

### DILEMMA

# What are the options for green smokers?

Tobacco production is costing the earth, says Lucy Siegle, so your green credentials go up in smoke every time you light up



There is no escaping the fact that keeping 1.2bn smokers in declining health uses up a huge amount of the earth's capacity. Were

this land and effort given over to growing food, some 10 to 20m of the globe's 28m malnourished inhabitants could be fed.

Naturally, the tobacco industry tries to wash away the guilt. Beginning with British American Tobacco in 2002, each of the big players (just 10 brands control a quarter of the tobacco industry) began to roll out an annual corporate social responsibility (CSR) report, as if it were producing vegan nut cutlets as opposed to cancer sticks.

Tobacco CSR reports do show progress in terms of lower input methods on farms, which increase sustainability and reduce incidences of soil erosion. They do not, however, dwell on the wider ecological impacts. Globally, one in eight trees is cut down for tobacco production; nearly 600m trees are chopped down each year to provide fuel just to dry out tobacco. Losing 51m acres of canopy for tobacco – according to recent research – equates to the production of nearly 5 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions.

Big Tobacco has famously fled to the developing world. By 2010, 87 per cent of the world's tobacco will be grown there. Such a rapid depletion of trees in an already semi-arid climate leads to desertification, as has already happened in Uganda, where valuable arable land has been lost. It leads to the stark choice: cigarettes or food?

We eco smokers (until recently I was part of this sheepish gang) know deep down that the planet has to work overtime to sustain our habit. So we salve our guilt with supposedly greener cigarettes. Traditionally, this has meant roll-up cigarettes with a reputation for being 'cleaner' and chemical-free. Fine, except that research shows the reverse to be true. Their only eco plus point is that at least they don't leave a toxic cigarette stub to wash into watercourses.

American Spirit is the best-known and most widely available organic tobacco, best friend to those of us who can't (or won't) kick the habit but want to nurture the earth and make sure a proportion of the 33m tobacco workers aren't subjected to repeated doses of heavy pesticides. So which artisanal, Native American co-operative lovingly produces these leaves? RJ Reynolds – America's second-biggest tobacco company.

It is no surprise that the industry is falling over itself to offer organic and fairly traded tobaccos. It's an unparalleled marketing opportunity in a market which, thanks to legislation and education, was thought to be finished. Green tobacco helps to keep a deadly industry in rude health. The fact is that there is really no such thing as an ethical cigarette, and it's time to put that in your pipe and (not) smoke it.



*The Observer Magazine, 2008*

### Tekst 3 What are the options for green smokers?

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- 3p 4 Geef van elk van de onderstaande beweringen aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van de tekst.
- 1 Replacing tobacco crops with food crops could help in solving the global hunger problem.
  - 2 Each tobacco company has its own ecological policy, disregarding the need for global co-operation.
  - 3 The tobacco industry has greatly expanded its market by moving to the developing world.
  - 4 The production of roll-up cigarettes is environmentally friendly.
  - 5 The tobacco industry has turned to growing organic tobacco in order to survive.
  - 6 Green smokers are under the illusion that they contribute to a sustainable environment.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door “wel” of “niet”.

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#### Bronvermelding

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