

Iraq

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Summary of Findings

1. Industry participation in policy development

It is not clearly known to what extent private tobacco importing companies influence the development of policies for controlling tobacco use in Iraq. This is due to the lack of available evidence that can be used to prove this, however there are strong suspicions that these companies are blocking the issuance of the amendment to the Law on Combating Harms of Tobacco. This amendment is still for three years in discussion inside the offices of the government.

The government fully supports Baghdad tobacco factories which belong to the Ministry of Industry. These factories are run by the private sector through investment. The Central Organization for Standardization and Quality Control in Iraq invites representatives of local cigarette and tobacco import companies to attend meetings related to setting standards for tobacco products and allows them to contribute to setting these specifications despite the objection of representatives of the Ministry of Health.

2. Industry CSR activities

Private tobacco companies importing tobacco into Iraq do not have any public benefit or involvement in community development projects.

3. Benefits to the industry

The most important aspects that benefit private tobacco importing companies are weak control of the borders. This facilitates smuggling and leads to bad types of tobacco products entering the country.

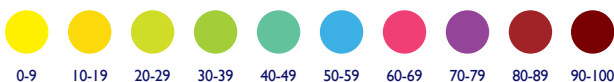
Tax on the importation of cigarettes is low and this leads to low prices of cigarettes and tobacco in Iraq, which are considered to be among the cheapest in the world.

The delay in legislating the new tobacco law raises questions on the extent of the influence of these companies on decision-makers.

4. Unnecessary interaction

The Minister of Industry and Minerals, Muhammad Shi`a al-Sudani, inaugurated the Baghdad Tobacco factory. He said that this is to support the national industry and to make a competition to the imported tobacco product, which costs Iraq millions of dollars. In fact, the Ministry of Trade in Iraq has distributed locally produced (Somar) cigarettes within the items of the free food ration program, which is distributed to families with limited income free of charge.

On July 21, 2020, the Minister of Industry and Minerals, Manhal Aziz Al-Khabbaz, announced that the Somar cigarette factory will be available to be run by the private sector through investment. He emphasized that the Ministry is working to create investment opportunities and a real partnership with international companies and the private sector to advance the Iraqi industrial reality.



5. Transparency

The transparency in Iraq has begun to decline for quite some time now, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic; there is still no procedure in place to ensure transparency. There are no government rules for the disclosure or registration of tobacco industry entities.

6. Conflict of interest

There is no publicly available data on senior retired officials taking part in the tobacco industry and the government does not have in place any procedure to prohibit contributions from the tobacco industry.

7. Preventive measures

Iraq does not have a plan for implementation of Article 5.3. There is no procedure in place to disclose the government's interaction with the tobacco industry. The government has not adopted or implemented a code of conduct for public officials in their dealings with the tobacco industry. The state tobacco company (Somar) announced some information about its tobacco production, revenue and any future plans while the Iraqi private tobacco trade companies do not have to do that.

There is no requirement for the industry to submit other information such as market share, marketing expenditures, lobbying, philanthropy and others. There is no publicly available information to show the government has a program or plan to consistently raise awareness on Article 5.3 Guidelines within its departments. Further, the National Tobacco Control section is a small tab on the public health directorate website and provides no information.

Recommendations

1. The government is required to put in place appropriate measures that permanently prohibit smoking in public places and provide protection for non-smokers from the effects of secondhand smoke, through strict follow-up to the implementation of the Anti-Smoking Law No. 19 of 2012.
2. The government is asked to make more efforts by pressing the House of Representatives to legislate the amendment to the Tobacco Control Law, which has been in place for three years.
3. The government is required to subject all shipments of tobacco products for quality checks at borders and to ensure that they comply with Iraqi standards and specifications, and to register all shipments that enter the borders.
4. The government is required to control the borders and prevent the smuggling of tobacco products through illegal outlets.
5. The Ministry of Commerce should not distribute locally produced cigarettes within the items of the free food ration program which is run by the government to low-income people.
6. There must be a procedure in place to disclose the records of government interaction with the tobacco industry. A code of conduct should be adopted by the government to guide officials when dealing with the tobacco industry. The Ministry of Health, through its Tobacco Control Program, could take the lead in writing those procedures.
7. The tobacco industry should be required to submit information on tobacco production, manufacture, market share, marketing expenditures, revenues and any other activity, including lobbying, philanthropy, political contributions and all other activities.
8. The government should work on raising awareness within its ministries on policies related to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Article 5.3. Similar activities could be coordinated between the Ministry of Health through its National Tobacco Program, NGOs and scientific societies.