



Fifty million people worldwide have died from tobacco-related causes over the past decade, according to a new report by the World Lung Foundation and the American Cancer Society.

The groups estimate that if current trends continue, a billion people will die from tobacco use and exposure in this century.

The Tobacco Atlas notes smoking rates in the developed world are on the decline, while rates are climbing in poorer areas of the world. Last year, tobacco use resulted in the deaths of almost 6 million people worldwide, with almost 80 percent occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

In China, tobacco is the number one killer, responsible for 1.2 million deaths per year, according to the atlas. That number is expected to grow to 3.5 million by 2030, Reuters reports.

The report said the tobacco industry has launched legal challenges to anti-tobacco policies such as plain cigarette packaging, laws banning smoking in public places, bans on advertising and health warnings on cigarette labels.

According to the report, the world's six biggest tobacco firms made \$35.1 billion in profits in 2010, an amount equal to the combined earnings of Coca-Cola, Microsoft and McDonald's.

"The tobacco industry thrives on ignorance of the true harms of tobacco use and using misinformation to subvert health policies that could save millions," Peter Baldini, Chief Executive Officer of the World Lung Foundation, said in a news release.