



**THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

---

**MEDIA RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

*10 October 2013*

**Millions of cigarettes seized in North West**

Following an anonymous tip-off, the Ramatlabama Border Policing Team recently seized over 3million illegal cigarettes at the border post in the North West Province.

The Seville brand of cigarettes which were non-compliant with the Tobacco Products Control and Customs and Excise Acts, were discovered hidden inside a tanker truck during a search conducted by SAPS and the SARS Tactical Intervention Unit. The truck driver, a Zimbabwean male was arrested and charged with possession of illicit cigarettes. He was detained by Mahikeng SAPS.

The illegal cigarette trade continues to be a major concern to authorities with research estimates putting it at 28% - 30% of the total cigarette market in South Africa. A large volume of illegal cigarettes, approximately 50%, makes its way into the country via Zimbabwe, while significant volumes, more than 45%, are also manufactured locally.

According to Francois van der Merwe, Chairman of the Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA), the Law Enforcement Agencies namely, SAPS and SARS are to be commended on their swift action leading to the seizure and arrest. The sale of these illegal cigarettes would have amounted to an almost R2million revenue loss to government, due to non-declaration and non-payment of excise duties and VAT.

TISA has actively been working towards a more collaborative approach in combating illicit trade not only in South Africa, but across the Southern African region. This intervention comes on the back end of the first Anti-Illicit Trade Summit held in Limpopo. Hosted by TISA, in partnership with the SAPS:DPCI and the University of Limpopo, the summit was a culmination of ongoing collaboration between the tobacco industry and law enforcement agencies to curb the scourge of illicit trade in Limpopo and the rest of the country. The two day discussions saw the recommitment from TISA, as a partner to government and law enforcement agencies who accepted taking ownership of implementing the outcomes of the Summit.

“Although significant progress has already been made to curb this growing tide, we believe that there should be increased resource allocation to enable greater law enforcement on the borders, and within the country where illicit trading is increasing as well as dedicated investigation teams. Furthermore, a co-ordinated approach involving SACU and SADC law enforcement authorities is needed to really eliminate the illicit trade in cigarettes. TISA remains committed to working with all the relevant parties in efforts to eradicate the illegal trade in tobacco products”, Van der Merwe concluded.

**-END-**

#### **Notes to the Editor**

A case has been opened at the SAPS Mahikeng: Case Number: 326/09/2013

The case has been handed to the Mahikeng Commercial Branch for further investigation.

Seizure took place at 09:00 on 22 September 2013

#### **Media Enquiries may be referred to:**

Mr Francois van der Merwe

Chairman and CEO

The Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa

Tel: +27 21 421 0011 (office hours)

Mobile: +27 82 891 6252

Email: [uvz@tobaccosa.co.za](mailto:uvz@tobaccosa.co.za)