



19 June 2007

New EU Whisky Law Welcomed

Clearer EU rules on whisky production, and improved protection for Scotch Whisky, have been approved by the European Parliament today during a vote on new EU spirit drinks legislation. The vote in Strasbourg was welcomed by The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) which has campaigned vigorously for improvements to EU law.

MEPS approved a wide range of improvements to existing EU spirit drinks law, including a clearer legal definition of 'whisky', which will assist whisky distillers to tackle unfair and misleading practices overseas. Reflecting traditional practice, the new law, for example, makes it explicit that whisky cannot be flavoured or sweetened. A mechanism is also introduced that will make it easier to ensure national rules on Scotch Whisky are enforced across the 27 EU Member States.

Nick Soper, the SWA's European Affairs Director, commented:

"Improved EU protection for the traditional way of making Scotch Whisky is a significant step forward. It will be easier to protect Scotch from unfair practices, supporting export success and the jobs that depend on that continued success.

"Throughout our campaign, the SWA has welcomed the support of the European Commission, Scottish Executive, UK Government and MEPs. Working together, we have secured an important result for Scottish distillers and the highest level of protection for Scotch Whisky and consumers."

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Note to Editors:

1. EU markets represent almost 35% of Scotch Whisky exports by value (£855m out of a global total of £2.5bn in 2006).

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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. The European Commission brought forward proposals for a new Regulation in December 2005, with the aim of updating the text in line with WTO rules.
3. Today's vote by the plenary session of the European Parliament secured agreement at 'First Reading' for a new EU Spirit Drinks Regulation, which is likely to come into effect before the end of 2007.
4. For further information, please contact David Williamson at the SWA on 020 7629 4384 or 07730 496 151.