



ApiraSol

E-CIGARETTES IN ARGENTINA 2024/2025 – Q2

SUPPLY CHAIN INTELLIGENCE
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Overview

1. INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

2. E-CIGARETTE TRADE - LATIN AMERICA

3. E-CIGARETTE TRADE - ARGENTINA

1

**INTRODUCTION &
METHODOLOGY**

Introduction

ApiraSol has been investigating the routes, brands, and entities involved in the trade of illicit e-cigarettes across various countries worldwide for several years.

In this particular research conducted in 2025, ApiraSol focused on the global illicit e-cigarette trade, drawing from trade data as well as open sources such as enforcement news, press releases from customs agencies, academic research papers, and online intelligence reports. The period covered for trade data spans January 2024 to December 2024, while enforcement-related news generally covers the years 2024 to 2025.

The Illicit E-Cigarette Trade: A Growing Global Challenge

The illicit e-cigarette trade is becoming a significant force reshaping the global nicotine market, fueled by rapid growth and mounting regulatory complexity. According to Euromonitor International, the illicit e-cigarette market was valued at **USD 47 billion in 2024**, representing over **70% of global spending** and roughly **three-quarters of total volume—equivalent to 605 billion cigarettes**. Furthermore, Euromonitor reported that illicit e-cigarette products exceed **80% penetration in North America, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, and Asia Pacific**,

while Western Europe, though lower, continues to face persistent illicit trade despite increasing legislative pressures.

Regulatory Frameworks Driving Illicit Trade

Stringent bans and fragmented regulations often unintentionally fuel underground trade. Bans do not necessarily eliminate demand for e-cigarettes; where consumer interest persists despite such measures, gaps in legal supply may arise, creating opportunities for illicit suppliers to fill unmet demand. Even in countries with robust regulatory frameworks, unintended consequences may arise—strict compliance requirements and high taxation can make legal products more expensive and less accessible, while the convenience of illicit channels, including online and delivery-based sources, may further draw consumers toward cheaper, non-compliant alternatives. These conditions typically incentivize smuggling and the use of transshipment hubs in regions with weaker oversight, allowing illicit goods to infiltrate regulated markets.

Complex regulations also often create loopholes that illicit networks exploit, such as mislabeling products or routing shipments through multiple jurisdictions to obscure origins. While strong regulations aim to protect public health, without equally strong

enforcement, these often end up driving demand for illicit products rather than curbing it.

China's Regulatory Gaps and Insufficient Enforcements

China produces the vast majority of e-cigarettes globally, making its regulatory framework critical to controlling illicit trade. The **Administrative Measures for Electronic Cigarettes** (effective May 1, 2022) require that all e-cigarette products comply with mandatory national standards and that producers, exporters, and retailers obtain licenses from the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (STMA). Similarly, the **Administrative Rules for E-Cigarettes Import-Export Trade** (issued October 2022) stipulate that only licensed exporters can ship products abroad, and exported goods must either meet the destination country's regulations or adhere to China's national standards.

In practice, however, exports are not sufficiently controlled. Loopholes in licensing, weak oversight of small-scale producers, and limited monitoring of export compliance allow unlicensed operators to bypass official channels.

Compounding these issues is weak enforcement in many destination countries. These challenges are amplified by the growing use of digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and

informal online channels, which make detection and enforcement even harder.

Without stronger controls and enforcement mechanisms in China, and investment in monitoring capabilities in destination countries, illicit trade will continue to thrive despite regulatory efforts.

On December 18, 2025, China's General Office of the State Council issued a policy document titled "Opinions on Combating Tobacco-Related Illegal Activities Across the Entire Chain", which sets out a comprehensive enforcement strategy against illicit tobacco and nicotine products. The Opinions explicitly bring electronic cigarettes and other nicotine-containing products under strengthened regulatory scrutiny, calling for full-chain enforcement against the illegal production, wholesale, transportation, sale, and "export re-flow" of e-cigarettes and related products. This includes tightening oversight of e-cigarette manufacturing and supply chains, cracking down on unauthorized operations, and treating unlawful export and smuggling back into China as enforcement priorities alongside traditional tobacco smuggling.

