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Italian success for whisky distillers

A long fight by the Scotch Whisky Association to protect consumers from imitation 'Scotch Whiskies' in Italy has come to a successful end in the Italian Supreme Court.

In the late 1980s, a number of imitation 'Scotch Whiskies' were found on sale in major retailers in Italy. All the 'whiskies' were supplied by a Mr Angelo Vendrame operating under several trading names. Despite the use of Scottish sounding names such as 'MacQueen', 'Clan 55', 'Jackson's', 'Gold River', 'Royal Club' and 'Sullivan' none of the products was genuine. Some were specifically mis-described as 'Scotch Whisky' on labels, whilst others claimed to be 'produced' or 'matured' in Scotland. Each label referred to a 'shell' UK company, Alex Albright Ltd, which had been set up by Mr Vendrame, to suggest a false provenance for his products.

A spokesman for The Scotch Whisky Association said:

"This has been a long battle to protect Italian consumers and Scotch Whisky distillers from imitation products unfairly trading on Scotch Whisky's reputation. Such practices left unchecked would undermine consumer confidence and the integrity of Scotch Whisky. Our top priority must be to protect Scotch Whisky from all forms of unfair competition and we are delighted at the successful outcome of this lengthy action in Italy."

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Note to Editors:

1. Images of several brands now removed from sale in Italy are available from the SWA on request.
2. The SWA originally took action in the UK, following which Alex Albright Ltd was wound up. Court actions in Milan and Florence to the stop sale of several brands were successful. Whilst Mr Vendrame's local court in Belluno initially rejected an SWA case on technical grounds, a series of appeals led to a favourable Italian Supreme Court ruling. The new ruling means the judgment in the SWA's favour is final. In addition to obtaining injunctions against Mr Vendrame, the SWA has a right to costs and damages.
3. For further information please contact David Williamson (0131 222 9230 or 07730 496 151) at the SWA.