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*\*All underlined blue text will link to additional details.*

## RumTech 2027: Next Stop, Guyana!

WIRSPA's annual Technical Conference is getting a new name. From 2027, **TechCon** becomes **RumTech**, reflecting the growth of the event and its increasingly international role as a specialist forum dedicated to the technical, operational and production issues affecting the rum industry.



**RumTech 2027** will take place in **Georgetown, Guyana**, from **10–14 May 2027**, in collaboration with **Demerara Distillers Limited**. The programme will retain the features that have made the conference so successful, including the **Supplier Showcase**, distillery visit, technical sessions, rum tasting and **Blenders Forum**, while continuing to introduce new areas reflecting developments in technology, sustainability, safety and rum production.

Following record participation in Trinidad & Tobago this year, members and suppliers are encouraged to plan early. **Registration opens on 14 December 2026**, with further information on the programme, accommodation and sponsor opportunities to be circulated shortly.

## Technical Learning Continues: Webinar Series

As part of WIRSPA's efforts to expand opportunities for technical learning and knowledge-sharing between its annual conferences we're re-launching our **Webinar series**.



Next up: A series of webinars in collaboration with **Bonsucro**. The first session, held on **14 October 2026** focused on **Traceability and Chain of Custody**.

This follows the recent **process safety webinar with ioMosaic**, led by its CEO and internationally

recognised process safety expert, **Dr. Georges Melhem**. One of WIRSPA's most well attended webinars to date, the session provided practical guidance on Process Safety Management, including identifying and managing hazards, strengthening safety systems and applying international best practices in distillery operations.

These webinars form part of our wider effort to develop a year-round technical knowledge programme alongside **RumTech** and our emerging **Communities of Practice**.

# Exploring the Heritage of Caribbean Rum



Rum's importance to the Caribbean extends far beyond its economic contribution. Centuries of knowledge, skills and traditions associated with sugar cane cultivation, fermentation, distillation, maturation and blending have made rum an important part of the cultural and industrial heritage of our region.

Following discussions by the Board of Directors, WIRSPA has begun preliminary work to explore possible pathways towards **international heritage recognition for aspects of Caribbean rum culture and**

**production.** We will begin with exploratory engagement in **Barbados**, aimed at better understanding the processes involved, identifying relevant cultural and heritage stakeholders and assessing what a wider Caribbean initiative might require.

This remains an early scoping exercise rather than the start of a formal UNESCO application. As the work develops, member input will be important in documenting traditional practices, historical production knowledge and the relationships between rum, communities and Caribbean culture.

# Responsible Drinking: Trinidad & Tobago Raises Age to 21

The decision by **Trinidad & Tobago to raise the minimum legal age for the purchase and consumption of alcohol from 18 to 21** is an important development for the regional beverage alcohol industry. It also raises practical questions for producers operating within an increasingly integrated CARICOM market, including the implications of different national age requirements for consumer information, packaging and labelling.

More broadly, the change should encourage our industry to consider how it responds to concerns around underage drinking across the region. WIRSPA has consistently advocated for education around underage consumption and supports responsible marketing practices, but industry should not wait for regulation before acting. There is an opportunity for producers, importers and distributors in individual markets to work more proactively on programmes addressing underage drinking, including consumer education, responsible retailing and stronger partnerships with other legitimate beverage alcohol operators.

WIRSPA is continuing its engagement with the **Latin American and Caribbean Spirits Alliance (ABELAC)** and other partners on responsible drinking, responsible marketing and illicit alcohol. We believe stronger national industry coalitions can help demonstrate credible industry leadership while supporting practical, evidence-based approaches to reducing alcohol-related harm.