The text of the Opinions does not designate exports to overseas destination markets as independent enforcement targets; rather, references to other countries and cross-border cooperation are tied specifically to preventing illegal e-cigarette exports from re-entering China's domestic market. This confirms that the

primary focus is safeguarding China's domestic regulatory objectives, public health, and market order, with international cooperation positioned mainly as a means to curb the re-flow of illicit products back into China. The effectiveness of China in stepping up its enforcement efforts to control the illicit trade of tobacco and nicotine products remains to be seen.

Amid the alarming surge of illicit market activity and mounting regulatory complexity, ApiraSol's 2025 investigation into the global e-cigarette trade will map illicit trade flows, analyze seizure patterns across countries and regions, and uncover the mechanisms enabling this shadow economy.

Methodology

This report has been prepared using various data sources, including (but not limited to):

- Publicly available customs trade data for the period January 2024 - December 2024. For those countries covered in this report that don't make their customs data publicly available, data has been obtained from the mirrored data of other countries.
- Statistical data for the period January 2024 - June 2025.
- News articles relating to enforcement and seizures.

Terminology and Definitions

Statistical Data - Numerical information representing measurable aspects of economic, demographic, social, or environmental phenomena, as produced by national statistical offices, government agencies, or intergovernmental organizations.

Trade Data - Information on the movement of goods and services between countries, typically reported by customs authorities and presented in terms of import and export volumes, values, origin, and destination.

Enforcement News - Reports and updates issued by law enforcement, customs, or regulatory agencies on activities such as investigations, product seizures, arrests, policy actions, and other official measures.

In the trade data, Origin and Destination Countries refer to the following:

Origin Countries - Shipment Origin Countries declared in publicly available trade data between January 2024 - June 2025.

Destination Countries - Shipment Destination Countries declared in publicly available trade data between January 2024 - June 2025.

2

**E-CIGARETTE TRADE
LATIN AMERICA**

E-Cigarette Trade - Latin America

This report examines the trade of e-cigarettes in **Argentina**.

E-cigarette regulations in Latin America vary widely, with most countries leaning toward strict bans while a few adopt structured frameworks. **Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina** enforce comprehensive prohibitions on the sale, import, advertising, and use of e-cigarettes and related devices, prioritizing public health and youth protection. In contrast, **Panama and Paraguay** have shifted to regulated models: Panama introduced strict controls on sale, advertising, and public use in 2025, while Paraguay passed a law establishing a full framework for importation, production, and commercialization of vaping products.

In 2024, China's export data showed hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of e-cigarette shipments to banned markets like **Brazil** and **Argentina**. **Mexico's** reported imports from China dropped sharply in 2025 following its ban. While **Panama** and **Paraguay** have regulatory frameworks, their declared imports still fall short of China's reported export volumes, suggesting substantial leakage into informal or illicit channels.



Illicit e-cigarette trade remains widespread across Latin America. Banned countries—**Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina**—see thriving black markets despite strict prohibitions, with authorities reporting seizures at ports, warehouses, malls, and border provinces. In Mexico, enforcements have uncovered Chinese-origin shipments disguised as clothing or electronics and routed through Paraguay. Investigations also point to growing involvement of Mexican cartels, which are leveraging established trafficking routes to move Chinese-made vaping products into the U.S.—a development increasingly viewed as a major security concern. In regulated markets like **Panama** and **Paraguay**, enforcement challenges persist. Panama reports misdeclared shipments through Free Trade Zones, while Paraguay continues as a key transshipment hub for Brazil and Argentina. Despite introducing stricter controls on e-cigarette imports, these measures do not appear sufficient to effectively curb the flow of illicit products. Goods from China were often hidden in trucks or warehouses, and Brazilian authorities have intercepted multiple truckloads of illicit e-cigarettes originating from Paraguay—underscoring its strategic position in regional smuggling networks. These patterns highlight systemic enforcement challenges and the growing role of organized networks, underscoring the urgent need for stronger cross-border cooperation and tighter trade controls.

