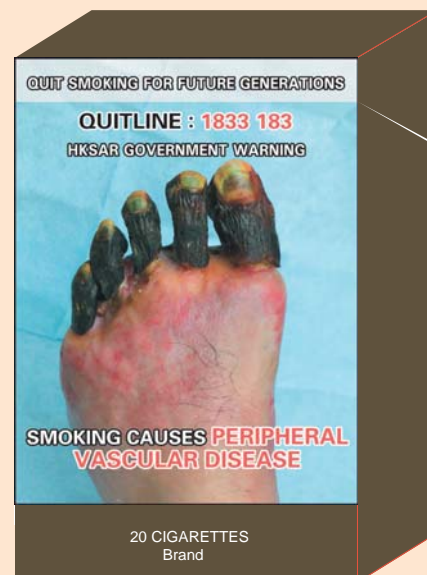


Fact Sheet on Plain Packaging

What is plain packaging?

- Plain packaging is also known as standardized packaging.
- Requires all form of tobacco branding to be labeled with standardized regulation. Trade marks, graphics and logos should be detached.
- Brand name should be displayed in a standard font, colour and location of the cigarette pack.

Mock-up:



Reasons for plain packaging

- Research has proved that pictorial health warnings could reduce the attractiveness of smoking, increase quit intention and deter youth from smoking. Larger warnings could educate smokers and the public on the health hazards of smoking.
- Plain packaging could further reduce the attractiveness of tobacco products, increase knowledge on smoking hazards and hence reduce demand on tobacco. The glamorous design of cigarette packs serves as channels of promotion to mislead and induce youngsters to smoke. Plain packaging could eliminate the advertising and branding effects of the cigarette packs.

Australia's experience confirmed the efficacy

- Australia has implemented plain packaging since December 2012. It successfully reduced the smoking prevalence of those aged 14 or above from 19.6% to 17.4% in September 2015, in which, 0.55% can be attributed to plain packaging. It is effective in motivating smoking cessation and preventing uptake and relapse of smoking.
- According to the study of Cancer Council Victoria in Australia, smokers who smoked the cigarettes in plain pack had higher intention to quit, perceived cigarette to be lower in quality, perceived cigarette as less satisfying and rated smoking cessation at higher priority in their lives.
- The study also showed that points for smokers to purchase tobacco products remained the same before and after the introduction of plain packaging. Furthermore, no additional time was required for the sellers to identify the cigarettes in 2 months after the adoption of plain packaging. It reflected that plain packaging would not cause negative impact to the small business.

- According to the Australian government’s record, seized cases of illicit cigarette have remained steady since 2007. The number of cases seized in post implementation period (2013-14) was even smaller than the pre-implementation years (2012-13, 2009-10 and 2007-08). Several surveys found that percentage of smokers purchasing and using illicit tobacco was dropped in 2013. The argument of the tobacco industry that plain packaging would worsen the situation of cigarette smuggling is false and invalid.
- Tobacco industry made use of litigation to intimidate and deter the Australian government from introducing plain packaging. However, Australia’s High Court, the Permanent Court of Arbitration and World Trade Organization have already dismissed the application of the tobacco industry. On the other hand, London’s High Court has also rejected tobacco industry’s appeal against UK government’s implementation of plain packaging.



Plain packaging requires the removal of trademarks, graphics and logos on the packs of tobacco products. Brand name should be displayed in a standard font, colour and location and smoking cessation hotline should be added.

A global trend recommended by WHO

- Dr Margaret CHAN, Director-General of World Health Organization particularly highlighted the effectiveness of plain packaging in the 16th World Conference on Tobacco or Health. Other countries were encouraged to adopt plain packaging and larger health warnings of 85% or more.
- To call for the adoption of plain packaging, “Get Ready for Plain Packaging” was marked as the theme for World No Tobacco Day 2016 by WHO.
- Since Australia successfully implemented plain packaging in 2012, more and more countries plan to introduce the same measure. European Union has also issued a directive to encourage member states to implement plain packaging.

- Apart from plain packaging, many countries has enlarged or are planning to enlarge the size of pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs, such as Nepal (90%), Vanuatu (90%), India (85%), Thailand (85%) and Uruguay (80%).
- In June 2017, the Legislative Council passed the amendment to enlarge the size of pictorial health warnings to 85% of the cigarette pack area and increase the number of forms of health warning from six to twelve. The measure has come into full operation since 21 June 2018. COSH advocates implementation of plain packaging in Hong Kong in the next few years to further restrain the use of cigarette packs to promote smoking.

Countries implemented/confirmed to implement plain packaging

Australia (2012); France, United Kingdom and Hungary (2016); Ireland and Norway (2017); New Zealand (2018); European Union, Uruguay and Thailand (2019); Slovenia (2020)

Countries considering plain packaging

Belgium, Canada, Finland, Nepal, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Sweden



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