



EU MARKET ACCESS FLASH NOTE

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EU obtains removal of import restrictions for spirits in Taiwan

As of 1st May 2016, Taiwan lifted measures restricting imports of European spirits that hindered trade in the last five years. A certificate requiring a proof that Cognac does not contain plasticisers is no more required.

In 2011, a local scandal related to the use of plasticisers in food made the Taiwanese authorities introduce a very strict policy as regards the presence of such substances in food and drink. Taiwan set a very strict maximum level of allowed phthalates' content (plasticisers) and imposed a 100 % testing regime for plasticisers to all spirit imports. Moreover, for Cognacs, it required a certificate confirming a satisfactory result of related product testing.

Taiwan is an important market for EU alcoholic drinks. In 2015, EU producers exported to Taiwan spirits, liqueurs and vermouth worth of €308 million. The 100% testing regime – inducing considerable costs – and the analytical certification requirement affected in particular exports of French Cognacs, worth on its own nearly €40 million a year.

The EU cooperated closely with the authorities of Taiwan to avoid that the certification requirement remains in place as a long-term barrier to trade. The European Commission and the European Economic and Trade Office in Taipei, with support from EU Member States and EU industry, raised this issue with the authorities of Taiwan. The European Commission also exchanged with the authorities of Taiwan information about the EU framework of controls and monitoring of plasticisers that ensure safety of food and drink products in the EU.

Thanks to this close cooperation, Taiwan in recent years relaxed its requirements, and eventually decided to lift its certification requirement (see the official notice of 1 May 2016). Cognac products from France are now no longer required to be accompanied by a certificate of phthalate test, unless there is a specific suspicion that the product might have been contaminated. This being said, Taiwan will continue its regular market surveillance of phthalate contents in all spirits, both domestically produced and imported.

The EU welcomes this recent development and will continue, through the Commission services and the European Economic and Trade Office in Taipei, to follow this matter to ensure that trade continues in a transparent and unhindered way.

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