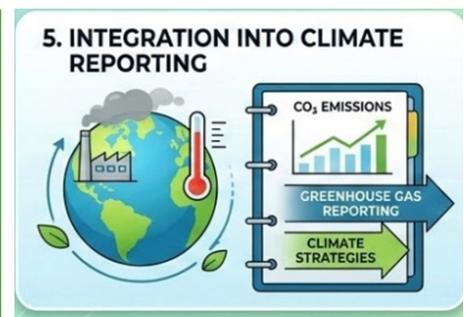
To address the environmental impacts of tobacco comprehensively, governments and international institutions may consider the following policy measures:



Governments should mandate **lifecycle environmental impact assessments** for tobacco production, covering emissions, water use, land conversion, and waste generation.



Given their environmental persistence and limited health benefit, cigarette filters should be **regulated as single-use plastics and considered for progressive phase-out.**



Tobacco industry emissions should be **included in national greenhouse gas reporting frameworks and climate mitigation strategies.**



Tobacco manufacturers should be held financially responsible for the **collection, treatment, and disposal of tobacco-related waste**, including cigarette filters.



Governments should support tobacco farmers transitioning to **alternative crops through subsidies, training, and market access programmes.**



Tobacco waste should be explicitly incorporated into **national plastic waste management policies and international plastics treaty negotiations.**

Conclusion: Expanding the Frame

Tobacco is widely recognised as a major public health threat, but its environmental impacts are equally significant. Across its lifecycle, tobacco production contributes to deforestation, intensive water use, carbon emissions, and large-scale plastic waste, including an estimated 4.5 trillion discarded cigarette filters each year.

These impacts show that tobacco is not only a health issue but also an environmental and sustainability challenge. Recognising this broader footprint highlights the need to integrate tobacco control with climate action, plastic waste management, and sustainable agriculture policies.

Viewing tobacco through a planetary health lens strengthens the case for comprehensive regulation and coordinated policy responses that protect both human health and the environment.



Tobacco crisis: WHO European Region projected to remain worst globally by 2030

The World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe has released 10 new MPOWER factsheets warning that the European Region, comprising 53 countries across Europe and Central Asia, is on track to remain the world's highest tobacco-using region by 2030 unless urgent action is taken. Tobacco already causes more than 1.1 million deaths annually in the Region, and it is the only WHO region not expected to meet the global target of a 30% reduction in tobacco use among women by 2025, with only a projected 12% decline between 2010 and 2025. Over 40% of the world's adult female smokers (62 million women) live in this Region, and girls aged 13–15 have the highest tobacco use prevalence globally. Around 4 million adolescents use tobacco, and e-cigarette use among 13–15-year-olds is the highest worldwide at 14.3%, with nearly equal rates among boys and girls;

adult e-cigarette use is also the second highest globally, with 31.4 million users. WHO/Europe Regional Director Hans Henri P. Kluge attributed rising youth use to targeted industry strategies such as flavoured products and social media marketing, while noting that policy implementation remains uneven: only 18 countries have comprehensive smoke-free laws, 13 have full advertising bans, 12 provide national quitlines with covered cessation services, and in 19 countries cigarettes are more affordable than in 2014. WHO has called on Member States to fully implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, strengthen enforcement, and extend regulations to emerging nicotine products to prevent today's trends from becoming the next generation's public health burden.

Source: <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/26-02-2026-tobacco-crisis--who-european-region-projected-to-remain-worst-globally-by-2030>

WHO: Despite smoking decline, tobacco still hooks one in five adults worldwide

The World Health Organization's latest report (2010–2024) shows global tobacco use has declined from 26.2% in 2010 to 19.5% in 2023 and is projected to keep falling, but the epidemic is far from over. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that the tobacco industry is aggressively promoting new nicotine products, particularly to young people. For the first time, the report estimates that over 100 million people worldwide use e-cigarettes, including 15 million adolescents aged 13–15, with youth prevalence far higher than adults. While Southeast Asia has seen major declines, Europe now has the largest number of smokers globally. WHO urges governments to strengthen tobacco control policies and regulate emerging nicotine products to sustain progress through 2030.

