due to the evaporation process. Further, even a partial loss of tobacco soluble components can have an undesirable impact on flavour.

Therefore, it would be desirable to provide an improved reconstituted tobacco sheet which preserves the tobacco flavour from the tobacco material. Further, it would be desirable to provide a reconstituted tobacco sheet that has an increased filling power. It would also be desirable to provide a reconstituted tobacco sheet which is better suited for withstanding mechanical stresses during the manufacture of tobacco products from the sheet.

It would also be desirable to provide a method of making a reconstituted tobacco sheet with a greater tensile strength than existing methods and can be obtained without the need for the sheet to be reinforced with undesirable non-tobacco cellulosic materials as binders.

According to a first aspect of the invention there is therefore provided a method of making a reconstituted tobacco sheet, the method comprising preparing a dispersion of tobacco stems or stalks in a liquid, the dispersion having a consistency of at least about 10 percent by weight. The tobacco stems or stalks in the dispersion are refined to obtain a pulp suspension having a freeness (drainability) of at least about 30 degrees Schopper-Riegler and comprising tobacco stem or stalk refined fibres having a length of at least about 300 micrometres dispersed in the liquid. The pulp suspension comprising the tobacco stem or stalk refined fibres are combined with tobacco cast leaf material to obtain a slurry. A sheet is then formed from this slurry.

According to another aspect of the invention, there is provided a reconstituted tobacco sheet obtainable by a method according to the first aspect of the invention. Further, according to another aspect of the invention, there is provided a reconstituted tobacco sheet having a basis weight of less than about 14 grams per square foot (about 151 grams per square metre) and comprising tobacco stem or stalk refined fibres having a length of at least about 300 micrometres and tobacco cast leaf material.

According to another aspect of the invention, there is, furthermore, provided a smoking article comprising reconstituted tobacco sheet material, wherein the reconstituted tobacco sheet material has a basis weight of less than about 14 grams per square foot (about 151 grams per square metre) and comprises tobacco stem or stalk refined fibres having a length of at least about 300 micrometres and tobacco cast leaf material.

It will be appreciated that any features described with reference to one aspect of the present invention are equally applicable to any other aspect of the invention.

The term “tobacco products” is used throughout this specification to refer to both combustible smoking articles and to smoking articles in which an aerosol forming substrate, such as tobacco, is heated rather than combusted. Combustible smoking articles, such as cigarettes, generally comprise shredded tobacco (usually in cut filler form) surrounded by a paper wrapper forming a tobacco rod. The shredded tobacco can be a single type of tobacco or a blend of two or more types of tobacco. A cigarette is employed by a consumer by lighting one

end thereof and burning the shredded tobacco rod. The consumer then receives mainstream smoke by drawing on the opposite end (mouth end or filter end) of the cigarette. In heated