

Broken Promise:

Philip Morris International is Not Quitting Cigarettes

In 2016, PMI claimed it would “change society and deliver a better, smoke-free future.” It later committed to “a world without cigarettes,” promising to slash annual sales from more than 700 billion sticks to fewer than 550 billion by 2025. The tobacco giant is nowhere close to hitting its target, according to researchers from the University of Bath.

Here are 6 reasons why we can't believe PMI:



1 Cigarette sales were falling in line with global trends (and PMI did nothing to further reduce them)

Global cigarette sales (outside China) began falling in 2008. PMI's sales followed the trend in 2012. The trend arose, in part, because more nations were introducing measures to reduce tobacco use, including taxation and smoke-free legislation, which encouraged more people to quit. It wasn't because of any tobacco industry goodwill.



2 The target was conservative, one that PMI 'must have known it could easily meet'

The target PMI announced in 2020—and reiterated in 2022—was described as “aspirational.” Cigarette shipment figures tell a different story. Had PMI cigarette sales continued to decline at almost 4% a year—the trend when PMI made its announcement—it would have reached about 510 billion sticks in 2025, well below its target, researchers found. It is nowhere near that number.



3 PMI's declining cigarette sales began to stall in 2020 during the pandemic

Despite evidence showing tobacco use worsened COVID-19 outcomes, PMI continued marketing its products, investing in new cigarette brands and businesses, forging manufacturing deals and interfering with policy across the globe. As of 2022, PMI remained the largest cigarette company by sales outside of China.

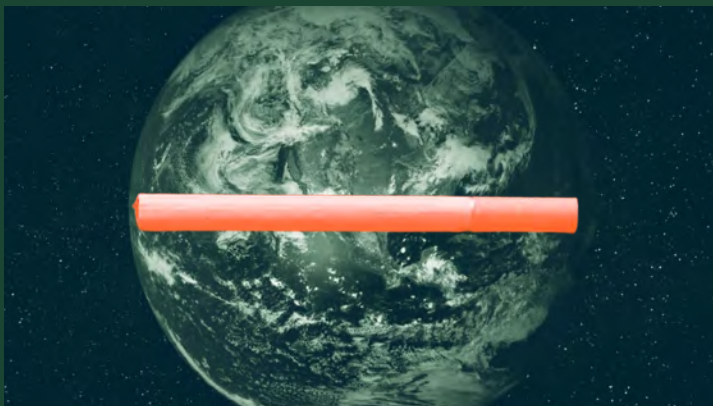


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4 PMI used falling sales to boost its image

While PMI continued spending billions on marketing cigarettes, the company cast declining cigarette sales as evidence it was “transforming.” At the same time, it reassured investors about the health of its cigarette business.



5 PMI still sells enough cigarettes to wrap around the world hundreds of times

Projections for 2025 show PMI is expected to sell at least 613 billion cigarettes (and perhaps as many as 623 billion), the paper says. That’s more than 60 billion over PMI’s promised target. It’s a drop from shipments in 2008, when more governments started implementing policies as part of a global treaty to reduce tobacco use, but it’s still staggering. If one were to line up those cigarettes end to end, they’d circle the equator more than 1,300 times.



6 PMI’s idea of ‘transforming’ is to fuel the next generation of addiction

Evidence shows when PMI says “smoke-free future,” it wants more people to use its controversial heated tobacco products, e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches. True transformation, researchers explain, means “verifiable progress toward eliminating production and sale of conventional tobacco products within five years.” That isn’t happening. In fact, PMI claims it needs to maintain its cigarette dominance to fund these other risky products.

PMI has a History

PMI has a history of saying it's interested in public health while undermining measures to reduce tobacco use. Meanwhile, its cigarette business continues as usual. Policymakers should reject PMI claims because the company can't be part of the solution to the global tobacco epidemic it helped create.

Read the paper: bit.ly/3M2UTN2



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