

Growing Tobacco

Tobacco is grown in over 125 countries, on over 4 million hectares of land, a third of which is in China alone. The global tobacco crop is worth approximately US\$20 billion, a small fraction of the total amount generated from the sale of manufactured tobacco products.

Tobacco is grown on less than one percent of the world's agricultural land, and on a wide variety of soils and climates. Since the 1960s, the bulk of production has moved from the Americas to Africa and Asia; land devoted to tobacco growing has been halved in the USA, Canada and Mexico, but has almost doubled in China, Malawi and United Republic of Tanzania.

The production of tobacco leaves has more than doubled since the 1960s, totalling nearly 7 million metric tons in 2000.

The greater use of fertilisers and pesticides, as well as the increased mechanisation, that have produced these higher yields are environmentally damaging. The problem does not end with growing tobacco: the processes used in curing tobacco leaves cause massive deforestation.

There are millions of tobacco farmers worldwide. The tobacco industry exploits them by contributing to their debt burden, while using their economic plight to argue against efforts to control tobacco. In the USA, the bond between the tobacco industry and the tobacco farmer finally is beginning to break down, and partnerships are developing between the farmers and the public health community.

5 countries produce 2/3 of the world's tobacco

