

# Cameroon



## Summary of Findings

### 1. INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The implementation of the regulation on graphic health labels (FCTC Article 11) was strongly influenced by the tobacco industry (TI). This intervention persuaded the authorities to adopt its own deadlines, disrupting the cycle of image rotation provided for in the regulation.

Government measures to reduce nicotine addiction (FCTC Article 5.2) were similarly compromised by TI interference. The industry influenced the Agency for Standards and Quality to adopt standards for nicotine products, tobacco-free nicotine sachets for oral use (VELO) and electronic cigarettes or vaping products (VUSE), to be marketed nationally. Both VELO and VUSE are BAT's brands. The development work saw active participation and financial support from the TI in the development of standards that could be established as regulations in accordance with national practices. The Anor's TC 47 committee on tobacco issues is chaired by a TI representative, and the background material for the draft standards reviewed by the committee members was proposed by the TI.

The regulation of tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (FCTC Article 13) was also influenced by the TI. After the failure of the draft text proposed to the government by the industry, which was contrary to the provisions of the FCTC, the process of adopting the text of application of the 2006 law governing advertising in Cameroon has stagnated for 17 years. The new text developed at the initiative of the Cameroon Coalition for Tobacco Control with other stakeholders has not been adopted.

### 2. INDUSTRY CSR ACTIVITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic served as an excuse for the Cameroonian industrial group Noubrou Holding, the parent company of Vinataba Oriental Cameroon Company Ltd (a local tobacco production company), to provide financial support of CFA francs 10 million to the Ministry of Public Health on April 14, 2020, as part of the fight against the pandemic.

The administrative authorities of the Department of Kadey in the Eastern region often visited the production units of the Compagnie des Tabacs Camerounais, which specializes in production, processing, and marketing of tobacco, during events organized by the company. The last visit was on June 23, 2022.

### 3. BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY

The TI has benefited from extensions of deadlines to comply with graphic health warning regulations since September 2018. The entry into force of the 1st set of images had initially been scheduled for January 03, 2019, and was subsequently pushed back to June 12, 2019, following pressure from the TI. This led to the signing of a joint circular of September 13, 2018, granting an additional 6 months for the TI to comply. For the 2nd series of images that started on June 12, 2021, the TI has obtained in secret from the health authorities further periods of first 6 months (June 12-December 12, 2021) and then two periods of three (03) months each (December 2021-March 2022) and (April-June 2022) to comply with the regulations. The rotation cycle of images as provided by the regulation is disrupted as a result of these extensions. The images of the 2nd series would have circulated for only 12 months, whereas the regulation provides for 24 months for

a series. The implementation of the 3rd series of images as of June 12, 2023 is uncertain as the text from the Ministry of Public Health that specifies the images adopted has not yet been signed - less than a month before the deadline. All of these factors compromise the effectiveness of what was hoped to be achieved by imposing regulations on graphic health marketing.

#### 4. UNNECESSARY INTERACTION

The TI has succeeded in creating beneficial interactions with government officials through company visits by the heads of central services of ministerial departments and the installation ceremony of the heads of TI structures placed under the presidency of administrative authorities.

Authorities regularly accept collaboration with the TI in the fight against the smuggling of tobacco products. This is a strategy that allows for maintaining good relationships with country authorities at both the national and local level.

#### 5. TRANSPARENCY

The conduct of public policies in tobacco control is still not transparent in Cameroon. The authorities in charge of tobacco issues, in the guise of sovereignty and administrative prerogatives, hold secret meetings with the TI. In 2021 the authorities in charge of health had an undisclosed working session with the TI. The session concluded with a delay of 6 months for the TI to implement the second phase of the Graphic Health Mark. This occurred without the knowledge of the other stakeholders, who were unaware of the existence or lack thereof a rule of communication regarding information to the TI or its entities to the attention of public authorities.

#### 6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The government does not prohibit the TI or any entity that promotes its interests from making contributions to political parties, candidates or political campaigns. In Cameroon several tobacco sector operators are also political actors; sometimes holding elected positions in parliament and high positions within their political party - in this case the ruling

party. In their quality of militants and leaders (deputies, senators, members of the Central Committee, etc.), they finance the activities of their political party. Through their positions within the political system, these operators, due to their proximity to decision-makers who are on the same political side as them, have the possibility of influencing government measures concerning their sector of activity.

We can also see that former civil servants in Cameroon offer their services to companies in the country. For example, the administrator of the Federation of Tobacco Growers of Cameroon, a mixed capital cooperative company that works closely with the Cameroon Tobacco Company. The administrator, in office since 2013, is an agricultural engineer from the Ministry of Agriculture where he held numerous positions including that of regional delegate of agriculture of the Centre.

#### 7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Preventative measures are lacking in Cameroon, and, the procedure for disclosing interactions with the TI is non-existent. The civil service code of conduct does not specifically address the relationship of public officials with the tobacco industry, and there are no text prescribing standards for public officials to follow in their interactions with the TI. There is also no law requiring the TI to periodically publish information on its activities. The tax system is declarative.

The Ministry of Finance has set up a system for the traceability of tobacco products through stickers that must be affixed to all products marketed in Cameroon, but the sticker system is not 100% reliable. There are false stickers, and an abundance of smuggled cigarettes even for well established brands.

There are no government programs, systems, or plans to systematically raise awareness of policies related to the guidelines of Article 5.3 of the FCTC. This extends to an absence of a policy to prohibit the acceptance of all forms of tobacco industry contributions or gifts (financial or other); including offers of assistance, policy proposals, and invitations to study tours given or offered to the government, its agencies, employees and their relatives.