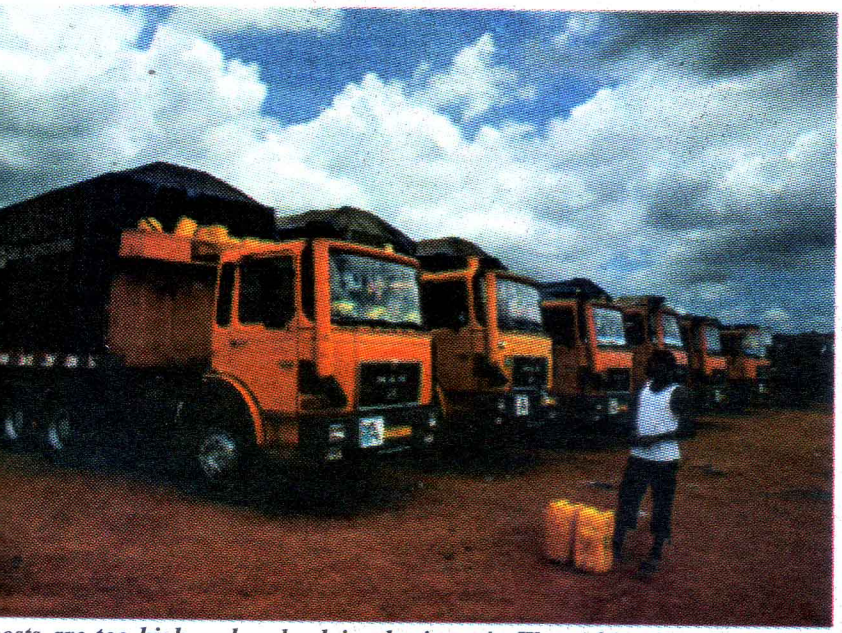
ts pose challenge for mpanies



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are significant, too.

One trucking company in Lagos, Nigeria which does not want its name in print said its costs included fuel (34%), tires (15%), payments on loans to banks (15%), labour (10%), maintenance of its fleet (10%), overhead (7%) and profit (8%). "Overhead" includes mainly the bribes it pays to pass checkpoints along major routes, its director said.

Delays caused by checkpoints add significantly to costs, too, he said.

But an underlying problem for the transport sector is that it includes many small companies run mainly by owner-operators and very few larger companies — organised operations that focus just on trucking.

The lack of larger trucking companies makes it difficult to identify and then reduce trucking costs. The sector is finding it difficult to tackle complicated problems, companies said.

Trucking costs are too high and make doing business in West Africa less competitive, exporters say. Another hidden cost driver is the lack of access to finance, one trucking company official said.

The structure of the trucking sector also drives up costs, companies said. At ports, middlemen who find trucks for importers add a layer of costs that would be unnecessary if the sector were better organised.

Exporting companies could reduce costs by working together.

reduction in $1.2bn

l biological eliminating tamination of ITA has said. re chemical luced mainly s Aspergillus n maize, cassava, and ese toxins are uses of cancer the immune g humans and be more diseases. flatoxins are ff barriers to

international trade since agricultural products that have more than permissible levels of contamination are rejected in the global market. Though losses faced by the global economy are estimated at $1.2 billion, African economies lose about $450 million annually to aflatoxin contamination. "Aflatoxin is a silent killer. It undermines human health and stunts the growth of children but is not often visible on the corn when purchased," says Dr. Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, IITA pathologist at a meeting organised by the AATF in collaboration with IITA. The meeting examined the prospects

African govts urged to stregthen tobacco control policies

... as PhilipMorris holds shareholders meeting

TOBACCO control activists have called on African governments to strengthen their tobacco control policies to stem a deluge of deaths which an aggressive marketing of cigarettes on the continent has unleashed.

The call is coming as shareholders of PhilipMorris International (PMI) met Tuesday in New York for Annual General Meeting of the world's largest and most profitable traded tobacco company. Anti_tobacco and youth groups upset about the meeting will be demonstrating outside the venue to protest the company's targeting of the younger generation world_wide.

While PMI's annual report indicates that from 2007 to 2008 consumption volumes slumped by 5.5 per cent in the European Union, the African region's consumption volumes jumped by 4.4 per cent. That of Asia went up 5.8 per cent, Latin America (11 per cent and 4.4 per cent in Eastern Europe.

The company's profitability rating in the annual report indicated that its Operating Companies Income (OCI) from the EU decreased from 46.2 per cent from 47.1 per cent, while its OCI from Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa climbed to 30.4 per cent from 27.3 per cent, making these regions the fastest growing in terms of its profits.

"PMI's deadly market growth is being achieved in large part due to aggressive and deceptive marketing activities that are no longer tolerated in the United States where the shareholder meeting is taking place," said Matthew L. Myers, President of Campaign for Tobacco_Free Kids.

"Governments of nations where PMI operates should examine the true health and economic harms inflicted by big international tobacco companies and adopt the policies known to reduce tobacco use."

The Pogramme Manager of Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria, Akinbode Oluwafemi said: "The 2008 annual report from PMI should be a wakeup call to African governments and that of developing nations that have been deliberately targeted by the tobacco industry to strengthen tobacco control policies that will nip the gale of tobacco induced deaths that has been unleashed on the world".

"The report is telling of the deliberate and misleading marketing of death to the developing world in the guise of criminal profits," he added.

PMI's growth is linked to several marketing tactics which include an aggressive targeting of young males and women throughout the world, engagement so_called "corporate social responsibility" philanthropy efforts in about 50 countries in 2008, and a fraudulent marketing of "low tar" products from U.S to 20 markets throughout the world.

Independent forecast indicate that global cigarette sales in the ultra_low segment will increase 16.5 per cent during 2006_2011 while the so_called low tar and high_tar segment will increase by 10.1 per cent and 3.3 per cent respectively within the same period.

In 2006, a U.S court found out that PMI's "low tar" cigarettes had no health benefits as claimed by the company and yet, was marketed to sustain profits.

According to the 2008 report, the company's shipped cigarette volume is up 2.5 per cent, which translates tto 869.8 billion of its cigarette brands which include Marlboro, Merit, Parliament and Virginia Slims, all of which are marketed in Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East, Asia, and Latin America.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) puts tobacco_related deaths at 5.4 million annually, especially in developing nations that already account for 80 per cent of this figure.