

THE FACTS ABOUT TOBACCO FLAVOURS

Recently, tobacco growers around the world have distributed misleading information about the flavourings that are added to tobacco products and about draft guidelines that would “restrict or prohibit” these flavourings. The draft guidelines will be discussed at the Conference of the Parties to the global tobacco treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in November in Uruguay.

Below is some information about tobacco flavourings and the Conference:

Key Points

- Flavourings and other additives are widely used in cigarettes and other tobacco products to increase the palatability or attractiveness of tobacco smoke, particularly for young people.
- The more attractive tobacco products are, the more people will become addicted and, ultimately, the more will die from tobacco-caused disease.
- Draft guidelines, to be discussed by more than 170 countries at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in Uruguay in November, recommend that countries “restrict or prohibit” flavourings that increase palatability, have colouring properties, create the impression of health benefits or are associated with energy and vitality.
- Contrary to industry claims, guidelines do not recommend a ban on burley tobacco, which is grown worldwide and often flavoured during production. Cigarettes containing burley continue to be sold in countries with strong restrictions on flavourings.

Draft FCTC Guidelines Urge Action on Flavours

Draft guidelines for implementation of Articles 9 and 10 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which deal with product regulation, have been prepared by a Working Group of Parties for consideration by the COP in November 2010. A recommendation in section 3.1.2.2(i) of the guidelines to “either prohibit or restrict” flavouring substances has received considerable opposition from the tobacco industry.

Despite tobacco industry lobbying, such a recommendation is entirely reasonable, necessary and worthy of support. Although the tobacco industry may wish to have the unregulated freedom to use chocolate, fruit, sugar, candy, ice cream and other flavourings to improve product attractiveness, what the tobacco industry wants is incompatible with public health.

Increasing tobacco industry use of flavours

In many countries, the tobacco industry is increasingly flavouring cigarettes and some other tobacco products. In some cases, flavoured cigarettes are being marketed by smaller companies separate from the large transnationals. Some of the major international companies have also sold flavoured cigarettes.

More countries restrict use of flavours

Recognising that flavours increase attractiveness, countries are increasingly responding by adopting legislation to restrict flavours in cigarettes and some other tobacco products:

Australia: Some states have banned fruit and confectionary (e.g.) flavours in cigarettes.

Thailand: Through administrative provisions, fruity and confectionary flavoured cigarettes are not permitted on the market.

United States: National legislation prohibits “characterising” flavours in cigarettes, roll-your-own tobacco, and some little cigars; characterising flavours could include flavours where the product tastes like fruit, candy, spice (e.g. cloves), alcoholic beverages, etc.

Canada: national legislation prohibits flavours and additives in cigarettes, little cigars and blunt wraps (a rolling paper but made of tobacco.)

France: a decree restricts flavours in cigarettes, including related to vanilla.

European Union: On 27 May 2010, the European Commission stated that controls on “attractive substances in tobacco products” are among the possible changes being analysed for revisions to the European Union’s Tobacco Products Directive. Further, in a 6 July 2010 draft opinion prepared for the European Commission, the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks concluded that “Attractiveness can similarly be improved in a number of ways, such as by adding flavours.”

(**Note:** All of these jurisdictions have allowed menthol cigarettes to continue to be sold.)

Summary points

- It is wrong for the tobacco industry to use flavours to improve taste and make it easier to smoke.
- How can it be acceptable for cigarettes to have ice cream, candy and fruit flavours such as chocolate, vanilla, mint, strawberry, cherry, peach and grape?
- A recommendation in an FCTC guideline to curb flavours in cigarettes would not ban either U.S.-style cigarettes, or the use of burley tobacco.
- The tobacco industry is engaging in a misinformation campaign and is lobbying hard against the guideline.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, in implementing national restrictions in the US, has cited evidence as to how attractive flavours in cigarettes are appealing to youth
(<http://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/ProtectingKidsfromTobacco/FlavoredTobacco/ucm183198.htm>).

Framework Convention Alliance

The FCA is a civil society alliance of NGOs, institutions, experts and others, whose mission is to help develop and implement the FCTC as the basis for effective global tobacco control. It represents more than 350 members in 100 countries. For more information, see www.fctc.org.

For further information, contact FCA Communications Manager Marty Logan in Ottawa, tel: +1.613.241.3927, ext 302 (office), +1.613.617.1179 (mobile), loganm@fctc.org.