

Uruguay

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Summary of Findings

1. Industry participation in policy development

The tobacco control regulations in Uruguay do not allow the government to accept support or support any offer of assistance from or in collaboration with the tobacco industry in the establishment or implementation of public health policies in relation to tobacco control. The tobacco industry cannot participate in the Inter-Agency Tobacco Control Advisory Commission (government advisory body) or the National Tobacco Control Programme.

Despite this, the government cancelled the prohibition on the marketing of heated tobacco products, substantiating the measure with arguments that align with the interests of the tobacco industry, and even mentions scientific evidence that does not exist and/or does not support the argument.

The Delegation of Uruguay to the last Conference of the Parties (COP) and other meetings related to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) had not been composed of representatives of the tobacco industry.

2. Industry CSR activities

In Uruguay, tobacco-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are prohibited. But despite this current rule, in 2020 the government sent "food" baskets to inmates, which included packs of cigarettes, as can be seen in the photos published in the press.

3. Benefits to the industry

Regulations that allow international travelers to buy and bring in tax-free tobacco remain in place; the amount allowed varies, non-residents in the country can bring in more tobacco than residents.

At the end of 2019, the government granted an exemption to agrochemicals used in tobacco plantations (among others) and also remains in force.

Moreover, the Executive Branch eliminated the prohibition on marketing heated tobacco products in addition to the tax rising below inflation.

4. Unnecessary interaction

There is no evidence that high-level government officials are interacting with tobacco companies. But in particular the Governor of Artigas has publicly shown his support for tobacco plantations in his State, and this support has been broadcast by the press.

5. Transparency

There is no evidence that the Executive Branch holds meetings with the tobacco industry.

There is also no regulation establishing the disclosure of such meetings.

6. Conflict of interest

The government is prohibited from accepting all forms of contributions/gifts from the tobacco industry (monetary or otherwise), including assistance offers, policy projects or study visits. However, during the current president's last election campaign, he claimed to have received money from Uruguay's main tobacco industry.

7. Preventive measures

The Ministry of Health does not have a procedure for disclosing records of interaction (such as agendas, attendees, minutes and results) with the tobacco industry and its representatives. The government as a whole has not formulated a policy, nor has it adopted any code of conduct for officials, as well as on the disclosure of records in their dealings with the tobacco industry.

Recommendations

While Uruguay still has good tobacco control measures, increased interference from the tobacco industry is now a threat to what has been achieved.

The industry should not continue to receive benefits, and should not be allowed to roll back the standards achieved. Regulations that are favorable for the development and growth of this industry should not be passed, and its new products should not be allowed to be promoted, nor should sales to youth. To begin to curb this interference, it is necessary to improve the implementation of Article 5.3, focusing on:

1. Developing a code of conduct that applies to all government officials when dealing with or interacting with the tobacco industry.
2. Require the tobacco industry to provide information on marketing or other activities, such as lobbying, political contributions and all other activities.