3

**E-CIGARETTE TRADE -
ARGENTINA**

Summary

In 2024, China reported total exports of e-cigarettes to Argentina valued at \$191,000. However, Argentina did not publish corresponding import data for these products, resulting in the inability to calculate a statistical gap. The absence of Argentine import figures limits transparency and complicates a clear assessment of the real volume of e-cigarettes entering the country.

- **Regulatory Environment:** Argentina enforces a nationwide ban on e-cigarettes, which complicates official customs reporting and market monitoring.
- **Re-Routing:** Shipments are frequently redirected through neighboring countries or illicit channels to avoid detection and regulatory barriers.
- **Misdeclaration and Evasion:** Traders may misdeclare goods or underreport quantities and values to avoid import controls, taxes, or scrutiny.
- **Incomplete or Delayed Reporting:** Some shipments lack complete data—such as shipment weight or transport mode—hampering transparency and granular reconciliation.
- **Customs Data Limitations:** Differences in classification standards, documentation practices, and valuation methods between Argentina and its trading partners exacerbate discrepancies, making reconciliation of bilateral trade figures challenging.
- **Prevalence of Smuggling and Illicit Trade:** Persistent black market activity and organized smuggling networks continue to

supply products, making enforcement and statistical tracking more difficult.

These factors collectively hinder accurate measurement of market size, trade compliance, and the effectiveness of regulatory controls.

Regulatory Overview

Argentina has maintained a strict ban on the sale, import, advertising, and distribution of e-cigarettes since 2011, under the National Administration for Medicines, Food and Medical Technology (ANMAT) Provision 3226. This includes both nicotine-containing and nicotine-free products.

Statistical Data (China as Origin)

China's declared exports of e-cigarettes to Argentina in 2024 totaled \$191,000, however Argentina's declared imports from China were not available. The absence of Argentina's import figures prevents a direct comparison and calculation of a statistical gap. This lack of data may reflect differences in reporting standards, limitations in Argentina's trade statistics, or issues with product classification, making it challenging to assess the true scale and compliance of cross-border e-cigarette trade.

Total Value 2024:

- Total Exports from China 2024: \$191,000
- Total Imports from China 2024: N/A
- **Statistical Gap: N/A**

EXPORTS OF E-CIGARETTES FROM CHINA TO ARGENTINA - STATISTICAL DATA (ITC DATABASE)

HS Code	HS Code Description	ORIGIN COUNTRY	DESTINATION COUNTRY	Value in 2024 (Unit : US Dollar thousand)	Value in 2025-Q1 -Q2 (Unit : US Dollar thousand)
24041200	Other products containing nicotine, intended for inhalation without combustion	CHINA	ARGENTINA	178	62
24041990	Other products containing nicotine substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion	CHINA	ARGENTINA	0	0
24041910	Other products containing tobacco substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion	CHINA	ARGENTINA	0	0
85434000	Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporizing devices	CHINA	ARGENTINA	13	0
Total:				191	62

IMPORTS OF E-CIGARETTES TO ARGENTINA FROM CHINA - STATISTICAL DATA (ITC DATABASE)

HS Code	HS Code Description	ORIGIN COUNTRY	DESTINATION COUNTRY	Value in 2024 (Unit : US Dollar thousand)	Value in 2025-Q1 -Q2 (Unit : US Dollar thousand)
24041200	Products containing nicotine, intended for inhalation without combustion (excl. containing . . .	CHINA	ARGENTINA	N/A	N/A
24041990	Products containing nicotine substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion (excl. . . .	CHINA	ARGENTINA	N/A	N/A
24041910	Products containing tobacco substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion (excl. . . .	CHINA	ARGENTINA	N/A	N/A
85434000	Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporizing devices	CHINA	ARGENTINA	N/A	N/A
Total:				-	-



