

Alcohol, tobacco ban achieves no end other than to fuel illegal activity - PnP chairman

Pick n Pay chairman Gareth Ackerman has spoken out against the ban on sales of alcohol and tobacco, saying that it risks creating more cynicism and division than any other decision taken by the government during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Gareth Ackerman

Speaking during the company's AGM held online this week, Ackerman said he chose to bring up the prohibitions on the occasion not because they hurt the retailer's sales and cashflow, which they do, but because they create confusion and cynicism and "erode the togetherness on which we all depend" during this time.

"South Africa is virtually the only country in the world that has prohibited the sale of these products during the pandemic. There has been no explanation as to why South Africa is right and so many other countries are wrong. What explanations we have been given have been confusing and contradictory.

"And, sadly, everyone knows that tobacco and liquor remain readily available through the black market. So the policy achieves no end other than to fuel illegal activity which ignores any regulatory safeguards and contributes not a single cent to the beleaguered tax service which desperately needs the revenue for the state to meet its socio-economic obligations," Ackerman said.



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4 Aug 2020



Ackerman urged the the country's leadership to review the bans and to look at the issue in the spirit of responsibility and togetherness. He called on the government to ensure that decisions are taken for the right reasons, are justified by the facts, and that these facts are explained to the public when decisions seem difficult to understand.

"The government has on several occasions reassured that they are listening and consulting. But we see little evidence of this. We need government to take us into their confidence when it comes to decisions that affect us all. We cannot afford

decisions that are poorly made or poorly explained," Ackerman said.



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Economic revival - reinvigoration, not over-regulation

Ackerman said that in the current circumstances, managing South Africa's economic recovery will require a great deal of finesse and extraordinary focus on rapid implementation of reforms, which the government has already committed to.

"The government will have to be far more deft in getting the economy back on its feet. It will have to recognise its limitations and withdraw from controls it has put in place, play to its strengths and allow citizens and the private sector to play to theirs, unleashing the creative energy of the whole society.

"We have to learn to live with the virus while we grow the economy, and for this to happen, the government will have to rely more on persuasion and co-operation, and less on control. We must harness the energy and innovation of all South Africans, with a focus on critical reinvigoration, not over-regulation," he said.



Excuse me Mr President, could we have a drink, please?

Rowan Leibbrandt 3 Aug 2020



Spirit of togetherness

Despite criticising the alcohol and tobacco bans, Ackerman applauded President Cyril Ramaphosa for his courage in facing up to tough choices and making tough decisions. "I salute the way he has emphasised, over and over again, that we are all in this together. That we will only survive if we stay together. That we will triumph in the end – but only if we stay together," Ackerman said.

He also recognised Pick n Pay staff, the greater consumer goods industry, frontline workers and consumers for their resilience and generosity displayed during the pandemic.

"I want to pay tribute to all my colleagues in the Pick n Pay Group who have stepped up magnificently to fulfil our responsibility as one of the essential service providers through the national state of disaster and the lockdown. Through all the challenges and tribulations, you have continued to feed the nation.

"The consumer goods industry has shown great resilience, and I am proud to be a co-chair of the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa.

"Our emergency services – and in particular our health workers around the country – have shown enormous heroism. They can be justly proud that, to date, South Africa has experienced far fewer deaths from Covid-19 than many other countries around the world.



Pick n Pay shoppers can now send digital grocery vouchers

21 Apr 2020



"More widely, our customers, alongside millions of others around the country, have shown solidarity by behaving responsibly, wearing their face masks and observing the physical distancing and other restrictions that we and others have had to introduce to safeguard lives.

"We have also seen unprecedented acts of generosity in all walks of life to alleviate some of the suffering the pandemic has caused. As one of many examples, our [Feed the Nation initiative](#) has channelled over R67m into food hampers, with donations from many customers and companies, our family, executives and Pick n Pay. We have been able to provide close to 17 million meals. This has been the largest humanitarian effort the PnP group has undertaken in its 53-year history," Ackermans said.

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