South Carolina Tobacco Farming Trends

Tobacco farming in South Carolina has been shrinking for years, with fewer tobacco farms producing less tobacco and playing an increasingly smaller role in the state’s economy. In 2005, the $10 billion buyout of tobacco farmers and quota holders as part of the termination of the federal tobacco price support program sharply accelerated these trends. Smaller family tobacco farms are no longer the rule but the exception as larger agribusinesses have taken their place.

The trends in the amount of tobacco harvested in South Carolina reflect the declines in tobacco farms. In the past 20 years, tobacco production in the state has declined 80.5 percent, to 11.6 million pounds harvested in 2022.

South Carolina Tobacco Product Manufacturing Employment

In 2021 (the most recent year available), there was minimal tobacco product manufacturing or processing employment in South Carolina. Even in the two states with the most tobacco manufacturing (North Carolina & Virginia), related employment makes up less than 2% of all state manufacturing jobs, and even smaller fractions of total employment.

Sales of Cigarettes in South Carolina

Taxed cigarette pack sales have also declined considerably in South Carolina over the past decade, making them a less significant factor in total retailer sales.
The Toll of Smoking and Other Tobacco Use on South Carolina

While the number of farms and jobs from tobacco farming and manufacturing have been declining sharply in South Carolina, the harms and costs from smoking in the state remain high. For example:

- Smoking-caused deaths in the state each year: 7,200
- Annual smoking-caused excess healthcare costs in the state: $2.21 billion


More active state efforts to prevent and reduce smoking and other tobacco use in South Carolina would improve public health; save lives; increase worker productivity; reduce government, business and household costs; and strengthen the state’s budget and economy.

*Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, February 6, 2023*