From start to finish, the tobacco life-cycle is an overwhelmingly polluting and damaging process. Tobacco devastates the environment. It is responsible for: large-scale deforestation (1); catastrophic carbon emissions (2); loss of biodiversity, including wildlife (3); depletion of the planet’s water, fossil fuel and metal resources (3); desertification, depleting soil fertility (3); exuberant emission of greenhouse gases (4); contamination of drinking water (3); emission of toxicants in the air via direct, second- and third-hand smoke (3); non-biodegradable cigarette butts (5,6); and degradation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems (7,8).

**STAGES OF TOBACCO LIFE-CYCLE**

**STAGE I CULTIVATION OF TOBACCO**

- **NEARLY 600 MILLION TREES** are cut each year to produce cigarettes (9)

- **ONE TREE MAKES 300 CIGARETTES** (1)

**STAGE II MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTING**

- **84 MILLION TONNES OF CO₂ EMISSIONS** from tobacco production are released into the air each year, equal to 3 million transatlantic flights (2)

- **6 TRILLION CIGARETTES** are manufactured every year (2)

**STAGE III CONSUMPTION**

- Tobacco smoke contains at least **70 CARCINOGENIC CHEMICALS** that are known to cause cancer in people and animals (2)

- The total economic cost of smoking is **US$ 1436 BILLION** (10)

**STAGE IV WASTE DISPOSAL**

- **4.5 TRILLION CIGARETTE BUTTS** are discarded improperly every year (11)

**STAGE V “RESIDUAL” TOBACCO**

- Tobacco product waste contains over

- **7000 TOXIC CHEMICALS**, which can leach into and accumulate in the environment (3)
TOBACCO’S THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

TOBACCO’S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT COMPARED TO THAT OF OTHER COMMODITIES
Cultivation of 1 tonne of tobacco versus 1 tonne of potatoes or tomatoes (4):

CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

POTATOES OR TOMATOES

TOBACCO

> 2–3 TIMES HIGHER

CONTRIBUTION TO WATER DEPLETION

POTATOES OR TOMATOES

TOBACCO

> 5–8 TIMES HIGHER

DEBUNKING A TOBACCO INDUSTRY MYTH

The tobacco industry uses tactics to so-called greenwash its reputation and build an image of itself as a sustainable and eco-friendly industry (12). These greenwashing activities are a guise perpetrated by corporations and a public diversion.

Examples of greenwashing activities (12):
→ funding beach clean-ups
→ marketing new products as “eco-friendly”, “natural”, “healthy” and “organic”
→ funding environmental and disaster relief organizations.

Tobacco companies save a lot of money by not having to pay the full cost of the environmental impact of the tobacco cycle.

NOVEL AND EMERGING NICOTINE AND TOBACCO PRODUCTS ARE NOT ECO-FRIENDLY.
They can potentially be more environmentally harmful than conventional cigarettes (6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More environmentally intensive manufacturing processes</th>
<th>Single-use products</th>
<th>Non-biodegradable and non-recyclable materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contain hazardous substances, such as heavy metals</td>
<td>Nicotine salts and heavy metals can leach into soil and water, or be ingested by wildlife</td>
<td>Generate toxic emissions that can pollute the environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN?

SPREAD THE WORD
Raise awareness that tobacco harms the environment. Don’t fall for the tobacco industry’s attempt to greenwash its products.

QUIT TOBACCO TO SAVE OUR PLANET
Protect the environment by not being a part of the destructive tobacco life-cycle that poisons our water, soil, beaches and city streets.

MAKE THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY CLEAN UP THEIR MESS
Hold the tobacco industry accountable for the environmental damage and the physical and financial costs of disposing waste.

HELP TOBACCO FARMERS SWITCH TO SUSTAINABLE CROPS
Support sustainable livelihoods to reduce the environmental impact of tobacco-growing and promote better and healthier working conditions for tobacco farmers.

SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE TOBACCO-CONTROL POLICIES
Support the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to reduce the environmental impact of tobacco.

For more information and guidance, visit: https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-no-tobacco-day/2022/calls-to-action

Tackling tobacco from the perspective of promoting economically viable alternatives for tobacco workers, as well as advancing the protection of the environment, would contribute to the achievement of numerous goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (13):

Goal 2 (Zero hunger), Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production), Goal 13 (Climate action), Goal 14 (Life below water), Goal 15 (Life on land).
REFERENCES


All references accessed 2 May 2022.