Illegal cigarette shops escape justice due to cost

Shop owners selling counterfeit cigarettes may avoid prosecution due to funding constraints faced by enforcement authorities, Bradford Council's licensing panel has been told. Officers from West Yorkshire Trading Standards said limited budgets mean they can only pursue the largest cases through costly private prosecutions, with some court battles dragging on for years and resulting in minimal fines — sometimes as low as £120. During a licence review of 263 Allerton Road (Fresh Market), which was caught selling illegal cigarettes four times in six months, officials explained that defendants often delay proceedings, dispute ownership, or sell their businesses before cases conclude, weakening enforcement outcomes. Instead of prosecution, authorities increasingly rely on seizing goods worth tens of thousands of pounds, revoking alcohol licences, or temporarily closing businesses to impose stronger financial consequences. The panel ultimately voted to revoke the shop's licence, while enforcement officials stressed the need for greater funding to more effectively combat the illegal tobacco trade.

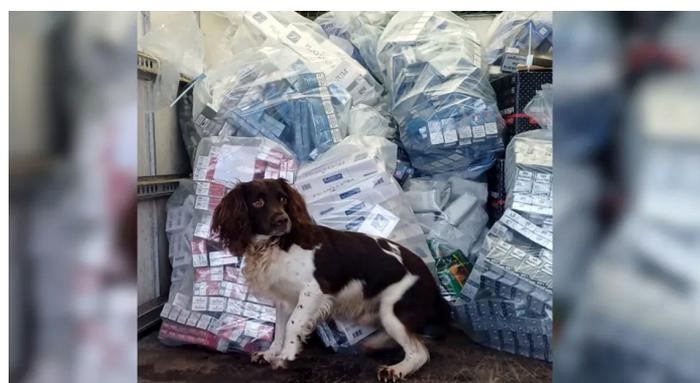


Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn42d119q2yo>



Over a million cigarettes seized in police raids

Nearly 1.5 million illegal cigarettes were seized during raids led by Medway Council's Trading Standards and Public Protection officers, in a joint operation with Kent Police. The multi-agency crackdown, supported by specialist sniffer dogs, resulted in the confiscation of 1,469,640 cigarettes, 148.5 kg of hand-rolling tobacco and 1,130 vapes, with an estimated street value of £650,000. A significant portion—worth around £600,000—was discovered in five storage lockers at a self-storage site. Officials stated the operation aims to disrupt the illegal tobacco trade, which is often linked to wider criminal activity, and reaffirmed their commitment to tackling tax evasion and protecting legitimate businesses.



Nicotine pouches are being illegally sold in corner stores across Canada

A CBC News investigation has found that high-dose, flavoured nicotine pouches remain widely available in Canadian convenience stores despite federal regulations introduced in August 2024 restricting sales to pharmacies to curb youth access. Under the new rules, Health Canada permits only Zonnica—owned by Imperial Tobacco Canada—to be sold legally, limited to four-milligram mint or menthol pouches as a smoking cessation aid for adults. However, reporters in multiple cities were able to purchase Zyn, a popular U.S. brand owned by Philip Morris International, in fruity flavours and strengths as high as 15 milligrams. Online distributors claiming to operate within Canada were also found selling unauthorized brands and high-dose products with discreet delivery, raising concerns about enforcement gaps and youth exposure.

Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/investigates/nicotine-pouches-illegal-sale-9.7000711>

India News

India sticks to e-cigarette ban in snub for Philip Morris



The Government of India has reaffirmed that it will not relax the 2019 ban on e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, rejecting sustained lobbying efforts by Philip Morris International. The world's most valuable tobacco firm has been seeking permission to introduce its heat-not-burn device, IQOS, into the Indian market, with its chief executive reportedly calling the ban "illogical."

India prohibited e-cigarettes, including heated tobacco products, in 2019 under a comprehensive regulatory framework aimed at protecting public health. The decision comes despite India being the world's seventh-largest cigarette market by volume, with over 100 billion cigarettes sold annually.

Tobacco use remains a major public health challenge in the country, contributing to more than one million deaths each year. The government's stance signals continued prioritization of public health safeguards over the commercial interests of multinational tobacco companies.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/india-sticks-e-cigarette-ban-snub-philip-morris-2026-02-11/>

Jadcherla: Police busts pan shops selling tobacco to minors

In a significant enforcement drive, the EAGLE Force of the Telangana Police apprehended three pan shop owners in Mahabubnagar district for selling cigarettes and gutka to minors near ZPHS Boys School in Badepally, Jadcherla. The shops were located within 100 metres of the school, violating provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA). Cases were also registered under the Juvenile Justice Act.

