

2-12-1997

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LADB Staff

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Recommended Citation

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by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 1997-02-12

According to the tequila regulatory council (Consejo Regulador del Tequila, CRT), Mexico produced 76.9 million liters of tequila in 1996, an increase of 29% from 1995. The CRT report said more than 70% of the total production was channeled to the export market, while only 25% was sold domestically. In fact, last year's export total of 54.7 million liters was 16.5% higher than in 1995. In an interview with the official news agency Notimex, CRT president Jose Luis Gonzalez Inigo said the Mexican tequila industry has improved the quality of tequila, which, in turn, has led to increased demand overseas.

Agreement with European Union to boost exports

The CRT said a recent decision by the European Union (EU) to designate tequila and mezcal, another distilled product made from the same plant, as "uniquely" Mexican products, should help boost future exports to that region. The EU offered the designation in exchange for a Mexican agreement to accept the same recognition for other European spirits. Europe currently absorbs about 7.2 million liters of Mexico's tequila exports.

The designation provides Mexican tequila manufacturers with exclusive rights to market and distribute their product in the EU, thus prohibiting liquor manufacturers in Spain from selling an imitation product. In addition to Europe, other overseas markets are opening up to Mexican tequila. According to Trade Secretary Herminio Blanco, Taiwan recently eliminated its barriers on tequila imports, allowing increased shipments to that country. (Sources: El Economista, 11/15/96; Notimex, 01/30/97; El Universal, 01/31/97)

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