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## Message From The Chairman

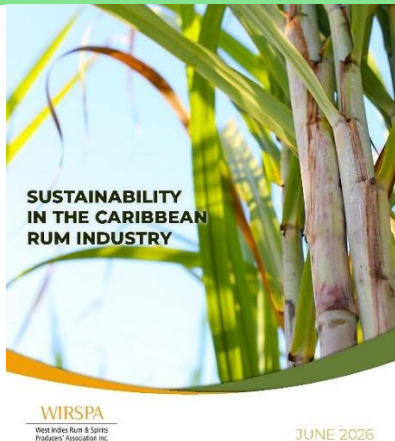
The first half of 2026 has been one of the busiest and most productive periods in WIRSPA's recent history. From the successful staging of our Technical Conference in Trinidad & Tobago to the launch of our first Sustainability Report and continued engagement on international trade and regulatory issues, our members have demonstrated that Caribbean rum continues to lead through innovation, collaboration and responsible business practices.



The discussions at our Annual General Meeting in Jamaica reinforced that our industry faces significant challenges, from changing global markets and evolving trade policies to increasing sustainability expectations. At the same time, they highlighted the tremendous opportunities available to producers who continue to invest in quality, technical excellence and international competitiveness.

As always, WIRSPA remains committed to protecting the interests of our producers while strengthening the global reputation of Authentic Caribbean Rum. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the initiatives and achievements that have shaped the past few months.

## Sustainability Report Highlights Industry Leadership



WIRSPA officially launched its first [Sustainability in the Caribbean Rum Industry Report](#) during its Annual General Meeting in Jamaica before its public release later in June. The publication showcases how producers across the Caribbean are investing in renewable energy, water stewardship, sustainable packaging, circular economy initiatives and climate resilience, demonstrating that sustainability has become a core element of long-term business competitiveness.

Drawing on case studies from producers across eight Caribbean countries, the report highlights measurable achievements including carbon-neutral and carbon-negative production, waste-to-energy systems, major reductions in water and energy consumption, and innovative approaches to sustainable agriculture. It also aligns the industry's work with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The report is intended to become a flagship WIRSPA publication, showcasing the industry's progress while encouraging continued collaboration and knowledge sharing across the region. It complements the association's [ESG Digest](#) launched earlier this year and reinforces the Caribbean rum industry's commitment to responsible and sustainable production.

## AGM Focuses on Competitiveness and Resilience

WIRSPA members gathered in Kingston, Jamaica, in June for the Association's [Annual General Meeting and Board of Directors meetings](#). Alongside the launch of the Sustainability Report, producers were joined by representatives from CARICOM, the Geneva Trade Platform, DISCUS, the World Spirits Alliance and ABELAC to examine the rapidly changing international trading environment.



Members agreed that growing geopolitical uncertainty and evolving tariff regimes reinforce the need to diversify export markets while continuing to defend the rules-based trading system that has underpinned Caribbean rum's international success. Directors also expressed concern over proposals that could restrict manufacturers' access to internationally competitive packaging materials, warning that such measures would undermine export competitiveness.

[The meetings](#) also reaffirmed the industry's commitment to responsible business practices, with members agreeing to strengthen collaboration across the wider beverage alcohol sector to promote responsible marketing and evidence-based public policy throughout the Caribbean.

**Mr. Clement Lawrence** was unanimously re-elected as Chairman of WIRSPA for a further one-year term, reaffirming its confidence in his leadership as the Association continues to advance regional advocacy, strengthen international partnerships, and promote the competitiveness and sustainability of the Caribbean spirits sector.

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## Joy Spence Receives Lifetime Achievement Award



One of the highlights of WIRSPA's Annual General Meeting in Jamaica was the [presentation of a special framed citation](#) to Dr. Joy Spence during [the cocktail reception](#), recognising her outstanding contribution to the Caribbean spirits industry and her extraordinary leadership in Caribbean rum over more than four decades.

As the world's first female Master Blender, Dr. Spence has helped transform the international reputation of Jamaican and Caribbean rum through her technical excellence, innovation and unwavering commitment to quality. Beyond her achievements at J. Wray & Nephew, she has been a generous mentor to distillers across the region and an

influential ambassador for Caribbean rum on the global stage.

[The award](#) recognises not only an exceptional career, but also Dr Spence's lasting contribution to the development of the Caribbean rum industry and the inspiration she continues to provide to future generations of rum makers.

The cocktail reception, co-hosted by the Spirits Pool Association, also [featured remarks](#) from the Hon. Delano Seiveright, Minister of State in the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce (MIIC), who underscored the importance of the spirits industry as both an economic driver and a powerful ambassador for the Caribbean on the international stage.

## TechCon 2026 Delivers Record Participation

[WIRSPA's Technical Conference 2026](#) in Trinidad & Tobago concluded with record participation, bringing together more than 160 delegates from over 30 producer companies across 20 countries. As the only international technical conference dedicated to rum production, the event reaffirmed its position as the industry's premier knowledge-sharing forum.

The programme combined technical presentations, practical workshops and a [supplier showcase](#) featuring a [record 40 companies](#), with a particular focus on post-distillation processes, [automation and artificial intelligence](#), regulatory forecasting and production technologies. Feedback from delegates highlighted the quality of the programme and the exceptional opportunities for networking and collaboration.



