

Philip Morris looking towards cigarette phase-out

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Tobacco giant Philip Morris is aiming to stop selling conventional cigarettes and replace them with a less harmful product, its chief executive said Wednesday.

As the firm launched its smokeless iQOS cigarette in Britain, Andre Calantzopoulos told BBC radio that the company would try to move smokers over to the new product.

The iQOS heats tobacco rather than burns it and it is claimed that smokers get the same hit of nicotine, but 90 percent less of the toxins present in cigarette smoke.

It is already available in Japan and Italy, and in Switzerland where Philip Morris International (PMI) is based.

"I believe that there will come a moment in time where we have sufficient adoption of this alternative product and sufficient awareness to start envisaging, together with governments, a phase-out period for cigarettes," said Calantzopoulos.

"I hope this time will come soon."

Marlboro maker Philip Morris is the world's second-biggest cigarette producer by market share, after the state-owned China National Tobacco Corporation.

PMI has spent \$3 billion on creating the iQOS substitute cigarette, the BBC reported.

"For us, it's to offer our consumers the best product we can in a category that we all know is addictive and causes harm," Calantzopoulos.

"Once we have the alternative, as we have today, we offer them the alternative and will do everything we can to convince them to switch to these products."

Most global tobacco firms are looking to emerging markets to offset sliding demand in Western Europe, where high taxes, public smoking bans and health concerns have persuaded many people to give up or turn to e-cigarettes, battery-powered devices that heat a nicotine liquid.

Action on Smoking and Health, a British anti-smoking lobby, said the iQOS should be regulated like other [tobacco products](#) unless independent evidence can prove it is less harmful than regular smoking.

"If smokers switch to electronic cigarettes or other products that can be shown to cut the risks to their health, this could lead to a big improvement in public health," said ASH [chief executive](#) Deborah Arnott.

"But we need independent evidence to support any claims made by the [tobacco](#) industry.

"From past experience, nothing the [tobacco companies](#) say should be accepted at face value."

Worldwide, smoking claims around six million lives annually, mostly in low-income countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) says.

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