

Cuban Rum Ready to Enter US Market

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Cuba's most famous brand of rum, "Havana Club", is ready to enter the US market as soon as Washington lifts its trade blockade against Cuban products, the media reported on Thursday.

"Our greatest wish is to be able to sell our products in the US so that the US consumers can enjoy a high quality rum," said Jerome Cottin-Bizonne, general manager of Havana Club International, a joint venture between state-run Cuba Ron and the French Pernod Ricard company.

Founded in 1993, Havana Club International was one of the first joint enterprises established by Cuba, and its Havana Club rum ranks 24th on the list of the 100 most sold spirits in the world.

The company's executives estimated that they could sell 1 million nine-litre cases in the US market upon the lifting of the blockade.

The sales of the company reach up to 4 million nine-litre cases each year in more than 140 countries, with Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Chile being the main customers.

The trade blockade imposed by Washington against the Caribbean island prevents Havana Club rum from being sold in the US that absorbs 40 percent of the world's rum production.

Though direct exports are prohibited, US President Barack Obama's administration has allowed citizens that travel to the island to return with rum and tobacco since January as a way of easing the blockade.

However, each US citizen cannot bring back Cuban goods worth more than \$100.