ARGENTINA STATISTICAL DATA



Exports from China to Argentina

191,000

Total 2024 Value (USD)
1H 2025 Value (USD): 62,000

Imports to Argentina from China

N/A

Total 2024 Value (USD)
1H 2025 Value (USD): N/A

Statistical Data Gap *

N/A

* Difference between the Exports and the Declared Imports (USD)



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The online articles report on **seizures of illegal e-cigarette products in Argentina**.

Argentine enforcement agencies have increased efforts to combat illegal e-cigarette trade, with seizures occurring in border provinces and urban centers. Major interceptions in Posadas and Corrientes uncovered shipments from Paraguay, often hidden among electronics or misdeclared as personal items. Cases have included flavored and cannabis-infused e-cigarettes, highlighting evolving smuggling tactics. Despite the nationwide ban, the black market thrives—particularly among youth—prompting tighter surveillance and greater cross-border cooperation.

Recent enforcement news confirms that authorities are regularly intercepting large, high-value shipments, sometimes involving organized networks operating trucks, vehicles, and premises with established supply structures. Incidents near borders and frequent escapes to Paraguay reveal persistent cross-border smuggling challenges. Illicit e-cigarettes continue to circulate through local retail networks and are often accessible to minors, emphasizing ongoing public health risks and regulatory gaps.

Enforcement actions frequently cite violations of customs regulations, tax evasion, and public health laws, reflecting the complexity of oversight in a restricted market. The continual arrests and detentions underscore the government's growing commitment to curbing the trade. Ultimately, despite robust enforcement and a

legal ban, both demand and supply remain strong, requiring sustained vigilance to manage market risks and youth exposure.


- **Locations of seizures:** Misiones (Posadas), Corrientes, Entre Ríos, and urban centers.
- **Products seized:** E-cigarettes (various, including flavored and cannabis-infused e-cigarettes).
- **Brands seized:** Multiple brands; specifics often not disclosed.
- **Methods:** Concealed among electronics, misdeclared as personal items, use of trucks (including false chassis), and vehicles.
- **Enforcement:** Actions by customs, police, and Coast Guard; arrests and confiscations; shipments frequently traced to Paraguay.



ARGENTINA ILLICIT TRADE OVERVIEW

Argentine enforcement agencies have ramped up efforts to curb illegal e-cigarette trade, with seizures taking place in border provinces and urban centers. Major interceptions in Posadas and Corrientes uncovered shipments from Paraguay, often concealed among electronics or misdeclared as personal items. Some cases involved flavored and cannabis-infused e-cigarettes, reflecting shifting smuggling tactics. Despite a nationwide ban, the black market continues to thrive, especially among youth, prompting tighter surveillance and cross-border cooperation.

Legend

-  Interception
-  Illicit Shipment
-  ENDS are banned





ARGENTINA ENFORCEMENT NEWS

Argentine Prefectura Naval seized 1,750 Chinese electronic cigarettes near the Uruguay River in Concordia, Entre Ríos during a nighttime patrol. The products were discovered abandoned in packages and the case is now under judicial investigation by the Federal Court in Concordia.

Entre Ríos: Prefectura secuestró un cargamento millonario de cigarrillos electrónicos

Un patrullaje nocturno permitió detectar el intento de contrabando en la ribera del Río Uruguay. La mercadería incautada está valuada en más de 70 millones de pesos.

