

Tobacco industry claims on cigarette packaging are nonsense

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Claims that replacing alluring designs on cigarette packs with a plain standardised look will increase illegal tobacco production are baseless - according to a [new report](#) published today (Friday) by an international expert.

Evidence in the report – already acknowledged in recent tobacco industry documents – demolishes arguments against the introduction of plain packs and shows that counterfeit producers find all existing packs easy to forge. Plain, standardised packs are unlikely to cause a rush of new [counterfeiters](#) making more packs.

The report by Luk Joossens - who has advised the World Bank, the [European Commission](#) and [World Health Organization](#) on illicit tobacco trade - was commissioned by Cancer Research UK as the government weighs up the pros and cons of plain packaging after a public consultation.

It shows that counterfeit packs are so cheap to make they can hardly become much cheaper and plain packaging will not significantly affect their final price.

The overall cost of manufacturing a 20-pack of counterfeit cigarettes is around 10 to 15 pence – of which up to a third is estimated to be on packaging. They are typically sold in the UK for around £3.

The report also shows that it is effective government action that has been successful in cutting the [illicit trade](#).

UK taxes have not been paid on nine percent of cigarettes smoked in this country. This has fallen from 21 per cent in 2000/01 but for those focussed on health it needs to fall further.

Luk Joossens, report author and international expert on illicit tobacco trade, said: "The tobacco industry claims that plain packs would be easier to counterfeit. The reality is that all packs are easy to counterfeit and that counterfeiters are able to provide top quality packaging at low prices in a short time. Plain packaging will not make any difference to the counterfeit business."

Australia is due to be the first country in the world to put all tobacco products in plain standardised packs. Other countries are likely to follow with New Zealand strongly indicating it may be next.

Jean King, Cancer Research UK's director of tobacco control, said: "The tobacco industry has a track record of facilitating smuggling and often says policies that cut smoking will increase smuggling, even though smuggling has been falling for a decade. Claims that plain packaging will cause a rush of illegal tobacco into the UK are ridiculous.

"The tobacco industry is making these claims while fighting the idea of plain packs – the new policy it most fears. Putting all [tobacco products](#) in standardised packs will reduce their appeal to children and help lead to fewer young people becoming addicted to cigarettes.

"The [tobacco industry](#) has no credibility and should

remain at arm's length from any health initiatives that are designed to reduce smoking rates. We urge the UK government to respond to the consultation as soon as possible. The answer is plain - standardised packaging won't stop everyone from smoking but it will give millions of young people one less reason to start."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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