Separately, intelligence inputs revealed a growing concern regarding the use of banned e-cigarettes among school students in the district. Investigations traced supply sources and compiled district-wise sales data for further enforcement action. In one recent incident at Indus School, students were found using e-cigarettes on campus. The devices reportedly belonged to family members who were regular users. The school suspended the students involved but declined to file a formal complaint or hand over the devices, despite this being the second such case reported.

The enforcement agency has emphasized the need for parental accountability, noting that e-cigarettes contain significantly higher nicotine concentrations and pose heightened risks of addiction and future substance abuse among adolescents. The episode underscores ongoing challenges in implementing India's 2019 ban on e-cigarettes and ensuring compliance with youth protection laws.



Source: <https://news.tuoitre.vn/vietnam-health-ministry-proposes-ban-on-tobacco-product-displays-in-shops-103260228145025525.htm>



Ayodhya to Enforce Mandatory Licensing for Tobacco Vendors; ₹10,000 Fine for Violations

The district administration in Ayodhya has announced strict measures to curb the unregulated sale of tobacco products. Vendors found selling tobacco without a valid license will face a fine of up to ₹10,000.

The decision was taken during a joint workshop organized by the District Tobacco Control Cell and the Municipal Corporation. Officials resolved to develop Ayodhya as the state's second "model district" for tobacco control, following the example of Mathura and Sikar.

Under the new policy, all tobacco vendors must obtain a license from the Municipal Corporation by March 31. Authorities stated

Source: <https://www.amarujala.com/uttar-pradesh/ayodhya/selling-tobacco-without-a-license-will-attract-a-fine-of-up-to-rs-10000-ayodhya-news-c-97-1-lu11030-144112-2026-02-27>



that vendor licensing will help regulate the number of tobacco outlets and restrict access to minors. A review of progress will be conducted at the Municipal Corporation board meeting on March 16, and accountability will be fixed in case of delays. So far, a list of 148 tobacco vendors has been prepared, with surveys ongoing for the remaining outlets. Zonal officers will

be responsible for issuing licenses. The administration also plans to launch a public awareness campaign on the harms of tobacco use, including announcements at major public intersections.

The move marks a significant step toward strengthening local tobacco control enforcement and youth protection measures in the district.

Madhya Pradesh High Court Upholds Dismissal Of Scindia School Employee Over Tobacco Sale On Campus

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has upheld the dismissal of a Class-IV employee of The Scindia School for selling tobacco products within the school campus.

Justice Anand Singh Bahrawat dismissed a writ petition filed by the employee, Prayagnarayan, who had challenged his termination and sought reinstatement with back wages. The petitioner had also contested the Labour Court's earlier award that upheld his dismissal. The High Court declined to interfere, reiterating the



limited scope of judicial review under Article 227 of the Constitution in service matters. It found no grounds to overturn the Labour Court's findings, thereby affirming that disciplinary action taken by the school authorities was legally sustainable.

The ruling reinforces the principle that educational institutions can take strict action against the sale of tobacco products on campus, especially in view of child protection and tobacco control norms.

Source: <https://lawbeat.in/news-updates/madhya-pradesh-high-court-upholds-dismissal-of-scindia-school-employee-over-tobacco-sale-on-campus-1568698>

Govt notifies ban on all chewable tobacco, nicotine products

The Government of Bhubaneswar has notified new rules imposing a complete ban on the manufacture, processing, packaging, storage, transportation, distribution and sale of all products containing tobacco or nicotine as ingredients.

The prohibition covers all chewable and non-chewable products that are flavoured, scented, or mixed with additives. This includes products sold under any name or form such as gutka, pan masala, and other flavoured or scented chewable mixtures. The ban applies to both packaged and unpackaged products, including those marketed as separate packets designed to be mixed by consumers.

The new notification supersedes an earlier order issued in

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/govt-notifies-ban-on-all-chewable-tobacco-nicotine-products/articleshow/127037904.cms>

January 2013 and strengthens regulatory measures in response to the continued availability of tobacco- and nicotine-containing products in the market.

The state government cited significant public health risks associated with smokeless tobacco use, particularly when combined with substances like betel leaf, areca nut, and slaked lime. It emphasized that such products pose serious health hazards, especially for children and young adults.

This move represents a major tightening of tobacco control enforcement in the state, aimed at reducing the widespread use of smokeless tobacco products.

Send us your feedback, comments and suggestions at rctcupdates@gmail.com

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