02 de mayo de 2025



Legend



Seizure



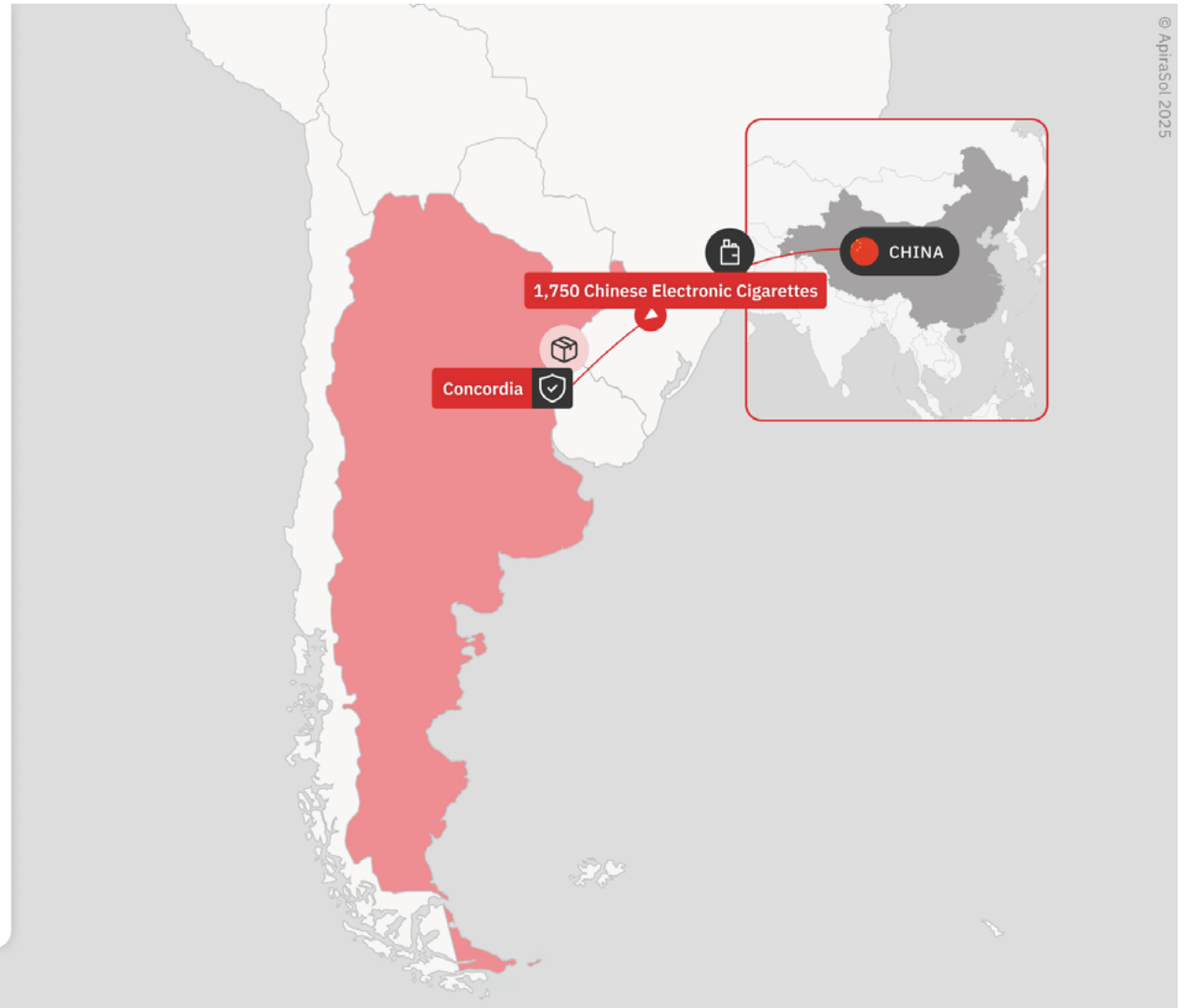
Abandoned Packages



ENDS are banned

Source

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Contact us

ApiraSol GmbH

Pappelallee 78

10437 Berlin, Germany

+49 3023 61 60 22

info@apirasol.com

www.apirasol.com