

Wray & Nephew sides with Spirits Pool in rum GI dispute

JAMAICA'S LARGEST rum maker J.Wray & Nephew Limited, JWN, has sided with the wider Spirits Pool Association in the unfolding legal rum fight against large bulk seller National Rums of Jamaica.

The parties will face off on September 27 in front of the Jamaica Intellectual Property Office, JIPO, the oversight agency for trademarks and GIs, or geographical indications.

The limits of what constitutes Jamaica rum can impact market share going forward within a sector where some players such as JWN sell premium aged rums, while others sell less expensive bulk rum used for blending or white labelling.

"JWN and the other industry players are in favour of strengthening the geographic indication, in order for the registration to be accepted in Europe of the



protections to be fully realised," said JWN in response to **Financial Gleaner** queries.

In 2016, rum makers, under the guidance of the JIPO, established specific criteria for what qualifies as Jamaican rum under a GI that speaks to origin, manufacturing techniques, climate and soil, and so on. Its geared at shielding the Jamaican rum sector from

imitation. In addition to a rum GI, there is also one for 'Jamaica Jerk'.

The Spirits Pool has wanted in recent years to upgrade the rum GI to include new and more stringent criteria. However, National Rums is said to have objected to the additional criteria.

The JIPO hearing set for next Wednesday will discuss whether the source of water needs to be

filtered by limestone, whether the ageing process needs to be done in Jamaica, and whether sugar can be added, sources indicate.

JWN, however, remained tight-lipped on the specifics of the legal fight, as did National Rums. The Spirits Pool also opted to hold its comments until after the hearing next week.

The large members of the Spirits Pool Association include JWN, National Rums, Hampden and Worthy Park. Each of these entities markets their products under recognised brands: JWN under Appleton and Wray & Nephew, Hampden under Hampden Estates, Worthy Park under Worthy Park and Rum-Bar, and National Rums under the Monymusk label.

The GI speaks to the core of the rum business and the uniqueness of the product. For instance, local industry players have said that rum ages three times faster in the Caribbean than in Europe, partially due to the heat evaporation in the region.

It's been said that a rum aged for four years in Jamaica equates to a 12-year aged rum in Europe. And since older rums fetch higher prices than younger rums, it has been argued that ageing local rums outside the island could create confusion.

JWN, which has operated for over 200 years, holds one of the largest stocks of aged rum reserves in the world. Its portfolio includes high-quality rums like Appleton Estate, some of which have been aged beyond 50 years. The company, which last year raked up €159.1 million (\$25 billion) in sales, says its rums reflect its exclusive geography, production techniques, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage.

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JCCUL to offload Clarendon lands

THE JAMAICA Co-operative Credit Union League, JCCUL, is exploring options around offloading some 276 acres of land it owns at Cross Pen in Clarendon.

JCCUL, which is the umbrella association for credit unions, has been the registered proprietor of the property for nearly 40 years, Manager of Property Services Lebert Langley told the **Financial Gleaner**, but now it wants to dispose of the lands and is sussing out the most profitable option.

JCCUL is in the process of recruiting expertise of land surveyors, planners or civil engineers to subdivide the lands for the purpose of residential lots, serviced with the required access, engineering services and utility provisions to facilitate the development of a subdivision plan.

Within that process, it also wants to determine just how much the land is worth today.

The bid deadline for interested consultants passed on Tuesday, September 19.

The area where the land sits is zoned for residential use.

"In looking for divestment possibilities, we are embarking on a project feasibility. Based on what we find out from this part of the project, then the board will have to sit and contemplate what will be done," Langley said.

"Because we are looking at divestment, it may mean that we simply offload the property as is at that point and no longer move on the subdivision ... it really depends on what comes out of that study," he added.

Langley estimates that the detailed analysis to consider all the critical aspects of the project will continue to run for another three to five years.

Formed eight decades ago, in 1942, to provide collective

representation and the promotion of credit union services, JCCUL now has 25 credit union firms as members. That's down from around 43 when the transition to central bank oversight first got under way.


There is currently a credit union located in every parish in Jamaica.

As the umbrella organisation for the movement pre-reform, JCCUL policed the health of the sector as the *de facto* watchdog, and generally provided support to members when needed through its Stabilisation Fund.


The Stabilisation Society was formed back in 1968, through which members were guaranteed the return of their total investment if the credit union were to become insolvent.

Now that the sector is being regulated by the central bank, JCCUL has restructured to provide services to its members in a consultative capacity. And the operations of the Stabilisation Fund have also been subsumed into that of the membership services department.

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