

Fiji



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Industry Participation in Policy Development

There have been no recorded instances of tobacco industry (TI) interference or contributions in shaping tobacco control policies in Fiji. There is also no evidence of TI participation in Fiji's delegation to the WHO FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP10).

2. Industry CSR Activities

The Fiji government has acknowledged BAT Fiji's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, recognizing contributions in community support and the agricultural and environmental sectors. However, authorities remain cautious about the broader impact of these activities, ensuring public health policies continue to address the harms of tobacco consumption.

The government endorsed several BAT CSR activities. Notably, BAT's Annual Star Farmer Incentive Awards were recognized for promoting agricultural best practices among growers, with speeches from high-ranking officials reinforcing the company's role in economic development. Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture formalized a Memorandum of Understanding with BAT for the Grow+ Programme, enabling collaboration that could potentially expand industry influence.

3. Benefits to the Industry

BAT Fiji benefits from government policies on excise tax rates and business incentives. Despite 5% excise tax

increases in the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 National Budgets, the TI continues to leverage regulatory flexibility and investment incentives to maintain profitability.

The Tobacco Control (Amendment) Act 2022 introduced changes that favored BAT Fiji, particularly regarding licensing flexibility and fee structures. Beyond direct tobacco regulations, BAT Fiji may also benefit from broader business incentives introduced under national economic policies, including Commercial Agriculture Farming and Agro-Processing Investment Incentives, Recycling Business Investment Packages, Subdivision of Land Investment Packages, Tax-Free Region Incentives, and Electric Vehicle Charging Station Development Packages.

4. Unnecessary Interaction

High-ranking government officials, including the President, Prime Minister, and Ministers, have attended TI-sponsored social events and corporate functions. While these engagements are framed as supporting economic and community development, they represent unnecessary interactions that risk undermining efforts to limit TI influence in policymaking.

Government agencies have also endorsed or entered into partnerships, formal or non-binding, with the TI or associated organizations, furthering its interests despite harms associated with tobacco consumption. Media frequently highlights officials' participation in BAT initiatives, portraying support for farmers and communities. However, such visibility legitimizes BAT's activities and shapes public perception of the company as socially responsible rather than a corporation whose products cause harm.



5. Transparency

The Fijian government's transparency regarding interactions with BAT Fiji remains limited. There is no public disclosure of meetings or engagements with the TI, even where these are strictly necessary for regulatory purposes.

While a decree requires political parties and officials to disclose their assets, income, liabilities, and donations, this obligation does not cover all public officials, leaving gaps in accountability. Moreover, there are no rules requiring TI entities, affiliates, or lobbyists to disclose interactions with government officials.

6. Conflict of Interest

Fiji lacks explicit legal restrictions preventing political parties, candidates, or campaigns from receiving contributions from BAT Fiji. While the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 requires transparency in political financing, it does not prohibit TI donations. Similarly, the Electoral Act 2014 contains no provisions restricting such contributions.

Although the Fiji Law Reform Commission is reviewing electoral legislation, the government continues to engage with BAT Fiji's CSR initiatives, including high-profile events and partnerships.

7. Preventive Measures

There are significant gaps in Fiji's preventive measures against TI influence. Currently, there are no formal disclosure procedures, no specific code of conduct, and no structured awareness programs within government departments regarding WHO FCTC Article 5.3 guidelines.

The Ministry of Health has attempted to address this by drafting a cabinet submission aimed at informing Parliamentarians about Article 5.3 and the risks of TI interference. However, no systematic approach exists to ensure that officials fully understand the importance of protecting public health policies from industry manipulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reinforce existing policies and enforcement frameworks to limit TI influence, ensuring consistent application of WHO FCTC Article 5.3 guidelines.
2. Establish clear guidelines and a code of conduct for government officials, limiting engagement with the TI to cases where it is strictly necessary, with mandatory training and accountability mechanisms.
3. Strengthen preventive measures to address conflicts of interest and reduce TI influence in policymaking.
4. Establish a dedicated monitoring body to track TI activities and government responses, ensuring vigilance and independent oversight.