

THE EBC WELCOMES THE RECENT NOTICE BY THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT ON TRACEABILITY

The European Business Council in Japan (EBC) welcomes the notice on Traceability issued by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) to 28 liquor sales- and distribution-related industry associations on 4 July. This follows the notice of the National Tax Agency (NTA) sent to eight liquor related industry associations on 22 September, 2014.

In the notice, METI/MHLW/MAFF confirm the importance of lot codes by saying, “In Japan, the display of Lot Codes is strongly recommended by the MHLW guideline, *Principle for the record keeping process and archive for food operators under the definition of Food Sanitation Law Chapter 1 Section 3 Clause 2*. The guideline stipulates that information which enables the identification of the lot should be recorded and systematically archived as precisely as possible in order to prevent any sanitary or health hazard resulting from the consumption of foodstuffs.” The METI/MHLW/MAFF further state concerns by saying, “However, a number of imported liquor products with erased lot codes are being distributed in the market. We believe this situation to be undesirable as it could lead to a lack of confidence among consumers about the reliability of liquor in general.” METI/MHLW/MAFF has asked the liquor sales and distribution related industry associations to notify the above concerns from the NTA to each of their members handling liquor, and requested they make efforts to foster a consensus around raising awareness about lot codes.

James Paton, the chairman of the EBC Liquor Committee, states, “It is an important step to have the METI/MHLW/MAFF issue this notice requesting 28 liquor sales- and distribution-related industry members to jointly refrain from selling and distributing decoded products. EU wine & spirits producers, in compliance with the EU Directive 89/396/EEC, apply lot codes with the aim of improving consumer protection. We will continue to monitor the situation in collaboration with the related ministries, liquor industry associations, and the other food and beverage related associations.” The EBC will request further action if the undesirable situation does not cease to exist.

The EBC Liquor Committee started to take the initiative on traceability in 2010, with the support and advice from the Japan-France Friendship Caucus of the House of Representatives, an influential parliamentary caucus in Japan.

About the EBC:

The European Business Council in Japan (EBC)/European (EU) Chamber of Commerce in Japan is the trade policy and advocacy arm of 18 European national chambers of commerce and business associations in Japan. Established in 1972, the EBC works to improve the business and investment environment in Japan. It currently represents more than 2,500 local European companies and individuals, some 350 of whom participate directly in the EBC's 24 sector-based committees.

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