



THE OBSERVATORY ON TOBACCO INDUSTRY STRATEGIES

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Editorial

Brazil is the world's leading exporter and the second-largest producer of tobacco leaves. Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) point out 651 tobacco-growing municipalities in 2018, mainly in the three Southern region states (88%). Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina accounted for 98% of total production in the same year. According to the Tobacco Growers' Association of Brazil (Afubra), approximately 149,000 families of family farmers were involved in the tobacco production chain in 2019, which means more than 600,000 people were exposed to heavy workloads. Adults, children, adolescents, and the elderly work in the open, under the burning sun and heavy rain; exposed to pesticides; in contact with the nicotine present in the green leaf; for long hours; with the adoption of uncomfortable postures forced by intense work, among other situations. These burdens interact dynamically in the workers' bodies and are manifested through musculoskeletal disorders, acute and chronic exogenous intoxications, cancers, and other diseases.

Data from the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (Sinan, in Portuguese) clearly show the impact of tobacco cultivation on producing families' health. Between 2010 and 2019, Brazil registered 760 cases of exogenous poisoning related to tobacco leaf production - the so-called Tobacco Leaf Disease, which affects adults, the elderly, children, and teenagers. This significant number, although far from the totality of cases that are likely to occur, reinforces the difficulties farmers have to access health





services, in addition to the weaknesses of these same services to take care of the health of smoking-producing families fully.

In September 2020, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation's Center for Tobacco and Health Studies held a webinar on "Suicide and work: how to break the silence among rural populations" - an initiative related to the "Yellow September," a month dedicated to actions for suicide prevention in Brazil. Several scientific research results showing the association between mental and behavioral disorders and tobacco growing were presented during that virtual event. The studies also showed a higher risk of suicidal ideation among people who have had pesticide poisoning and green tobacco sickness episodes. These data contribute to a better understanding of the complex net of determinants that interconnect and define the ways of life, illness, and death where tobacco is grown. They also turn it into a public health problem – a sometimes invisible or neglected problem,

and that needs to be faced with determination and courage by the Brazilian government. Courage and determination, yes! These are two critical conditions to confront the tobacco industry and its allies' pressure to undermine tobacco control actions, policies, and programs.

It is necessary to strengthen the intersectoral articulations between government and organized civil society to deal with the health and environmental problems arising from tobacco growing. Otherwise, among other issues, there will still be cases of illnesses related to labor, child labor, deforestation, chemical pollution in tobacco cultivated areas.

Strengthening initiatives for implementing WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Articles 17 and 18 is essential to ensure people's health and protect the environment. Thus, WHO FCTC Secretariat took an important initiative in

establishing a Knowledge Hub on Articles 17 and 18.

Another important initiative of the Center for Tobacco and Health Studies (Cetab/ENSP/Fiocruz) to collaborate with the implementation of WHO FCTC Article 18 was the development of guidelines for

tobacco growers' comprehensive care. This activity is related to the continuity and strengthening of the National Program for Diversification in Tobacco Growing Areas, developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, as a strategy for sustainable local development and the population's health promotion.

Marcelo Moreno dos Reis

Senior Public Health Technologist and researcher at Cesteh and Cetab/ENSP/Fiocruz

Report

INSTITUTIONS DEMAND THE END OF TOBACCO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP IN FORMULA 1

One hundred one organizations and civil society representatives from 38 countries have released an open letter to the International Automobile Federation (FIA) president, Jean Todt. This letter called on the end of all tobacco advertising and sponsorship in Formula 1, the world's most popular motorsport category. Fiocruz, through the Observatory on Tobacco Industry Strategies, is one of the signatories.

The document reveals that the sport, which has the second-highest proportion of fans under the age of 25 among all global sports leagues, represents one of the last vestiges of Big Tobacco's global marketing (a name used to refer to the largest global companies in the tobacco industry: *Philip Morris International, Altria, British American Tobacco, Imperial Brands, and Japan Tobacco International*) to lure young people to addiction through sport. Besides representing a violation of public health laws and the United Nations (UN) norms, the measure hurts the FIA's

commitments to the UN global road safety and climate change initiatives.

The survey presented to the FIA president shows that Philip Morris International (PMI) and British American Tobacco (BAT) spent nearly \$100 million in 2019 and will spend \$115 million in the 2020 season to reach 500 million global Formula One fans. The document also warns of cross-border advertising and sponsorship.

"Tobacco brands on the racetracks stream across borders via multiple media channels and through computer games ... A majority of governments, including countries hosting F1 races, have banned sports advertising, and governments have held the tobacco industry liable for violating laws through Formula 1 ads. FIA's continued failure to take responsive action to prevent violations could make it complicit with the tobacco industry," the letter states.

The authors also point to FIA's omission in restraining advertising. Despite being an F1 regulatory body, FIA transfers its responsibility for controlling the sport participants' actions.

