

One cigarette at a time, the tobacco industry is turning the ocean to ashes



From the earliest stages of cigarette production, the tobacco industry endangers both of our planet's lungs: its forests and the ocean.

The tobacco industry is suffocating our planet.

It all starts at the root, where tobacco cultivation destroys lands and forests. This deforestation, in turn, exacerbates climate change, leading to increased ocean acidity and temperatures that profoundly affect marine life.

Each year, 600 million trees and 200,000 hectares of land are sacrificed to tobacco cultivation and leaf curing, resulting in soil depletion, loss of biodiversity, and desertification.

200 000
hectares of land
are sacrificed each year

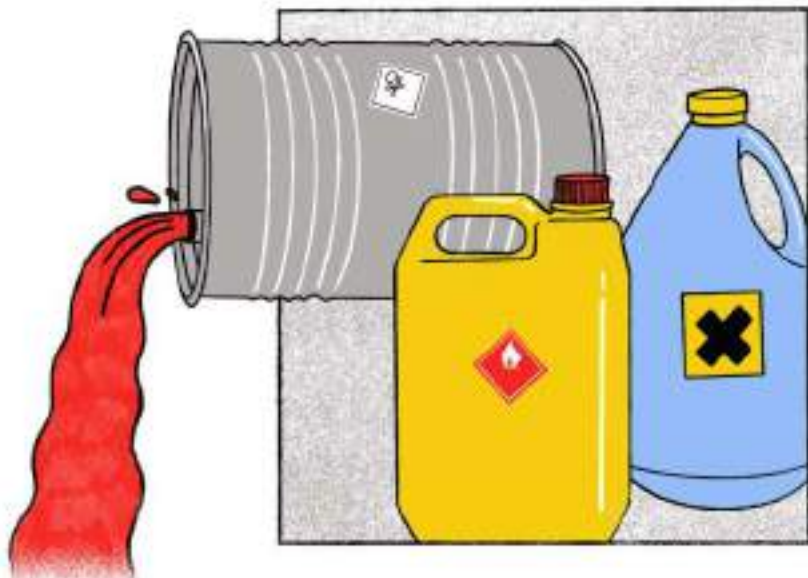
600
million trees
are cut down
every year

The tobacco industry's production, processing, and transportation activities contribute significantly to global warming, with a carbon footprint equivalent to 1/5th of the annual CO₂ emissions from the commercial airline industry, increasing the risk of irreversible loss of marine and coastal ecosystems.



Tobacco: a thirsty and polluting crop

It takes 3,7L of water to make one cigarette.



Tobacco cultivation involves substantial use of chemicals, such as pesticides, fertilizers, and growth regulators, which contaminate the soil, groundwater, and aquatic ecosystems through runoff.

22 billion

tons of water devoured each year
by world tobacco production

4.5 trillion

cigarette butts are thrown on the ground
and end up in waterways and the ocean

The cigarette butt, a toxic plastic bomb...

Each year, 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are thrown on the ground and end up in waterways and the ocean. These cigarette butts, mainly made of plastic (cellulose acetate), break down into micro and nano plastic particles when exposed to water, releasing the 7,000 toxic chemical substances they contain, such as nicotine, arsenic, mercury, ammonia, and lead. Specifically, nicotine from the butts can seep into water within 24 hours, potentially contaminating up to 1,000 litres of water and persisting in sediments for at least 60 days.

7,000

toxic chemical
substances released
into the water

...poisoning marine ecosystems.

