

Dept urges liquor traders to comply with laws

The Department of Trade and Industry has urged liquor traders to comply with the legal framework imposed by the licensing authority or face the might of the law.

By [Professor Ndawonde](#) 26 Mar 2009

“Traders who wish to trade liquor need to get into the legal framework, they should get licenses and comply with the conditions imposed by the licensing authority, the National Liquor Authority (NLA) or face the might of the law,” said the department’s Director-General Tshediso Matona.

Speaking at the Biennial Conference on Liquor Regulation on Thursday, 26 March 2009, Matona said the industry requires properly licensed traders who know precisely what alcohol is and the potential harm that is inherent in its trade and consumption.

The illegal trading of alcohol, he said, has created despicable social ills and has also affected the country’s economy.

Take responsibility

He encouraged traders to take responsibility of the society and to know that legal and proper trading in liquor has long term positive off-spins, not only to the business, but to society as well.

“The adverse socio-economic impact of liquor abuse and its related costs has also left an indelible mark on society,” he said, adding that this required stringent action from government and business.

“There is a need to work together to counter this negative impact and its effects on society at large,” he explained, adding that the civil society also has a role in that they can report illegal trading so it can be rooted from communities.

Educating traders

In the area of compliance and enforcement, the department and the NLA together with relevant stakeholders have now moved towards education and voluntary compliance rather than the enforcement only-oriented practice.

Matona affirmed that proper education and communication strategies are tools that the liquor regulators are seriously considering as mechanisms to teach those who deal with liquor about liquor.

He said as the country approaches the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the department with stakeholders need to ensure streamlined enforcement strategies with the provinces, improve on turn around licenses, beef up capacity and take initiative for collective inspection efforts to ensure compliance.

“We also need to develop educational strategies to empower consumers about excess liquor consumption in the current economic downturn and develop the strategy in promoting access into the industry and opportunities for small companies during the world cup.”

Reviewing legislation

In promoting the development of a responsible and sustainable liquor industry, government has in 2003 reviewed the liquor legislative framework which culminated in the National Liquor Act of 2003.

The Act outline vital norms and standards in the liquor industry aimed at ameliorating socio-economic effects and other costs of alcohol abuse in the country.

It also entrenches a social responsibility principle by requiring distributors and manufactures to combat alcohol abuse, however balancing the effect of liquor abuse against promoting the economic imperatives of the industry remains a challenge.

In improving alcohol abuse awareness, the department will continue to work closely with Departments of Health and Education respectively by embarking on initiatives and educational campaigns directed at the social ills of alcohol consumption and their impact on youth.

Policy interventions

Commenting on policy interventions to combat alcohol abuse, the Director of International Centre for Alcohol Policies (ICAP), Brett Bivans said it was vital to enforce liquor policies to prevent alcohol abuse and illegal trading of liquor.

“By enforcing these policies we will effectively minimise harm and maximise benefits. These policies should be seen as a safeguard of wellbeing and health as they offer protection from harm.

”These policies if they are implemented correctly, they can improve the ability to make informed decisions and discourage negative drinking and obviously both the revenue of the industry,” he said.

This industry is an important sector of the country's economy due to its potential of generating revenue and its contribution to the gross domestic product however illegal trading has according to Mr Bivans ripped the industry millions and has led to unbearable social ills.

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