Jean Todt reaffirmed the federation's commitment to smoking prevention and tobacco control in response to the letter. However, despite recognizing the harms of smoking, he pointed out others as responsible for regulating advertising.

“While the setting of rules governing the marketing activities of the tobacco industry is primarily the responsibility of national decision-makers, it is my firm belief that the tobacco industry itself must more actively contribute to community efforts to counterbalance the negative impacts that arise from smoking,” he claimed.

In another passage, Todt highlighted the differences in the laws between countries and that most national bans on tobacco sponsorship are directed to products, not to companies.

“In this context, it is primarily down to governments to tighten, in accordance with their respective national constitutions or constitutional principles, their tobacco legislation and the FIA is not in a position to substitute them and make the law,” he exempted himself.

After reading the FIA president's responses, the letter's authors criticized the justifications, mainly by ignoring the cross-border nature of races and placing the responsibility to regulate them on governments, besides not assuming young people's exposure to tobacco advertising.

“FIA has the authority to govern its stakeholders without waiting for government action, yet it refuses to do so and continues to allow tobacco advertising and sponsorship deliberately... It then shifts the responsibility solely onto governments, despite the fact that governments' main barrier to regulating tobacco, ..., is tobacco industry interference,” the authors retorted.

Silvana Turci, the coordinator of the Observatory on Tobacco Industry Strategies, said Fiocruz's participation in a report of this scope highlights the institution's alignment with national and international tobacco control partners.

“We note that the industry continues to advertise through the exhibition of new products and initiatives. The letter reflects the concern of more than 100 institutions from about 40 countries. The Observatory's participation is crucial not only to monitor these actions but also to show our alignment with global tobacco control actions.”



PRO-TOBACCO ORGANIZATIONS ACT TO PREVENT CIGARETTE TAXATION IN THE BRAZILIAN TAX REFORM

The Covid-19 pandemic has contaminated the tobacco economy and deepened a slowly approaching crisis in the sector due to the decreasing consumption of conventional cigarettes in European and Asian countries.

Although tobacco is sold in dollars, the amount depreciated by tobacco manufacturers accumulated losses from the producer to traders and then to the network of services of tobacco-dependent municipalities, impacting the Southern states' export revenues.



Scientifically proven injuries related to tobacco use and coronavirus¹ triggered alerts, smoking bans² and the “widespread refusal of global demand for tobacco.”³ They eventually reached the Brazilian commodity, much of it destined for export, swallowing the family farmers in the south of the country, the weakest link in the production chain.

The decline in consumption added to adverse climatic factors, and the suspension of activities due to the covid-19 pandemic motivated Rio Grande do Sul Department of Agriculture to reactivate the Sectoral Chamber of Tobacco.⁴ This reactivation led to public hearings and the creation of and parliamentary⁵ fronts to confront the tobacco sector crisis.

¹ <https://www.inca.gov.br/publicacoes/notas-tecnicas/alerta-do-inca-populacao-sobre-tabagismo-e-coronavirus>

² <https://www.portalmie.com/atualidade/mundo/noticias-do-mundo/2020/08/regioes-na-espanha-proibem-fumo-por-risco-de-covid-19/>

³ <https://www.noticiasaoiminuto.com/economia/1594236/covid-19-empresa-mocambicana-dedicada-ao-tabaco-reduz-producao>, comunicado da Moçambique Leaf Tobacco.

⁴ <https://www.agricultura.rs.gov.br/camara-setorial-do-tabaco-e-reativada-para-avaliar-restricoes-frente-ao-covid-19>

⁵ <http://www.al.rs.gov.br/agenciadenoticias/destaque/tabid/855/IdMateria/321152/Default.aspx>, <https://www.cliccamaqua.com.br/noticia/55528/frente-parlamentar-em-defesa-do-produtor-de-tabaco-discute-problemas-enfrentados-pelos-produtores.html>

In June, two public hearings were held at Rio Grande do Sul Assembly⁶. A month later, the Tobacco Growers' Association of Brazil (Afubra) launched the campaign "*plant less and earn more*,"⁷, leaving the market fluctuations, once again, as a solution for the families' income.

Still, tobacco companies minimized the damage related to the pandemic. They justified the product rejection due to its "low quality" caused by drought, the "significant losses" of which would be denounced by Vale do Rio Pardo producers in February, in a meeting with Congress and government members⁸ a month before the announcement of the pandemic.

With the profit margin threatened, tobacco companies' lobby pressures the Congress and government members, who have been debating tax reform, to end with a minimum price for cigarettes⁹, seeking to maintain its production chain from tobacco-dependent Brazilian consumers.

