

# Big Alcohol

## Global Alcohol Policy Conference

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**Sven-Olov Carlsson**  
International President  
IOGT International

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# Why talk about alcohol?

- The harmful use of alcohol results in approximately **2.25 million deaths per year**
- World's **3rd largest risk factor for disease and disability**; in middle-income countries it is **No 1**
- Alcohol is a **causal factor in 60 types of diseases and injuries** and a component cause in 200 others.
- Almost **4% of all deaths worldwide are attributed to alcohol**, greater than deaths caused by HIV/AIDS, violence or tuberculosis.

# Why are we not talking about alcohol?

- The evidence is less clear than on tobacco i.e. low/minimal risk levels of drinking exist
- It is a legally consumed food product
- Many government departments deal with it i.e. trade, taxation, food standards, health, agriculture, licensing, policing, transport
- It is a very profitable industry with strong economic power

# How does Big Alcohol compare?

Revenues from global **tobacco sales** are estimated to be close to **\$500bn** generating combined profits for the six largest firms of **\$35 bn**

In 2008, global **alcohol sales** were estimated at **\$1,163 bn** and profits from the leading six companies of **\$48 bn**

COMPANY	PROFIT for 2012
Diageo	3.2bn £
Anheuser-Busch InBev's	15.5 billion \$
SABMiller	5.6 billion \$
Bacardi (Revenue)	5 billion \$
Constellation Brands	5.2 million \$
Pernod Ricard	8.6 billion €

# What are the prospects for Big Alcohol?

- The global alcoholic drinks industry is expected to exceed \$1 trillion in 2014
- Volume of consumption is predicted to reach almost 210 billion liters in 2014, a 10% increase in five years
- The EU represents almost 57% of the world alcoholic drinks market

# Big Alcohol – learning from the playbook of Big Tobacco

- **Deny there is a problem**
- **Limit product liability and transfer responsibility to consumers**
- **Claim behaviour cannot be regulated**
- **Undermine independent scientific research**
- **Insist on being part of the solution, while denying responsibility for the problem**
- **Create additional organisations to fill the policy space**

# Deny there is a problem

- Faced with growing evidence, acknowledge that a very **small minority of people** 'misuse' their products
- Frame attempts to regulate or control their product as a **disproportionate response to a small problem**



# Limit product liability

- The product is a legitimate and legal consumer product → it is the **behaviour of the consumer that is at fault**
- Alcohol producers are **distanced** emotionally, legally and financially from the harm caused





# Drinking behaviour cannot be regulated, so don't try

- Behaviour cannot be controlled by legislation  
Therefore legislation is an inappropriate policy option
- Use the failure of prohibition as an example of how regulation does not work



# Undermine independent scientific research

- Fund academics and research that supports the industry position, e.g highlighting positive aspects of the product from a social, cultural or health perspective.



# Insist on being part of the solution

- Encourage multi-stakeholder processes → Use these to **establish the industry as an equal and legitimate stakeholder** in **health** discussions
- Delay, block or challenge proposed policy actions



# Create additional bodies to fill the policy space

- designed to act as counterweight to NGOs
- they are both advocacy and corporate social responsibility bodies
- industry messages can be passed by seemingly independent organisations

**drinkaware.co.uk**  
for the facts about alcohol

**talking alcohol.com**



**International Center for Alcohol Policies**  
Analysis. Balance. Partnership.

# Change might be slow but not inevitable

## There needs to be encouraged:

- Shift in attention to, and understanding of alcohol= it is bad for health and carcinogenic
- Shift in governments 'frame' to understand alcohol= it is health issued should be dealt by Health Departments
- Evidence plays a key role in the process= acceptance of the unequivocal alcohol is harmful scientific evidence

*One person with a belief is equal to a  
force of 99 who have only interests*

**John Stuart Mill**

Thank you for your attention