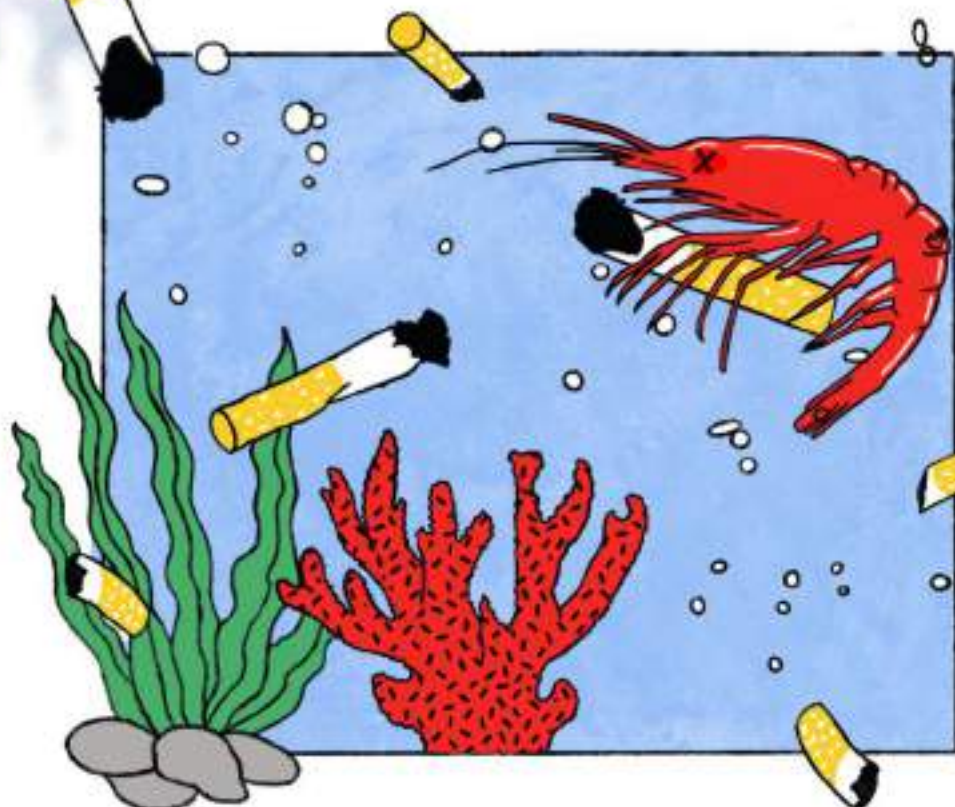
Microplastics and chemicals present in cigarette butts have a profound impact on fauna and flora as soon as they enter the environment:

- the growth of marine plants is inhibited, jeopardizing the quality of water and marine life.
- aquatic organisms, birds, mammals, turtles, and crabs can ingest these plastics and pollutants, adversely affecting their behaviour, reproduction, and health.

In fact, laboratory studies further reveal that cigarette butt waste can release enough toxins to cause a 50% mortality rate in fish within 96 hours.

50%

Fish mortality rate within 96 hours
caused by cigarette butt toxins



50 million

tons of electrical and electronic waste produced worldwide



The industry is renewing itself and polluting more and more.

Cigarette butts are now joined by new types of waste: disposable electronic cigarettes, or "puffs". These new marketing products offered by the industry are made of plastic and lithium batteries, contributing to the already-existing plastic and electronic pollution.

These devices add to the over 50 million tons of electrical and electronic waste produced worldwide. Batteries, which already require a great deal of water for lithium extraction, release heavy metals (such as mercury, lead, and bromine), acid, and nicotine when they end up in the environment, damaging the health of our ecosystem.

Designed for single-use and non-recyclable, as the batteries are directly moulded into the plastic, these disposable electronic cigarettes contribute to global plastic pollution.

To summarize...

Every year, tobacco products generate an astronomical amount of waste, comprising over 680,000 tons of cigarette butts, approximately 907,184 tons of waste from tobacco manufacturing, and an estimated 25 million tons from the complete tobacco life cycle. This is not to mention the impact and waste associated with new electronic tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco, which also have a devastating impact on the environment.



680 000

tons of cigarette butts

907 184

tons of waste from tobacco manufacturing

25 million

tons of waste from the complete tobacco life cycle



Faced with this alarming reality, the tobacco industry tries to conceal the harmful consequences of tobacco farming, production, consumption, and waste on the environment, ocean, farmers, and communities. The industry employs deceptive tactics, engaging in seemingly positive environmental activities like tree planting, anti-litter campaigns, and donations to environmental organizations, all aimed at hiding the true extent of the impacts.

It is urgent to enforce the polluter-pays principle and hold tobacco companies accountable for the decades-long damage they have caused, including harm to ecosystems and ocean life.



**The tobacco industry is also killing the environment.
Be aware of the real impacts of this industry and help preserve
our ocean by not littering any cigarette butts or tobacco
products in the environment.**

To quit smoking : WHO quitting toolkit :

https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/world-no-tobacco-day-2021/who-quitting-toolkit.pdf?sfvrsn=eb787df5_8&download=true



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