

Khat Ban Comes with Major Collateral Damage to African Economies

As World Departs from Drug War, UK Takes a Step Back on Khat Ban

LONDON (24 June 2014) – As the UK’s khat ban goes into effect today, a new briefing paper from the Global Drug Policy Observatory at Swansea University finds the law will damage economies in the global South and expand a failed criminal justice drug policy model.

“Increasingly the world is looking toward drug policies that minimize harm to people who use drugs as well as producer and transit countries” said David Bewley-Taylor, the director of the Global Drug Policy Observatory. “However, this new law is pulling a page from an outdated playbook. Even worse, it passes on the greatest costs to low-income producer countries when official experts found the substance does not pose a serious threat.”

The ban—which followed the Netherlands in 2012—defied the government’s own experts, who found that a criminal justice model was inappropriate to the dangers posed by khat, a mild stimulant that is chewed in mostly immigrant communities in Europe.

The leaf is exported from African countries, several of which depend heavily on the crop. For example, in 2013, it was estimated that the value of khat exported from Kenya to the UK alone was over £15.4 million per year. At various times in recent years, khat has been Ethiopia’s second most lucrative export product after coffee. In 2012-13, khat export revenues for Ethiopia were estimated at £160.1 million.

Kenya is seeking legal remedies over the ban.

The report suggests that policymakers enact policies that distinguish levels of harm associated with use and to design laws that focus policing and criminal justice interventions on the most harmful elements of the drug trade.

To read the full; briefing paper, go here:

<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/European%20Policy%20on%20khat-%20Drug%20Policy%20lessons%20not%20learned.pdf>

Also see:

<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/GDPO%20Situation%20Analysis%20Khat.pdf>