

Briefing Note

Smoking and Health and Regulatory Issues

Smoking Methods

Progress continues towards the adoption by ISO of the revised standard applicable to all cigarettes including those with Actron filters. The changes will be embodied in a set of revisions which are recommended by a Coresta Task Force seeking harmonisation of testing methods. Currently, voting on the draft standard is taking place. Difficulties with R J Reynolds over the minimum tar level appear to have been resolved on the basis that the experimental results can be expressed in different ways in different countries, e.g. dependant on whether there is one central laboratory (as in the U.S.A.) or a number of laboratories (a possible situation in the E.C.).

Within the BAT Group there have been some practical problems associated with the introduction of the revised methods e.g. in BAT Benalux, but these have now been resolved.

Additives/Constituents of Tobacco Smoke

Within the BAT Group the completion of the Central Additives Register is being attended to with urgency in view of the increasing interest being shown by Regulatory Authorities in this area. The current position of the Central Additives Register is discussed in a separate note. The position within the E.C. on tobacco additives is unclear except that intelligence suggests that both German and U.K. Regulatory bodies would like to see their views imposed on the E.C. To this end a BAT initiative, developed from the German list of additives, is being prepared as a basis for a possible approach to the E.C.

In Australia recently a major consumer's association began a media campaign to inform the public about tobacco additives, pesticide residues and chemical constituents of tobacco smoke. In advertisements and television programmes attention was drawn to the fact that tobacco smoke contains chemicals that are also present in e.g. paint strippers, rocket fuel, mothballs etc. Concern was also expressed about what was being added to tobacco smoke in the form of additives during processing and pesticide residues. As a result of this activity, the Minister of Health has written a letter to tobacco companies requesting disclosure of additives (name, use and amount) and agricultural chemicals. The industry is seeking a meeting with the Minister to impress upon him the confidentiality of this information and to reassure him about the industry's use of additives in the Australian market.

In New Zealand, legislation which has just been passed requires manufacturers to observe limits for "harmful constituents" in tobacco. Although it is not clear from legislation what is meant by "harmful constituents", it is believed to include additives. Again, pressure groups are demanding that these "harmful constituents" should also be listed on packs or on pack inserts.

Scientific Research

1. Genetics

There has been considerable recent publicity given to papers claiming to have established a genetically determined factor which predisposes to lung cancer. As yet the original scientific publications are not available so that detailed comments cannot be made, but as BAT funds original research in this area expert opinion on the significance of this work will be available.

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2. Addiction

Whilst many scientists continue to promulgate the view that nicotine is an addictive drug on a par with heroin and cocaine, other scientists are trying to put nicotine into the same category as caffeine: i.e. it is not a drug of abuse. The latter scientists concentrate on putting forward the benefits of nicotine i.e. improved attention, concentration and performance, relief of stress. A number of scientific conferences have been held on the subject of nicotine over the past 12 months (in Florence, Sweden and Hamburg) where such views have been presented. BAT is funding research in this area in the UK (Professor I. Hindmarch, Professor J.A. Gray) and Canada (Dr. V. Knott). Considerable media attention has been given to the work of Professor Gray and his colleagues suggesting that nicotine can improve some of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

Environmental Tobacco Smoke

Legislation banning smoking in public places and the workplace continues to be introduced in many countries around the world, including New Zealand, Chile and Guatemala. Industry strategy currently concentrates on pre-empting ETS as an issue where it has not yet arisen by focussing attention on indoor and outdoor pollution concerns; and being better prepared to handle the issue with media and government when it is raised by carrying out local research on local levels of ETS constituents/other chemicals in indoor air and the external environment, and identifying local scientists to be trained as experts in the field. One such programme, to achieve these aims, is already in place in the Far East (supported by BATCo/B&W, FM, RJR & Japan Tobacco) and another is proposed for Latin America.

Following the circulation to operating companies of a strategy document and supporting package entitled "ETS: Improving The Quality of Public Debate", a more detailed package of strategies and supporting materials is being prepared. The request for this came from BATCo. operating companies in the Far East and the package will deal with the following subjects:

- Smoking in public places.
- Smoking in the workplace.
- Smoking aboard aircraft.
- Smoking in public transport.
- Scientific aspects of ETS.
- How to pre-empt the ETS issue.
- Indoor air quality.
- How to respond to legislation on ETS.

The package should be available by the end of October.

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