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Media release

Distilled Spirits Association Applauds Seizure

The seizure and destruction by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) of a substantial quantity of parallel imported alcohol beverages has been welcomed by the Distilled Spirits Association.

MAF's ongoing inspections of retail liquor outlets discovered the range of products on sale that contravened the strict labelling requirements of the Food Standards Code. Further investigations led to the discovery of a substantial quantity of parallel imported alcohol beverages with tampered labels on the premises of an Auckland-based distributor.

Distilled Spirits Association Chief Executive Thomas Chin applauded the MAF investigators for their vigilance and decisive enforcement actions to protect the public.

In this instance, the products had been imported with the lot codes (a special alpha-numeric code generated by manufacturers to track a batch of products) deliberately removed or obliterated preventing the true provenance of the products being established. Other labelling requirements such as the name and address of the New Zealand (or Australian) supplier and standard drinks information were also missing.

"Lot codes are the consumers' protection against potential health risks and tampered or counterfeit contents," Mr Chin says.

"Consumers should avoid those products where labels may be scratched, wonkily positioned or where important fields of information maybe overstickered and obscured.

"We advise retailers to avoid the risk of prosecution and business loss by not stocking, and returning to the supplier, any products with dodgy looking labels. MAF should also be notified."

Importers and retailers need to be aware of their obligations under the Food Act not to sell goods that may contravene food standards, Mr Chin says.

"MAF's pro-active policing of the legislation is pleasing as it shows that they are not soft on traders who do not comply with the law."

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