**Further reading:** [Trinidad & Tobago Senate approves increase in legal drinking age to 21](#)

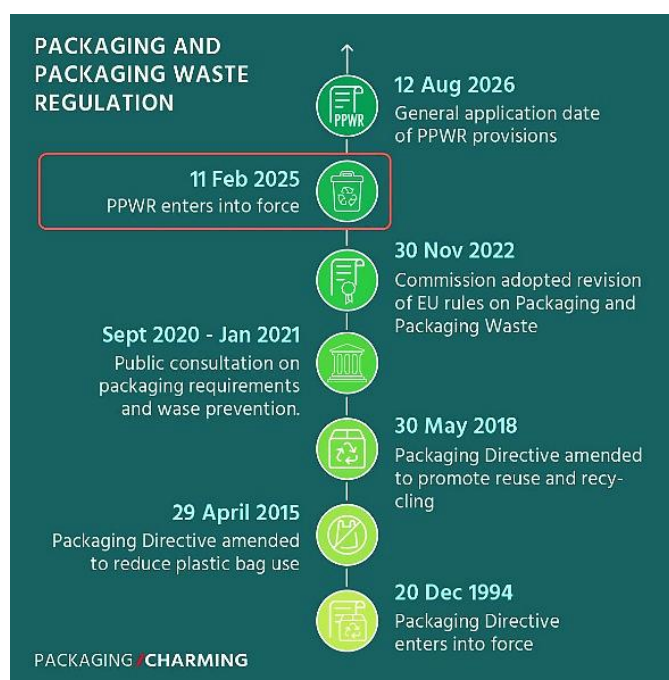


## PPWR: Implementation Underway

The EU's new **Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)** began applying on 12 August. WIRSPA has provided members with several updates and practical guidance during the year, and producers exporting to the European Union should by now be progressing their preparations with packaging suppliers and European customers.

The immediate focus is on putting appropriate documentation and compliance processes in place, while many of the more substantial requirements relating to packaging design, recyclability, recycled content and harmonised labelling will be phased in over the coming years.

Members are encouraged to continue discussions with their EU importers and packaging suppliers and to keep their technical documentation under review as further implementing requirements emerge. WIRSPA will continue monitoring developments and sharing information relevant to Caribbean rum exporters.



## WIRSPA Calls for a Regional Approach on Beverage Alcohol Standards

Work continues in Jamaica on the review of proposed standards covering alcoholic beverages following the withdrawal of the original WTO notifications and the establishment of a broader stakeholder consultation process. WIRSPA remains actively engaged alongside Jamaican producers, importers and international spirits industry partners.

While the immediate work is taking place in Jamaica, WIRSPA continues to advocate for a **regional approach to the development of beverage alcohol standards**. Different or overlapping national requirements across CARICOM create unnecessary complexity for producers trading throughout the region, particularly in areas such as labelling. Greater regional harmonisation would provide clearer rules for industry, facilitate intra-regional trade and help ensure that Caribbean standards remain aligned with appropriate international practice.

This is particularly timely as work on the **revised CARICOM Rum Standard approaches completion**. The Standard provides an important common foundation for the definition, production and authenticity of rum across the Community. WIRSPA will continue advocating for regional consistency wherever practical as other beverage alcohol standards are developed or reviewed.

### Celebrating ESG Leadership

Recognising the businesses shaping a more sustainable drinks industry.

Enter now

## Glass Bottles and Labels: National Advocacy Remains Critical



WIRSPA continues its engagement with CARICOM governments and the CARICOM Secretariat regarding proposals affecting the tariff treatment of **glass bottles and labels**. Of particular concern are proposals that could restrict producers' access to internationally sourced packaging through changes to their treatment under the Common External Tariff.

WIRSPA supports the development of competitive regional manufacturing. At the same time, packaging is fundamental to product quality, brand identity, reliability of supply and export competitiveness.

Producers need access to packaging that meets requirements for quality, price, design, availability and security of supply.

**We particularly encourage members to continue raising this issue directly with their national governments.** WIRSPA's advocacy at the regional level is considerably strengthened when Ministries of Trade, Industry and Finance hear directly from manufacturers about the practical consequences of proposed changes. Members should therefore continue national engagement and keep the Secretariat informed of discussions and feedback received.

## #ICYMI... In Case You Missed It

Earlier this year WIRSPA published its first [Sustainability in the Caribbean Rum Industry Report](#), bringing together industry-wide analysis and case studies demonstrating the investments Caribbean producers are making in renewable energy, water stewardship, emissions reduction, circular economy solutions, sustainable packaging and climate resilience.

We also published the [second edition of the WIRSPA ESG Digest](#) in August, highlighting more recent environmental, social and governance initiatives being undertaken across our membership, from responsible drinking and community programmes to sustainability investments and improvements in production and packaging.

Both publications are useful resources for members when communicating with governments, customers, employees and other stakeholders about the positive contribution and continuing evolution of the Caribbean rum industry.

The Global Drinks Intel ESG Awards celebrate businesses making measurable progress across sustainability, social impact and governance.

Whether you're reducing emissions, improving supply chain transparency, investing in communities, or driving positive change within your organisation, this is your opportunity to share your achievements with the wider drinks industry.

Your ESG journey deserves recognition. Discover more at [gdiesgawards.com](https://gdiesgawards.com)



# WIRSPA

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## West Indies Rum & Spirits Producers' Association Inc.

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**Our Mailing Address:**

West Indies Rum and Spirits Producers' Association Inc. (WIRSPA)  
Mars House, #13 Pine Road, Belleville, St. Michael BB11113, Barbados

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