

The Environmental Impact of Tobacco

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We've all heard the reasons why tobacco is harmful to our health, and even the health of others. But did you know that tobacco is actually harmful to the environment as well? Tobacco products harm the environment through production, use and improper disposal. Evidence shows environmental damages from tobacco agriculture include not only pesticides, herbicides and fungicides that are not always friendly to the rest of us, but also damages from deforestation. The chemicals used throughout the entire growing season to grow tobacco can be harmful to animals, farmers and the ozone itself. Much of the damage being done comes from the volume of the chemicals that are used, about 27 million pounds per year in the United States alone ([Truth](#)). These chemicals can pollute groundwater, as well as waterways, used by populations downstream. These chemicals may find it easier to get downstream because of the deforestation used to make way for tobacco fields.

According to the [World Health Organization](#), in many developing countries, an estimated 500,000 acres of forests are cut down each year due to tobacco farming. In fact, Big Tobacco accounts for the removal of nearly 600 million trees every year in order to make room for new fields but also to provide fuel to cure the tobacco after harvest. The materials needed to create the packaging, rolling papers and filters also contribute to deforestation.

Aside from the damage done to the environment itself through deforestation and chemicals, the tobacco product waste creates an entirely different issue. Cigarette butts are the

most littered item in the world, with over 1.69 billion pounds of butts ending up as waste each year ([Truth](#)). These butts are resistant to deterioration as they aren't biodegradable. According to Truth, discarded cigarette butts can take anywhere from 18 months to 10 years to decompose! And don't let us even get started about the cellophane wrap, packages and lighters that get littered as well.

If you want to be a part of the solution, check out our [mini-grants](#) page, where you can get all the tools, such as the Cigarette Butt Cleanup, you need to join the fight against Big Tobacco and to help the world [#BreatheEasy](#).