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UCT study finds cigarettes market increasing in Africa

A study conducted by the University of Cape Town's [Economics of Tobacco Control Project \(ETCP\)](#), titled [Trends in cigarette demand and supply in Africa](#), has found that Africa has become a prime target for tobacco companies that now see it as a major destination for tobacco production and consumption.

As a developing continent, Africa has become an attractive market for the tobacco industry given its increases in income, population size, foreign direct investment as well as improved life expectancy. Consumers in Africa are now able to afford cigarettes and coupled with weak tobacco control laws, this has resulted in the tobacco industry focusing its attention on increasing its market presence.

The study found 62 cigarette production facilities in 30 African countries. However, production growth and restructuring have resulted in industry consolidation creating five African main tobacco producing hubs: South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt and Algeria.

As tobacco production is increasing in Africa, so too is consumption. The study examined cigarette consumption in 22 countries which host 80% of the continent's population and found that between 1990 and 2012, cigarette consumption increased from 165.6 billion to 238.5 billion cigarettes, or by 44%. "This upward trend in consumption continues today," Nicole Vellios, a Researcher at the ETCP and co-author of the study, contends.

Even though the total cigarette demand in Africa seems to be primarily driven by population growth, many countries also report increasing smoking rates. The study finds that higher production is able to satisfy the increasing demand for cigarettes on the continent. For example, British American Tobacco Nigeria serves both the local and international markets, with one factory producing for the domestic market only, and another that functions as an export base.

"Tobacco companies are thriving on the continent due to the weak anti-tobacco and tax laws in many African countries," argues Dr Hana Ross, a Principal Researcher at the ETCP and co-author of the study. Whilst SA's tobacco control legislation is in some respect comparatively better, its legislation still doesn't hold up to anti-tobacco laws in many developed countries.

A 2015 survey found that 20% of SA's population smokes. Smoking in SA dropped from 33% to 20% between 1993 and 2010 and appears to have plateaued at that level. Interestingly, smoking prevalence is high amongst coloured and white men, compared to other race groups and women.

The study calls for better data collection in Africa to support evidence-based policy that can respond more powerfully to the emerging tobacco epidemic in Africa.

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