One of the [highlights of TechCon 2026](#) was a visit to the House of Angostura where delegates toured key areas of the company's operations. Co-sponsored by Canadian-owned engineering and manufacturing company Omnifission Inc., the visit showcased Angostura's rich heritage and continued innovation, reinforcing its global reputation in bitters and rum production while demonstrating the value of industry collaboration.

Building on the success of this year's event, WIRSPA will continue to strengthen technical cooperation through its Communities of Practice and looks forward to welcoming producers and suppliers back for TechCon 2027.

## WIRSPA Partners with WSET on Spirits Training



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West Indies Rum & Spirits  
Producers' Association Inc.



**WSET**

WIRSPA has launched a new collaboration with WSET to expand access to globally recognised spirits training for producers across the region. Through this initiative, members and partners will benefit from discounted access to WSET Level 1 and Level 2 Awards in Spirits, delivered through flexible online formats.

The courses are designed to strengthen technical knowledge, tasting skills and understanding of global spirits categories. Level 1 introduces the fundamentals of production and key categories, while Level 2

provides a more detailed exploration of production methods, style influences and structured tasting approaches.

This initiative forms part of WIRSPA's broader focus on knowledge development and capacity building. By improving access to internationally recognised training, the programme supports both individual professional development and the continued advancement of Caribbean rum as a premium global category.

## Strengthening Category Recognition Through the Global Rum Awards



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West Indies Rum & Spirits  
Producers' Association Inc.

WIRSPA is working with [Global Drinks Intel](#) on the Global Rum Awards, part of the wider Global Drinks Awards programme. [This partnership](#) aims to strengthen how rum is categorised, assessed and recognised within international competitions, ensuring that the diversity and complexity of the category are properly reflected.

[Through this collaboration](#), WIRSPA will contribute to category definitions and judging frameworks, helping to align evaluation criteria with the realities of rum production and styles. [The awards](#) are built on blind tasting and independent judging, providing a credible platform for recognising quality and innovation across the sector.

The initiative also supports greater visibility for producers, offering access to buyers, distributors and trade stakeholders internationally. As the category continues to grow, ensuring accurate and meaningful representation remains a key priority for WIRSPA and its members.

## WIRSPA Engages in WHO Dialogue with Beverage Alcohol Producers



WIRSPA participated in the WHO Economic Operators Dialogue held on 15 April 2026, contributing to discussions on the role of industry in supporting the Global Alcohol Action Plan.

The dialogue brought together WHO officials and private-sector stakeholders from across the global beer, wine and spirits industries.

Industry contributions focused on practical actions to reduce harmful use, including responsible marketing, protection of minors, particularly in digital environments, product

innovation, improved labelling and strengthened retail safeguards.

WIRSPA highlighted the progress being made across Caribbean producers in raising standards and implementing best practices.

WIRSPA also intervened directly, emphasising support for co-regulatory approaches that extend best practices beyond formal industry groupings. At the same time, the Association noted ongoing challenges in engaging Ministries of Health in the region, with current dynamics limiting opportunities for constructive public-private collaboration.

## Copalli Rum Awarded Authentic Caribbean Rum Marque



Copal Tree Distillery of Belize has been approved to use the **Authentic Caribbean Rum (ACR)** Marque for its Copalli rum range confirming compliance with WIRSPA's quality and origin standards.

[Copalli Rum](#) is produced using sustainably grown sugarcane and reflects a strong focus on environmental stewardship and traceability.

The distillery has built a reputation for integrating responsible production practices with high-quality rum-making, contributing to the growing diversity of the regional category.

The [ACR Marque](#) remains a key tool in protecting the authenticity and reputation of Caribbean rum globally.

By certifying origin and adherence to recognised standards, the marque helps differentiate genuine Caribbean products in international markets and reinforces consumer confidence in the category.

## Industry Leadership Transitions and Tribute



WIRSPA Directors and members recently marked the passing of Patrick J. Mayers, a longstanding leader and former Chairman who played a central role in shaping the modern Caribbean rum industry. His contribution to market access, industry development and modernisation as well as building cohesion across producers with varying interests leaves a lasting legacy across the region.

The Association also welcomed two senior industry appointments. [Cecil Smith Jr.](#) has been named General Manager for Jamaica at J. Wray & Nephew, bringing extensive commercial and regional experience to the role. [Ian Forbes](#) has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Angostura Holdings, following a distinguished career across technical and operational leadership.

These transitions reflect both continuity and renewal within the sector, with experienced leadership continuing to guide key companies while building the next phase of growth and innovation for Caribbean rum.

## Caribbean Producers at Bar Convent Berlin 2026



WIRSPA will continue its collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC) to host an Authentic Caribbean Rum stand at [Bar Convent Berlin \(BCB\)](#) from 12–14 October 2026. This initiative forms part of the EU-ACP Business Friendly Programme and supports producers in accessing one of the world’s leading trade events for spirits.

Selected participants will receive support including stand design and construction, event preparation and coaching, and participation in a Brand Stage session featuring masterclasses and tastings. The programme is designed to enhance market exposure and facilitate engagement with international buyers and distributors.

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