

Liquor traders, taverners plead for off-premise sales

Liquor traders from the tavern sector are appealing to the government to allow off-premise alcohol sales to resume on 16 January, to help protect the 250,000 jobs in the sector and safeguard livelihoods.



Credit: rawpixel via Pxabay

The Liquor Traders Formation said in a statement that liquor traders continue to suffer the brunt of the lockdowns first implemented by the president on 26 March 2020.

"Out of the 284 days that the country has been on some measure of lockdown, liquor traders have not been able to trade in liquor for +100 days with no government support whatsoever to cushion against this blow. Closure is the immediate reality faced by the majority of 34,500 taverns - and this includes shebeen permit holders," the organisation said.



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30 Dec 2020



It added that 1 million jobs across the full alcohol value chain are at risk and that taverns support township-based jobs that anchor households and ensure that more than 250,000 families have meals on their tables daily. "The current lockdown means over 250,000 families do not know where their next meal is going to come from or how they will have means to prepare for their back to school needs."

Requests to government

The Liquor Traders Formation's call to government is to immediately consider the following:

- Allow off-premise sales with limited days and hours with effect from 16 January 2021
- Moratorium on licence renewals and linked fee increases for a period no less than 1 year
- Financial package for liquor traders to cover their non-trading losses to the value no less than R20,000

According to the organisation, the last two bans resulted in 165,000 job losses in the alcohol industry, and the majority of taverns face permanent closure if alcohol sales don't resume in some way this month.



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Lucky Ntimane, convener for the Liquor Traders Formation, reiterated the sector's support in stemming the tide against the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. "We further welcome the collaborative efforts of our communities, society and law enforcement officials over the festive period which ensured that there was generally high compliance levels with Covid-19 regulations as evidenced by few incidents reported and low trauma admissions in hospital linked to alcohol abuse.

"Liquor traders will continue to strongly support measures to reduce the spike in coronavirus infections during this second wave including the president's call to remain vigilant and adopt the government's Covid-19 regulations, namely, the mandatory wearing of masks, maintaining social distancing, obeying the curfew hours and sanitising regularly and repeatedly."

The organisation urges law enforcement agencies to take a tougher stance against the illicit and illegal trading of liquor. "The current lockdown environment we find ourselves in encourages network of alcohol smugglers to fill in the vacuum created of unmet consumer demand for alcoholic products."

The Liquor Traders Formation urges the public to make use of the Consumer Goods Council hotline on 0800 014 856 to report any violation of the regulations.

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