<https://www.agricultura.rs.gov.br/camara-setorial-do-tabaco-e-reativada-para-avaliar-restricoes-frente-ao-covid-1>

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<https://afubra.com.br/noticias/11415/entidades-orientam-fumicultores-a-plantar-menos.html>

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⁶ <http://www.al.rs.gov.br/agenciadenoticias/destaque/tabid/855/IdMateria/320883/Default.aspx>

⁷ <https://imprensawessul.com.br/entidades-orientam-fumicultores-a-plantar-menos/> Afubra em conjunto com as Federações dos Sindicatos Rurais (Farsul e Faesc) e as Federações dos Trabalhadores Rurais (Fetag, Fetaesc e Fetaep).

⁸ <http://www.al.rs.gov.br/agenciadenoticias/destaque/tabid/855/IdMateria/319660/Default.aspx>

⁹ <http://olajournal.com.br/impacto-da-reforma-tributaria-na-cadeia-produtiva-do-tabaco-e-tema-de-conferencia/>



Margareth Dalcolmo
Pulmonologist of
Fiocruz

“Smokers and users of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), also called electronic cigarettes, may be at a higher risk for developing serious diseases related to COVID-19,”

said Fiocruz pulmonologist Margareth Dalcolmo, one of the prominent voices of science in coping with the pandemic. In an interview with the Observatory Bulletin, she highlights the elements that lead to this risk and comments on the main challenges of the pandemic’s current stage. She leaves a message for smokers:

“Take advantage of this epidemic moment to think about major resolutions in your lives. Stop smoking.” Check it out.

Observatory Bulletin: *Contrary to what science says, research published in France and China has pointed out that smokers would be less likely to develop symptoms of COVID-19. What’s real about that? Is smoking actually a risk factor for COVID complications?*

Margareth Dalcolmo: If the patient has a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, whether it is emphysema or chronic bronchitis, he already has a chronically ill lung due to smoking. We can say that smoking is a risk factor for greater severity in those with COVID infection. If the disease evolves into what we call endothelitis - an endothelium disease - and the person already has a chronic inflammatory disease, with restriction of his functional capacity, the possibility of complication and evolution to the need

for hospitalization, including mechanical ventilation, is much greater.

BO: *The tobacco industry has been using the concept that ENDS offers harm reduction to smokers. As a pulmonologist, how do you see this statement? Does the use of ENDS also provide an increased risk of greater severity of COVID-19 infection?*

Margareth Dalcolmo: Today, it is proven that vapers are responsible for a considerable number of deaths in several countries, even among young people. These deaths have nothing to do with COVID-19, and it is why we managed to get Anvisa never to approve the sale and commercialization of ENDS in Brazil. What we see out there are smuggled. I could not say how many deaths

due to COVID-19 occurred among vaper users. Still, I can say that ENDS use is highly harmful to the lung because it can cause inflammatory lung disease. The aspirated vapor contains nicotine and other substances that are relatively toxic to the lung but give the product a pleasant odor and taste. Of course, the use of electronic cigarettes can also be considered a risk factor for the greater severity of COVID-19 infection.

BO: *Ensp/Fiocruz's Observatory on Tobacco Industry Strategies was created to monitor the industry's actions to promote new products and show their economic importance. What is the message you leave for smokers and e-cigarette users in times of pandemic?*

Margareth Dalcolmo: May you take advantage of this moment, which induces us to profoundly reflect, to make essential and protective decisions in your lives, and stop smoking. Smoking conventional cigarettes or ENDS is harmful and causes COPD and other lung diseases, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and various cancer types. Here comes a piece of advice and a doctor and specialist's recommendation: people should take advantage of this moment and stop smoking.

BO: *How do you evaluate the current stage of the pandemic? What are our next challenges?*

Margareth Dalcolmo: Brazil keeps the significant heterogeneity that has characterized the pandemic in its territory. It means: COVID arrived differently and continues to behave differently. Unfortunately, we did not have the European countries' behavior from an epidemiological point of view, which reached a peak of deaths and decreased rapidly. Here, we are stuck on a very high transmission plateau. Many places have been keeping a TR (transmission rate) above 1 or very close to 1, which means that 100 people transmit to over 100, and the risk is still very high. Community transmission still worries us a lot.

We recognize widespread fatigue in the population, but as we have never achieved desirable social distancing rates in any city, we recommend and warn the population that the pandemic is still very present. From a practical and real point of view, cases have increased again in the north of Brazil and Rio de Janeiro. We have disturbing bed occupancy rates again. So, all these indicators show that the pandemic is not controlled in Brazil. I consider this a worrying moment, and it does not allow the resumption of many activities, including our school activities, given the risk that the disease represents.

Expediente:

Presidente da Fiocruz: *Nísia Trindade Lima*

Diretor da ENSP: *Hermano Castro*

Coordenadora do Cetab: *Valeska Figueiredo*

Corpo editorial:

Alex Medeiros Kornalewski

Alexandre Octavio Ribeiro de Carvalho

Danielle Barata

Filipe Leonel

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Ana Lucia Normando – Revisão

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Contato:

cetab.observatorio@ensp.fiocruz.br



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