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Scotch whisky producers appeal approval of English whisky geographical indication

Scottish, Irish and Welsh trade groups say the new rules could weaken protections for the single malt category.

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Scotch whisky producers have formally challenged the recent approval of a geographical indication for English whisky, opening a new stage in a dispute over how one of the industry’s most valuable categories, single malt, is defined and protected

across the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The Scotch Whisky Association said it lodged an appeal on October 8 in response to the approval of the English Whisky geographical indication, known as a GI. The move was followed by a joint statement from the Scotch Whisky Association, the Irish Whiskey Association and the Welsh Whisky Association, which said their members remain concerned about both the approval process and how the new rules could be applied in the future.

A geographical indication is a form of protected product name that links a spirit to a place and sets rules for how it can be made and marketed. In this case, the dispute centers on the English Whisky GI and, more specifically, on the definition of the single malt category within it.

In their statement, the three trade groups said they had hoped to reach what they called a “mutually beneficial resolution” that would protect the integrity of single malt while allowing the English GI to move forward. They said efforts to reach an agreement included offering compromises to the English Whisky Guild, but those talks did not resolve their concerns.

The groups said they believe there were “inconsistencies” in the approval of the English Whisky GI, both in the process itself and in what the decision could mean for future practice. They did not release the full appeal filing, and they did not provide a detailed legal argument in the public statement.

The trade bodies also framed the dispute as one that goes beyond a single application. In their statement, they said the whisky and whiskey producers they represent have a long tradition of making the spirit and want “high-quality definitions” that support a high-quality single malt category consumed around the world.

The appeal does not mean the English Whisky GI has been canceled or suspended. Based on the material released by the Scotch Whisky Association, the action marks a formal challenge to the approval, not a final ruling on it. No decision on the appeal was published with the statement.

The public material also did not include any estimate of the economic impact of the dispute. The associations did not publish figures on sales, export volumes, affected production, or potential losses tied to the approval or the appeal. That leaves the immediate commercial stakes unquantified, even though the single malt label is widely regarded as a premium designation in the spirits market.

The case is likely to draw close attention across the whisky industry because naming rules can shape competition, branding, and consumer perception. A GI can influence who may use a protected term and under what production standards, and disagreements over those standards can have commercial effects even before a court or regulator issues a final decision.

The statement released Thursday came only from the associations backing the appeal, and it reflects their position in the dispute. The English Whisky Guild’s response was not included in the material published by the Scotch Whisky Association, and the underlying appeal document was not made public. That means the full arguments on both sides, and the exact points under challenge, are not yet available in the public record released with the announcement.

For now, the matter has moved from a regulatory approval into a formal legal or administrative challenge. The dispute now turns on whether the approval of the English Whisky GI, and the way it treats the single malt category, can withstand that appeal.