

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 59

Division/Agency: Wine Australia Corporation

Topic: Export Approval Control for Bulk Wine

Proof Hansard Page: 134 (21/02/2011)

Senator Xenophon asked:

Mr Cheesman—Yes, probably twofold. We are going through the process of strengthening the export approval control mechanisms around the export of bulk wine. We are also introducing some new requirements on wine that is packaged in international markets and is labelled as Australian wine. We are working with counterpart regulatory bodies in those other countries to assist us with that.

Senator XENOPHON—I think Senator Back has some questions. Could you provide some details of what you have just outlined on notice?

Mr Cheesman—Yes.

Answer:

In 2002, Wine Australia Corporation introduced additional controls applicable to wine exported in bulk to all offshore facilities in response to the heightened risk of substitution, contamination or quality degradation associated with wine exported in this form. These controls require the international packaging facility to demonstrate compliance with an independently audited, internationally recognised, quality management system, and to return samples of finished product to Australia for review by Wine Australia Corporation's inspection panel.

Wine Australia Corporation has recently conducted a review of these bulk wine controls and has decided to introduce additional measures. All facilities offshore that package Australian wine will be integrated into the Wine Export Approval System, with a risk-based rating system determining audit frequency. This will provide timely advice as to each bulk shipment's progress through the packaging cycle and distribution chain. The new measures will allow for early intervention in the case of non-compliance, including writing to the facility and asking that bottling be reconsidered if there are any possible contamination issues and requesting samples of the wine be sent to the Wine Australia Corporation for testing.

Following a 2010 review of a range of approved bottling facilities in China, Wine Australia Corporation has developed a new standard to augment existing quality management system certification arrangements. In addition to maintaining their existing quality management system certification, approved Chinese bottling facilities will be required to submit to an annual audit by the China Quality Certification Centre – a professional certification agency approved by the Chinese Government. The audit will comprise an inspection of the records to ensure: all Australian bulk wine is packaged at the facility and not on-sold; nothing other than permitted materials is added to Australian wine; claims made on labels about the vintage, variety and geographical indication (region of origin) of the wine are truthful; and basic control processes are in place.