

# WIRSPA

West Indies Rum & Spirits  
Producers' Association Inc.

## NEWS ROUNDUP

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### Consumption in COVID-19 – What Will The Year Look Like?

Producers continue to face a challenging business environment as COVID-19 secondary wave affect export markets, and several key CARICOM markets are still experiencing higher than expected infection rates – impacting on re-opening and a return to normalcy of economic activity. This unpredictable scenario looks to continue well in 2021, longer than anyone could have imagined at the start of the pandemic. While some producers have been able to turn production to sanitation products, to maintain turnover, many will see a substantial fall in sales for 2020 and into 2021.

In the meantime, new headlines scream “*Increased Consumption during COVID!*” and many anecdotal sources report at-home use increasing – with attendant risk of excessive drinking. The fact is that most consumption occurs in social occasions and around festivals – and these have been absent or much reduced since March and will be so for the medium term.

[A worldwide survey](#) by the IARD (International Agency for Responsible Drinking) says that although some persons are drinking more (11%), more are drinking the same or less (84%). [A recent report](#) by the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) showed a decrease during COVID of a key metric, HED – Heavy Episodic Drinking - which declined by more than a third, as compared to the same period in 2019.

None of this diminishes the seriousness of the problem of excessive drinking however, and our industry will continue to promote responsible consumption and seek collaborative action with stakeholders to reduce harmful use.

## New Rum Labels Promote Responsible Consumption



Arising out of a commitment made in mid-2019, several WIRSPA members have now released new labels for their rum and spirits products, in domestic and CARICOM markets. The 2019 agreement requires labels to show the amount of drinks per container, the number of calories per drink, as well as advice logos that warn against underage consumption, driving under the influence, and drinking during pregnancy.

To allow time to adjust packaging and to design and phase in new labels, the agreement is for implementation over a 24-month period. The label upgrade underscores the commitment by rum producers to advocate and educate about the dangers of excessive consumption.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, several brands have already made good progress with the new labels being introduced by producers in [Belize](#), [Grenada](#), [St. Lucia](#), [St. Vincent & the Grenadines](#), [Trinidad & Tobago](#) and Guyana. This action puts regional producers ahead of international developments in the region, and in international markets.

## No-Deal BREXIT Looks to Pose Challenges for Rum Shipments between EU and UK



With a no-deal Brexit looking increasingly likely, the EU and UK will likely become separate customs jurisdictions on 01 January 2021. We anticipate that there could be a range of challenges to movement of rum shipments between the EU and the UK.

Where products enter either the UK or EU and are then broken down (and re-packed) for onward shipment into the other territory, various logistic and administrative, and possible origin certification issues could arise, leading to the imposition of duties on products and other unforeseen costs and delays.

Where bottling takes place in the EU or UK either as own brand or private label, the retention of origin status (and therefore duty-free entry) is an issue for goods moving from one customs territory to the next.

WIRSPA recently held a webinar with producers to alert them of the potential issues and to hear from them about contingency measures to take account of any anticipated problems.

We're happy to report that producers are taking precautions to avoid potential issues.

## WIRSPA – Zavvy Livestreams

In our last Newsletter (June 2020) we announced a collaboration with [Zavvy.co](https://zavvy.co) for a fortnightly livestream, focused on our producer distilleries. With a plethora of marketing-oriented streams online, we present a more production-oriented show, featuring the persons behind the scenes, who actually produce the rum.

The sessions have been moderated by Matt Pietrek, WIRSPA Community Envoy, better known as [Cocktail Wonk](#) and one of the most knowledgeable writer-enthusiasts on rum. Launched in May, we have now featured nine producers: Demerara Distillers; National Rums of Jamaica; St. Lucia Distillers; Grenada Distillers; J. Wray & Nephew; Mount Gay Rum; Travellers Liquors; Rhum Barbancourt; Suriname Alcoholic Beverages; and Angostura – all accessible on our [YouTube channel](#).

Coming up before year end, are **West Indies Rum Distillery** and **St. Vincent Distillers (TBD)**.



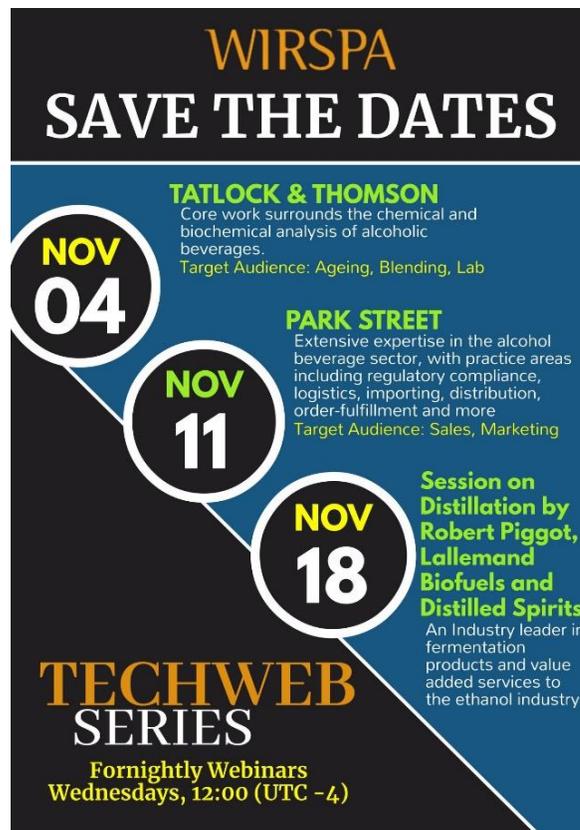
## Pivoting to Online Knowledge Transfer

With the cancellation of our planned technical conference in October, we launched our **TechWeb Series** (*fortnightly webinars on technical subjects*) in June, and have completed nine sessions, with more to come.

