



GI Bill Falls Short

The *Geographical Indications (Wine and Spirits) Registration Bill* was reported back to Parliament today by the Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade select committee.

The Bill seeks to clarify and strengthen the legal protections for well-known local and international wine and spirit names with geographical indications (GIs).¹ However, Thomas Chin, chief executive of the Distilled Spirits Association fears the committee has fallen short of fully protecting GI wine and spirits from misuse or misrepresentation.

“We were initially buoyed by the review of this important intellectual property law, but to find that all of our proposed amendments have been disregarded by the committee is really disappointing,” says Mr Chin.

“The recent failure of the WTO to reach a multi-lateral agreement protecting international wine and spirit GIs places even more importance on this New Zealand Bill being robust and effective.”

The Association appealed for three main inclusions in the GI Bill. Firstly, clearer definitions for spirits and liqueurs, which are currently inaccurate and do not adequately describe the range of spirits and liqueurs that exist on the market.

Secondly, a tough infringements and enforcement regime be put in place, as opposed to relying on other jurisdictions and statutes to penalise people who imitate or exploit GI wines and spirits.

Thirdly, the Association suggested that it be made an expert member of the GI registrations committee to provide counsel on such matters, especially given its expertise and interest in spirit GI issues.

“It’s a real shame to see the opportunity to create a higher standard of honesty on all wine and spirit product labeling missed. To survive and grow, legitimate GI producers need to know that their intellectual property is well-protected, and this Bill is sadly lacking in key areas”.

¹ Some well-known and popular GI spirits sold in New Zealand include: Armagnac (produced exclusively in France), Bourbon (USA), Canadian Whiskey (Canada), Cognac (France), Grappa (Italy), Irish Whiskey (Ireland), Ouzo (Greece), Scotch Whisky (Scotland), Tennessee Whiskey (USA), and Tequila (Mexico).

Mr Chin says the new legislation should deter counterfeiters of products that can only legally be produced in a designated district, region or area, such as Cognac and Tequila.

“Without appropriate consequences and legislation, these people will continue to go about their illegal and damaging behaviour.”

“We urge the House to reconsider the Association’s proposals before its too late and move to safeguard famous and well-established wine and spirit names from exploitation.”

ENDS.

Prepared on behalf of DSA by *the pr shop*. For further information, please contact Sally Frewin, (09) 368 1078, 021 333 221 or email sally@theprshop.co.nz