

BEGIN DISTILLING

Begin Distilling Limited

New Zealand Business Number (NZBN): 942 9041 98 3614

Certificate of Incorporation: 580 7587

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To:

Consultations

Ministry for Primary Industries

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New Zealand

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29 August 2024

Suspension of unused or out-of-date nursery stock import pathways

Begin Distilling Limited is grateful for the opportunity to submit on the consultation: *Suspension of unused or out-of-date nursery stock import pathways and reformat of nursery stock import health standard*

About Begin Distilling Limited:

Begin Distilling Limited (BDL) is a premium spirits distiller located in New Plymouth, New Zealand. The distillery was opened in 2016 and manufactures a range of premium spirits under the brands Juno, Vesta and Monica. Begin Distilling has three company values: Make it Fun, Make it Together and Make it Right.

It is the value Make it Right that has inspired BDL to be the first distillery in New Zealand to commercially grow Angelica Root (***Angelica archangelica***) on our family farm and work with Our Patch in Hastings and Massey University to grow and evaluate efficacy of Orris Root (***Rhizoma iridis***). Our Patch now have two farms growing and supplying the root to the New Zealand distilling industry.

Alongside these two successfully commercialised crops, BDL has been working with Massey University since 2018 to source, analyse and propagate Juniper trees (***Juniperus communis***) for the commercial production of juniper cones – a key ingredient in all modern gins and a number of nutraceuticals.

About The New Zealand Distilled Spirits Industry:

The New Zealand spirits industry is made up of more than 200 distilleries, which employ approximately 910 jobs with an estimated \$41 million per year in wages. The industry is largely made up of small and medium family businesses, with over 65% located in rural and regional New Zealand.

The industry has a downstream economic value of \$16.8 million across other industries such as tourism, hospitality, research, agriculture, and manufacturing, providing approximately 1,547 downstream jobs. The New Zealand spirits' sector currently has an export value of \$45.8 million, with New Zealand-made spirits having the potential to match if not exceed the value of New Zealand's Wine Exports. Our distillers are recognised amongst the best in the world, bringing home prestigious awards such as the World's Best Gin at the International Wine and Spirits Competition on three different occasions.

Consultation

Biosecurity New Zealand is seeking feedback on two proposed changes to the import health standard Importation of Nursery Stock.

The proposed changes are:

1. Reformatting the standard to make it more user-friendly

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2. Suspending plants-for-planting pathways (import of plant genus from a specific country) that are not used and/or are out of date.

Biosecurity New Zealand has a list of plant genus which have not been imported in the last 11-25 years. They propose to suspend pathways for these genera (including assessing emerging pest threats for the genus) and are seeking feedback on any plant genera or species proposed for suspension that the public may have a viable and valid interest in importing, including understanding the demand for and opportunities for New Zealand for the plant species.

These changes should ensure:

- The standard is useable
- Biosecurity New Zealand can focus on the pathways that are important to the sector and which will have positive impacts and benefits to New Zealand.

Even if pathways are suspended or revoked, plants could be imported again after a review and consultation on new import requirements.

Begin Distilling Limited Submission

A key to creating world class spirits is the use of quality botanicals. As noted above, BDL has championed the establishment of local sourcing of ingredients for freshness, quality, cost, reducing food-miles, establishing provenance and the development of a unique New Zealand essence to our brands.

Gin is by far the most common spirit produced by our members. Traditional gins typically have botanicals such as Juniper cones (**Juniperus communis**), Coriander Seed (**Coriandrum sativum**), Angelica Root (**Angelica archangelica**) and Orris Root (**Rhizoma iridis**). Other botanicals used commonly in the spirits industry can include Cassia (**Cinnamomum cassia**), liquorice (**Glycyrrhiza glabra**), Wormwood (**Artemisia absinthium**) Anise (**Pimpinella anisum**), Cardamom (**Elettaria cardamomum**), Cinnamon (**Cinnamomum verum**), peppercorns, aniseed, almond, caraway, fennel, ginger, nutmeg, and many more.

As recently as 2016, none of these ingredients were grown in New Zealand and were all imported. There is now a healthy research and growing programme to locally source these botanicals. We are actively working with local growers, Te Puna Umanga Venture Taranaki (Branching Out growing trials) and Massey University, on various programs for building a botanicals industry within Taranaki and other regions in New Zealand. Orris Root, Coriander Seed and Angelica Root are now being produced commercially to supply to our distilleries and for other uses in the Food & Beverage industry. Growing these botanicals locally has provided high-value diversification opportunities for farmers for both local and export opportunities.

Gin must contain juniper in significant quantities, and so the ability to grow and harvest from **Juniperus communis** in New Zealand will have a significant impact on the New Zealand spirits industry. A recent review of go / no-go on the Begin/VT/Massey project concluded that it will be a longer-term programme, but there is a compelling argument to continue. In the next 10 years or so we must be research-focused to establish genetic-diverse stock suitable for New Zealand conditions, understand how to propagate in volume and determine regimes for commercial growing, processing systems etc. We will need plants and plant material from overseas to compare with Juniper trees grown from seeds imported into New Zealand in the 1980's. Since 2011 *Phytophthora austrocedri*, an aggressive pathogen of juniper and cypress trees, has been causing dieback and fatality in the juniper industry overseas. We will therefore need to have an appropriate importation protocol in place in future.

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Begin Distilling supports:

BDL supports the proposal to reformat the import health standard Importation of Nursery Stock to make it more user-friendly and align it with modern standards.

Begin Distilling does not support:

BDL does not support the suspension of pathways that may be important for the establishment of the spirits botanicals industry in New Zealand. These include **Juniperus, Cinnamomum, Angelica, Iris** (potentially impacting Orris root), **Pimpinella, Cinnamomum, Glycyrrhiza, Artemisia** which are on the Biosecurity New Zealand suspension list.

The spirits botanicals industry in New Zealand is just beginning an exciting phase of growth, and it is important for Biosecurity to be aware of and support the retention of plant material importation protocols relevant to the distillation industry.

Yours faithfully



David James

Founder / Distiller, Begin Distilling Limited