With producers back in full operation, it has become challenging for staff at the various distilleries to participate in all of the sessions. Nevertheless, the feedback so far, says that participants have found the sessions to be very beneficial and continue to have a keen interest.

Each session is now moderated by an experienced practitioner from one of our member-producers, to ensure the presentations are relevant to the Caribbean rum industry and as effective as possible.

All presentations can be made available to member-producers (pdf or video formats) but they are no substitute for actually participating in the sessions.



**WIRSPA**  
**SAVE THE DATES**

**NOV 04**  
**TATLOCK & THOMSON**  
Core work surrounds the chemical and biochemical analysis of alcoholic beverages.  
Target Audience: Ageing, Blending, Lab

**NOV 11**  
**PARK STREET**  
Extensive expertise in the alcohol beverage sector, with practice areas including regulatory compliance, logistics, importing, distribution, order-fulfillment and more  
Target Audience: Sales, Marketing

**NOV 18**  
**Session on Distillation by Robert Piggot, Lallemand Biofuels and Distilled Spirits**  
An Industry leader in fermentation products and value added services to the ethanol industry

**TECHWEB SERIES**  
Fornightly Webinars  
Wednesdays, 12:00 (UTC -4)

## **CARIFORUM/ CARICOM Review of Origin Rules under EU Economic Partnership Agreement and CSME**

With a CARICOM review of the CSME rules of origin, which govern what can be said to be made in CARICOM, gathering steam, CARIFORUM has also now begun a process to simplify origin rules under the Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU.

For the rum industry, the region's premier and largest single agro-based product, these rules are very important in supporting the international competitiveness of the industry.

We believe the current origin rules correctly protect origin and promote authentic Caribbean provenance – aside from some tidying up, we wish to see the current rules for fermentation and distillation from sugarcane materials, remain in place.

The value proposition for our rums depend in large part on country origin – authentic provenance. Current and planned rules which allow for cumulation, for instance the ability to use rum from other neighbouring countries in South/Central America and still maintain our rules of origin, would remove our credibility in the premium market and undercut the authenticity and provenance of Caribbean rum.

CARICOM is also undertaking a review of the CET, and a key objective for the rum industry would be to maintain a duty regime that has helped provide an economic space for the growth of the industry.

The international spirits markets are rife with producer subsidies, which allow competing spirits to produce at artificially low costs. We believe CARICOM countries should maintain a cohesive approach to the import regime for all spirits.

## WSET Level 1 Spirits Certification

WIRSPA collaborated with the **Wines & Spirits Education Trust** in July to [launch an initiative](#) aimed at providing hospitality sector beverage professionals the opportunity to attain the WSET Level 1 certification in Spirits. WIRSPA producers in virtually every member state sponsored over 200 persons, many of whom may have been laid-off due to hospitality industry closure, during lockdowns.

The WSET certification is an internationally recognised accreditation and a boon to beverage professionals seeking to upgrade skills and find new employment.



**WSET**  
WINE & SPIRIT  
EDUCATION TRUST

Despite some IT challenges faced by participants in completing the online assessment, most persons have now successfully completed the examination.

The WIRSPA Secretariat and WSET are working with the sponsoring companies to facilitate the remaining examinations.

## Caribbean Export – Virtual Trade Show to Europe

WIRSPA is collaborating with the **Caribbean Export and Development Agency (CEDA)** to facilitate the participation of Caribbean small and midsize brands in this year's [Virtual Expo](#), which takes place on the 17-18<sup>th</sup> November and which is targeted at the EU market.

This year, CEDA is making a special effort to ensure the right importers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers are identified to participate in the show. Several WIRSPA member-producers are already registered to take part.



## Upcoming Events - 2020

- [Zavvy.co](#) Live Stream – 29 October  
West Indies Rum Distillery Ltd.
- **TechWeb Series: Tatlock & Thomson Session – 4 Nov** ▶ WIRSPA Producers only ◀  
Harry Rifkin, Jennifer Rifkin & Adam Webster
- **TechWeb Series: Park Street Session – 11 Nov** ▶ WIRSPA Producers only ◀  
Presenters TBC
- **TechWeb Series: Session on Distillation – 18 Nov** ▶ WIRSPA Producers only ◀  
Robert Piggott, Lallemand Biofuels and Distilled Spirits
- **WIRSPA AGM & Directors Meeting – Date TBD**

## Follow Us on Social Media



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