

Potential 11-day alcohol ban looms, and liquor makers demand justification

South African Liquor Brandowners Association (Salba) claims that it received confirmation at the industry meeting with the officials of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) on 29 March that the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) is intending on banning all sales of alcohol for 11 days, starting Easter weekend.



Salba has submitted an urgent request for information in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act to the Minister of Cooperative Government, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, requesting information that Government has used to decide to yet again ban alcohol sales.

The association has given Government up to Wednesday, 31 March 2021 to furnish this information on which the organisation would base its next course of action.

Relaxed restrictions around gatherings

Salba said in a press statement that despite the pending fourth ban on alcohol sales, NCCC further intends to increase the number of people allowed in a gathering from the current limitation of 100 for indoors and 250 for outdoors for the same period.

“We hope Government will be transparent and make this information available. We would like to understand what the rationale/evidence-based reasoning is behind an 11-day ban of alcohol sales while at the same time increasing the maximum number of people allowed in a gathering,” said Salba chairperson Sibani Mngadi.



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Lack of cooperation from Patel

Mngadi also expressed concern that the Minister of Trade and Industry, Ebrahim Patel, has once again failed to meet with the industry to discuss the coming ban. Through its National Liquor Authority division, DTIC is responsible for licensing of manufacturing and distribution of alcohol in the country.

"We have had three bans totalling 19-weeks of lost trade days with R36bn loss in sales revenue for the industry and R29bn loss in tax revenue for Government since the start of the lockdown this time last year. However, Minister Patel has only found time on one occasion to meet with industry to inform us of the third liquor ban.

"He has not responded to a series of correspondence from various organisations in the alcohol sector. We have, instead, been received by other Ministers in the NCCC, but not him," said Mngadi.

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