



30 January 2007

Brussels whisky vote toasted by distillers

An influential committee of MEPs today voted to support proposals that would ensure Scotch Whisky receives stronger legal protection at EU level. The result has been welcomed by The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) which has been campaigning for improvements to EU law defining and protecting spirit drinks.

Today's vote in Brussels approved changes to existing EU law that will better protect traditional practice within the whisky industry and improve the international protection of 'Scotch Whisky' as a geographical indication. Such protection is crucial to Scotch Whisky's success allowing the industry to tackle unfair and misleading practices overseas.

The proposals will be considered by the full European Parliament in March, with the aim that the EU institutions reach agreement on the legislation's introduction later in 2007.

Gavin Hewitt, the SWA Chief Executive, welcomed the vote:

"Today's vote by MEPs is an important step forward as the industry seeks to ensure the highest level of legal protection for Scotch Whisky from unfair practices. These proposals to update EU law on the definition and protection of spirit drinks are of major importance to Scottish distillers. We will be working hard in the coming weeks - with Ministers, officials and MEPs - to secure agreement in Brussels for their early introduction."

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Note to Editors:

1. Today's vote took place in the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. The full Parliament is expected to vote on the proposals in March.

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2. Whisky and other spirit drinks have been defined in EU law since 1989. The Regulations (1576/89 and 1014/90) protect 'Scotch Whisky' as a geographical indication and have helped the industry's work to protect consumers and Scotch Whisky from unfair competition.
3. The European Commission brought forward proposals for a new Spirit Drinks Regulation in December 2005, with the aim of updating the text to take into account a number of difficulties of interpretation and various court judgements, and to ensure EU law was in line with WTO rules.
4. The proposals would introduce a clearer definition of 'whisky', better reflecting traditional practices in Scotland, at EU level and make it easier to protect 'Scotch Whisky' as a geographical indication. The SWA is also examining the possible inclusion in law of a Gaelic term for 'Scotch Whisky'.
5. For further information, please contact David Williamson at The Scotch Whisky Association on 0131 222 9230 or 07730 496 151.