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Taiwan Tightens Alcohol Label Rules

New requirements demand proof for vintage claims, origin labels and age statements before imported drinks clear customs

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Taiwan has tightened and clarified the rules that govern how alcohol products must be labeled, a framework that matters for wine exporters because it sets specific requirements for vintage claims, geographical indications and supporting documents before goods can clear customs.

Under the regulations issued by the Ministry of Finance’s National Treasury Administration, a wine may use the term “Vintage Year” only if at least 85% of the wine comes from fruit harvested in the year shown on the label. If an imported wine carries

that claim, importers must submit a certificate of the vintage year issued by a government body or a chamber of commerce authorized by the government in the place of production before declaring the product to customs.

The same rule applies to age statements. If a wine or other alcohol product is labeled with an age or described as aged, the label must state the number of years of maturity. When a product is blended from alcohols of different ages, the label must use the age of the youngest component. The regulations also require detailed records and related certification documents to be available for review on request.

For geographical indications, Taiwan defines the term as a geographic origin, such as a country or region, that identifies qualities, reputation or other characteristics of the product and that is also the place where it was made. If an imported alcohol product uses a geographical indication on its label, importers must submit a certificate issued by an authorized government body or chamber of commerce from the place of production before customs clearance. The rules also bar labels from using words such as “kind,” “type,” “style” or “imitation,” or similar expressions, if those terms could create a false impression about origin even when the true origin is stated elsewhere on the label.

The regulations also require alcohol labels to be clear, legible and not misleading. Brand names must appear in larger or bolder type than other text and cannot suggest false information about age, origin or identity. Alcohol content must be stated as a number using degrees, %, % vol or % by volume. The label must also show net contents, dates in Chinese or Gregorian calendar format, and warning statements in a conspicuous place on the container.

For imported products, Taiwan requires labels to identify origin and business name and address in a way that allows consumers to contact the company. The rules say labels should generally be in Chinese, though imported brand names, foreign manufacturer names and addresses, commissioned foreign manufacturers and geographical indications are exempt from that language requirement.

The labeling rules were first enacted in 2000 and later amended several times, including changes that took effect in 2015. For exporters, especially wineries seeking to market vintage-dated bottles or wines with protected origin claims, the practical effect is that Taiwan treats label wording as both a consumer protection issue and a customs compliance issue, with documentary proof required before release into the market.