A CALL FOR OPEN ACCESS DATA ON TOBACCO TAXATION

The Impact of Tobacco Consumption

• Tobacco consumption accounts for more than 8 million deaths annually, of which 1.2 million are attributable to second-hand smoking.¹

• It also affects household expenditure by shifting expenditure from necessities like food and education to tobacco expenditure.²,³

• Cigarette butts are the leading plastic polluters, with an estimated two-thirds of the trillions of filters used each year tossed into the environments, which inhibit plant growth and affect marine life.⁴,⁵

Why is Tobacco Taxation Data Important?

• Effective tobacco taxes significantly reduce tobacco consumption while simultaneously generating government revenue and curbing the public health effects of tobacco use.

• However, some governments are still reluctant to raise tobacco excise taxes as a result of the tobacco industry’s misleading claims that tobacco tax hikes lead to increased illicit cigarette trade.

• This creates a demand for evidence-based research on the advantages of tobacco taxation and its effects on illicit trade.

• Such evidence will motivate governments to implement tobacco tax increases.

• Sound research requires reliable data, which in turn drives a demand for tobacco taxation data.

Reliable Tobacco Tax Data Sources

• There is a misconception that tobacco tax data is non-existent but such data are routinely collected by governments.

• The Ministries of Finance and Customs Units are reliable data sources for excise tax revenue, tobacco import duties, general sales tax (GST) and value added tax (VAT) data.

• Policymakers should consider opening access to their data to ensure evidence-based research on tobacco taxation takes place.

Data Access and Data Quality

• Tobacco data are sometimes available through commercial “data brokers”.

• It is difficult to confirm the quality of commercially produced datasets, as access-restrictions hinder data scrutiny by the wider academic community.

• Open access data allows for data quality assessments.

• In order to promote sound research in tobacco taxation, we need to promote open access data.

Open Access Data Promotes Research

• The Data on Aliments, Tobacco and Alcohol (DATA) in Africa Project provides open access to economic data on alcohol, food, and tobacco for African countries.

• Researchers can either access data on the DATA portal or learn about where they can access data shared on other sites.

• Opening access to data as the DATA Project does, is a primary tool for promoting evidence-based research on tobacco taxes.

• Promoting evidence-based research on the benefits of tobacco taxation creates the gateway necessary for tobacco tax policy changes.

• Data owners should open access to their data to promote country-specific tobacco tax research.

Tobacco Tax Data for Research

• Researchers are often interested in tobacco tax data disaggregated by brands, time period (e.g. monthly or annually) and tobacco product (e.g. cigarettes, cigarillos).

• Such data should be available as open access to promote research.

Sources:


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