

**HEALTH PROTECTION DIRECTORATE**

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Standards Management Officer  
Food Standards Australia New Zealand  
PO Box 7186  
Canberra BC ACT 2610

Dear Sir / Madam

**Submission – Application A1026 – Minimum Alcohol Content for Wine**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Assessment Report (AR) for Application A1026.

This is a whole of Queensland Government response and is made by Queensland Health since it is the lead agency in Queensland which coordinates policy advice relative to the national policy on food regulation. Our approach follows consultation with other relevant Queensland Government agencies and includes input by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation after contact with the Queensland Wine Industry Association Inc.

After considering the documentation, Queensland supports Option 2 – To prepare a draft variation to Standard 4.5.1 – Wine Production Requirements to require wine and sparkling wine produced in Australia to contain no less than 45 mL/L of ethanol at 20°C.

Option 2 provides benefits to the Australian wine industry in terms of product innovation and market opportunities and addresses a regulatory disadvantage for the Australian wine industry in comparison to imports.

We believe Australian consumers may also benefit from a potentially wider range of low alcohol wine products and increased competition. Any costs incurred by industry would be voluntary.

It is also understood demand for low alcohol and low calorie wines in Australia and internationally is increasing.

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Furthermore, Queensland Health promotes products and practices which have better health and safety outcomes. Reducing the minimum allowed alcohol content of wine is consistent with these outcomes. Conversely, seeking to maintain the minimum alcohol content at the current higher level would persist in perpetuating the various harmful effects of high alcohol consumption.

Overall, the benefits of the Application outweigh the costs.

Assuming the above amendment is progressed, a consequential amendment to the current definition of wine under the *Queensland Wine Industry Act 1994* (the Act) will be required.

The Act currently applies the 8% limit under the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code) in the definition when a wine producer/merchant licence is legally required. The relevant Second Schedule to that Act defines wine as:

*“wine means any of the following fermented or distilled fluids of an intoxicating nature intended for human consumption—*

- (a) a fluid resulting from the complete or partial fermentation of only grapes and, at 20°C, containing ethyl alcohol (ethanol) of at least 80mL/L (8%);*
- (b) a fluid resulting from the complete or partial fermentation of fruit (other than wholly from grapes) and, at 20°C, containing ethyl alcohol (ethanol) of at least 11.5mL/L (1.15%);*
- (c) a fluid resulting from the complete or partial fermentation of honey and at 20°C, containing ethyl alcohol (ethanol) of at least 11.5mL/L (1.15%);*
- (d) a fluid resulting from the distillation of any fruit to obtain a fluid possessing the taste, aroma and other characteristics generally attributed to brandy and, at 20°C, containing ethyl alcohol (ethanol) of at least 250mL/L (25%);*
- (e) a fluid resulting from adding a fluid mentioned in paragraph (d) with a fluid mentioned in paragraph (a), (b) or (c) and, at 20°C, containing ethyl alcohol (ethanol) of at least 170mL/L (17%).”*

If the proposed change is made to the Code, and not consequentially reflected in the Act, it could technically result in a producer of grape wine with less than 8% alcohol not being subject to the mandatory licensing requirements under the Act, which would not be a favorable outcome.

A minor discrepancy is also noted for the alcoholic strength shown in 2.4.1 and Table 1 of 2.4.2 of the AR. The details in 2.4.1 state *“wine shall have an alcoholic strength of not less than 8.5% vol or 9% vol depending on the wine-growing zone”* whilst the Table 1 in 2.4.2 shows minimum alcohol (vol/vol) for Europe as 9%.

Yours sincerely

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