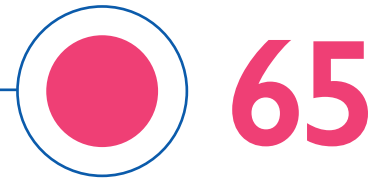


Fiji



Summary of Findings

1. INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Fiji has not reported any documented instances of interference or contributions from the tobacco industry (TI) towards the development of tobacco control policies to date.

There has been no known involvement of the TI in Fiji's delegation to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Conference of the Parties (COP).

2. INDUSTRY CSR ACTIVITIES

BAT continues to highlight its CSR efforts while deflecting attention from the negative impacts of tobacco products. They often employ socially responsible initiatives to counteract negative perceptions. In April 2022, the Minister of Agriculture attended and endorsed BAT's Star Farmers Incentive Program and endorsed its support to farmers, the provision of farm equipment and crop inputs, subsidies for land preparation and reduced cost of fertilizers and crop treatment chemicals, as well as a guaranteed market and fixed price for their harvest.

The Ministry of Agriculture signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BAT for the Grow+ (Plus) Programme. While this cooperation is currently limited to the specific program, it could potentially open the door for further communication and lobbying efforts from BAT in the future.

3. BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY

There is currently no documented evidence to suggest that the TI has received specific benefits from the government. However, in response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the government introduced duty concessions on the importation of raw materials, equipment, and machinery. It's important to note that these concessions were not explicitly designed for the TI, but rather for a broader range of businesses affected by the pandemic. However, the TI could potentially leverage these concessions to their advantage.

Furthermore, in the most recent 2022-2023 budget, no changes were made to these conditions. The same concessions were reiterated, hence the TI still has the opportunity to benefit from them.

4. UNNECESSARY INTERACTION

Frequently, the media covers events where high-level public officials are seen attending BAT program launches and expressing support for their efforts in benefiting farmers, communities, and the economy. However, such interactions can be seen as unnecessary and may undermine efforts to prevent the TI from exploiting their influence. In March 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, SMEs, and Communications, attended and endorsed BAT Fiji's support to local farmers. These engagements by public officials can generate a positive image of BAT as a responsible and benevolent organization, which can deflect attention from the detrimental effects of the TI on public health and well-being.



5. TRANSPARENCY

Internal communications between ministries and the TI remain undisclosed to the public. There is often a lack of documented evidence or transcripts that can shed light on these interactions and their nature. This lack of transparency raises concerns about the potential for undisclosed dealings and influences between the TI and government entities.

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The existing guidelines and policies to prevent conflicts of interest between the government and the TI are limited, leaving room for potential conflicts to arise. In the past, there was an instance where a former CEO of BAT was appointed as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, which could have resulted in biased actions or

opinions in favor of the TI. Although this position has been filled by another individual since then, there are no known policies that have been implemented to prevent similar incidents from occurring.

7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

The prevailing situation underscores a significant gap in the government's efforts to implement effective preventative measures. Currently, there are no established procedures in place for disclosing interactions. No specific code of conduct governing engagements with the TI, and a lack of awareness-raising programs within government departments regarding policies related to the FCTC Article 5.3 Guidelines. This highlights the need for improved measures to address these shortcomings and ensure implementation of robust preventative measures.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen government regulations and enforcement mechanisms to prevent interference by the TI.
2. Promote transparency in the government's interactions with the TI to reduce opportunities for undue influence by implementing measures such as disclosure of meetings and communication with industry representatives.
3. Create a robust code of conduct for the government when interacting with the TI.