



## A Defining Moment For Scotch Whisky

Today is a defining moment for Scotland's distillers. We have been distilling whisky in Scotland for over five hundred years. Today, however, landmark rules covering every aspect of the making, bottling, and labelling of Scotch Whisky come into force.

Consumers, distillers, and the wider economy will all benefit from the Scotch Whisky Regulations introduced by the UK Government. They reflect and underpin the traditions and practice that have allowed Scotch Whisky to become the leading international spirit drink.

Scotch has been defined in law for many years, with even a Royal Commission as far back as 1909 asking 'what is whisky?' Whilst distillers have been proactive in protecting their brands, it had become clear that more must be done to protect the integrity of Scotch Whisky from unfair competition.

This is important because record investments demonstrate small and large distillers alike looking to grow Scotch Whisky in both traditionally important and new emerging markets. The Regulations will boost these efforts to develop Scotland's largest export - accounting for 20% of the country's total - even further.

Imitation may be a form of flattery but fake products that pass themselves off as genuine Scotch Whisky mislead consumers, undermine the industry, and damage the economy. The Scotch Whisky Regulations therefore enshrine robust rules providing our brands with comprehensive legal protection.

Take, for example, the use of regional names associated with whisky, such as 'Islay' and 'Speyside'. These will now receive protection from misuse, stopping such products as the 'Highland' whisky that was being produced in China taking advantage of Scotch Whisky's reputation.

Tighter rules around the use of distillery names on bottle labels will prevent consumer confusion. A new requirement to bottle Single Malts only in Scotland will also help to underpin the high quality image of this growing category.

If protection is a major element of the Regulations, promotion is the other key pillar.

The Regulations provide the industry with an opportunity to raise consumer awareness and understanding about Scotch Whisky, supporting the work each distiller does to promote appreciation of its brands around the world.

Compulsory sales descriptions will now be used for the five different whisky categories. If the brand is a 'Single Malt Scotch Whisky' that term will have to appear clearly on labels, helping consumers to understand what they are buying. Clear rules on the use of age statements are included to prevent any confusion over how long a whisky has matured. Consistent terminology and labelling practice will ensure customers always get accurate information about what they are drinking.

As I travel internationally, representing my company and the SWA, I see just how passionate consumers are about the whiskies Scotland produces. They recognise brands of the highest quality, which have built up a reputation that is second to none. And yet, at home, it is easy to forget what an ambassador and asset for the country the whisky industry is. Over 40,000 Scottish jobs rely on the industry, with Scotch vital to the economy. We should work hard to protect and promote Scotland's national drink both at home and abroad.

Today, a century after the Royal Commission asked 'what is whisky?', we have a definitive answer. Government and industry have worked together to produce a UK law that will have international reach. The rules offer the right blend for Scotch Whisky, supporting the work of all distillers and promoting both Single and Blended whiskies.

We should take the opportunity of this landmark to recognise what we have in Scotch, the benefits it brings to Scotland, and move forward in our efforts to explain to consumers around the world why Scotch Whisky is so special.

**Paul Walsh is Chairman of The Scotch Whisky Association, the industry's representative body, and Chief Executive of Diageo plc.**

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