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**Economic Environment**

**US and UK sign trade deal to protect spirits post-Brexit**

Trade body the Distilled Spirits Council has welcomed a new agreement signed by the US and the UK to ensure protection for spirits as the UK prepares to leave the European Union. The deal ensures that mutual protection for Bourbon, Tennessee whiskey, Scotch whisky and Irish whiskey will "continue uninterrupted” when the UK departs the EU in March 2019.

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**Natural / Physical Resources**

**Australia’s most threatening plant disease targeted**

Australia will be better prepared for Xylella fastidiosa outbreaks with the appointment of a national coordinator to lead a three-year program to improve readiness for the potential incursion of this devastating disease. An experienced biosecurity and emergency response coordinator has been appointed to work with a national steering committee and coordinate the program to safeguard the nation against Xylella, an exotic bacteria that threatens more than 350 commercial, ornamental and native plant species in Australia.

The role is a joint initiative between Wine Australia and Hort Innovation through the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI) to coordinate research and emergency response activities to improve Australia’s preparedness. While Australia is currently free of Xylella, the disease has been catastrophic overseas infecting more than 200 million citrus trees in Brazil, destroying 1 million olive trees in Italy and severely impacted the Californian grape sector.

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