



COVID-19: ILLICIT ALCOHOL MARKET ALERT

WARNING: COVID-19 prohibitions on alcoholic beverages drive markets for illicit alcohol, present dangerous risks to consumers, encourage criminality and sideline legal jobs and growth.

In efforts to contain COVID-19, several countries have banned the production, import, distribution and sale of alcoholic beverages. While social distancing principles called for restrictions in the on-premise consumption of alcohol, such measures did not need to be extended to supermarkets and off-license outlets, home delivery, order-and-collect / grab-and-go, and e-commerce options.

Restrictions on availability of alcohol that are *too strict* may promote the development of a parallel illicit market, according to the World Health Organization.¹ During this time of crisis, overly restrictive access to legitimate beverages will drive consumers to illicit and counterfeit alcohol supplied by criminals and unscrupulous illicit traders.

Sadly, by increasing exposure to toxic, illicit alcohol, these bans undermine the public health objectives for which COVID-19 emergency measures have been enacted.



COVID-19 restrictions spike demand for illicit alcohol and create significant, unintended health risks.



Emergency restrictions sideline legitimate industry, jeopardize long-term employment and growth.



Upsurges in illicit alcohol reduce public revenues, now vital to address COVID-19 emergencies.



Crisis-driven prohibition laws open windows for criminal activity.

TRACIT warns policy makers that emergency response measures to protect people from COVID-19 must avoid prohibition laws that inadvertently grow and strengthen markets for illicit alcohol.

- Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Tahiti have quickly understood the consequences of prohibition laws—and have reversed them.
- Wherever such prohibition laws remain—Panama, Mexico, Australia, India, Botswana, South Africa and Thailand—TRACIT calls on these governments to remove bans on the production, distribution and consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- Ensure access to legitimate products in supermarkets and off-license outlets as well as through home delivery, carry-out, and e-commerce.
- Lift remaining on-premise restrictions immediately in line with relaxation of social distancing measures.
- Follow the approach of countries that include alcoholic beverages among essential goods, responding to consumer demand and supporting the legitimate economy.

¹ World Health Organization, Strengthen restrictions on alcohol availability, https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/safer/s/en/