

Festival organisers cut deals with tobacco firms, gov't inspectors step in

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The Dutch food and product safety board has started an investigation into claims that tobacco companies are paying the organisers of festivals for exclusive rights to market their products during the event.

Dutch laws on tobacco ban exclusive sales deals by clubs, bars and the rest of the hospitality sector.

The revelations that companies such as Philip Morris are paying to have only their products on sale at events such as Pinkpop were made by a group of journalists specialising in researching the tobacco industry.

They visited 21 festivals this summer and found evidence of exclusive deals at 16 of them, including Pinkpop, Mysterland and other major events.

For example, the JTI (Camel) promotion firm Spirit was at Zeezout in Amsterdam and the Smeerboel festival in Utrecht, while British American Tobacco sent its promotional team MJR TOM to Mysterland.

Sponsoring

Pinkpop director Jan Smeets described the agreement with tobacco companies as 'sponsoring' and has denied the deals break rules on the sale of tobacco.

The [Onderzoeksredactie Tabak](#) journalists, say British American Tobacco (Lucky Strike) and JTI were both fined €45,000 in 2009 and 2010 for their deals with Pinkpop.

Despite those fines, over the past few years, Pinkpop has received payment for an exclusive deal with Philip Morris (Marlboro). Extrema, with organises events such as Extrema Outdoors and Solar Weekend has also admitted working with Philip Morris for 10 years.

According to the Festival Monitor there were 934 festivals and events with 26.7visitors last year. Philip Morris is festival market leader while JTI and BAT focus on smaller events.

Earlier this year Onderzoeksredactie Tabak revealed that JTI had reached a deal with at least 10 large student fraternity organisations on exclusive sales rights.