

Define single-malt whiskies afresh, says alcobev industry

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The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has requested the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority to come up with a narrower, India-specific definition that will serve as a benchmark for producing single malts in the country, considering the varied climatic conditions compared to other whisky-producing nations.

In India, spirits age three to four times faster compared to other countries. Typically, single malt should be a product of a single distillery though the malt can be matured in different casks.

At present, there are 8-9 distilleries producing their own single-malt brands. Paul John, Amrut, Solan Gold and Rampur have become household names, while new brands such as Indri and Gian Chand are yet to make a mark despite receiving considerable recognition from connoisseurs. While Diageo has launched Godawan, more distilleries plan to launch their single malts soon.

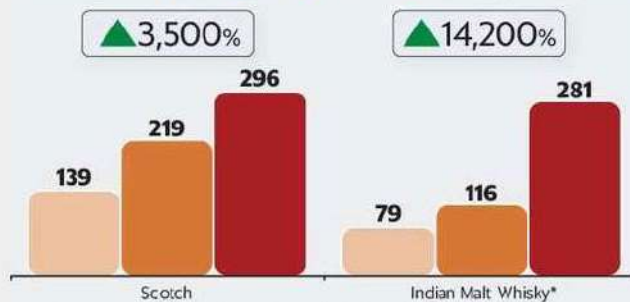
However, with both regulatory and industry perspectives coming into play, the single-malt category faces a dilemma over the definition.

According to the 2018 food safety and standards regulations for alcoholic beverages by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), single-malt or single-grain whisky is defined as a distillate derived from fermented mash utilizing malted barley, or malted or unmalted grain, distilled in a pot and originating from a sin-

In good spirits

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Malt whisky sales 2020 2021 2022 Growth (in %, 2022 vs 2021)



*Current Indian malt portfolio is Amrut, Paul John, Rampur, Solan Gold, Indri, Kamet, Gian Chand, Godawan, Peter Scot black. Volume above covers them.

*Number of cases in 000 (one case is 9 litres each)

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Source: CIABC

gle distillery.

However, experts argue that the FSSAI's definition of single malt is too broad and regulatory in nature. They emphasize the industry's need for specific and practical standards, tailor-made to address the unique considerations of whisky production in India.

Unlike the climate in Scotland, where most single malts are produced, India has varied climatic conditions within the country that can significantly

impact the product's characteristics. So, industry insiders contend that India should standardize the definition of single-malt whiskies produced in the country to mitigate variations as

Indian products have distinct notes and flavours due to the use of domestically grown barley and the impact of warmer climatic conditions during the maturation process, CIABC director general Vinod Giri said.

The lobby group represents interests of firms such as Radico Khaitan Ltd, Jagatjit Industries Ltd and Allied Blender and Distillers Pvt. Ltd.

"Rampur, Indri, Amrut, Paul John, Gian Chand and others

doing well is an endorsement of Indian whiskies by Indians. It is a very vital step in building global acceptance for our local products. For the Indian single malt becoming a strong global brand, we must deliver quality product experience uniformly and consistently. This requires well-defined product and process standards," Giri added.

It will also help in better regulation of the industry, he said. Benchmarks are also required to help the industry's growth and to check spurious, doubtful products. It could also help exports by defining Indian single malts as a separate category with a certification by the government agency, Giri added.

The consumption of single-malt whisky in India is about 475,000 cases (of 9 litres each). One-fourth of this is said to be of Indian brands. Of the 220,000 cases of single malts produced by Indian companies, about 100,000 cases are exported. While still at a nascent stage, Indian single malts have been gaining strong market share of late. International drinks market analyst, IWSR, said premium local brands are evident across all categories, but Indian single malts are the most credible and expensive, given that the most aged liquid in barrels are found here.

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