CLAIMS

1. A method of making a reconstituted tobacco sheet, comprising:
providing tobacco stems or tobacco stalks or a mixture thereof;
conditioning the tobacco stems or tobacco stalks such that their moisture content is increased to at least about 40 % Oven Volatiles (OV);
processing the conditioned tobacco stems or tobacco stalks in a twin screw extruder to so as to obtain a pulp suspension having a Schopper-Riegler index of at least about 30 degrees and comprising tobacco stem or tobacco stalk refined fibres having a length of at least about 200 micrometres;
combining the pulp suspension with tobacco cast leaf material to obtain a slurry; and
forming a sheet from the slurry.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the tobacco stems or tobacco stalks are extruded to obtain a pulp suspension containing tobacco stem or tobacco stalk refined fibres having an average length of less than about 1200 micrometres.

3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the step of processing the conditioned stems or stalks is carried out at a temperature of at least about 50 degrees C.

4. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the step of processing the conditioned tobacco stems or tobacco stalks comprises one or more passes of the conditioned tobacco stems or tobacco stalks through the twin screw extruder.

5. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the step of processing the conditioned stems or stalks is carried out in a twin screw extruder comprising at least a first and a second conveying sections adapted to advance the material being processed along an axial direction of the extruder and at least a kneading section adapted to restrict the flow of the material being processed along the axial direction and to exert a kneading and shearing action on the stems, wherein the at least one kneading section is located between the first and the second conveying sections.

6. A method according to claim 5, wherein the twin screw extruder has a Length/Diameter ratio of from 25 to 70.