



Thailand's New Alcohol Control Law Raises Questions for Businesses

Thailand's Alcoholic Beverage Control Act 2025, which came into force in November 2025, has introduced significant changes aimed at balancing economic activity with public health protection. The revision was intended to address concerns that the previous 2008 law was overly restrictive and unclear, particularly regarding advertising rules and permitted business practices. Industry representatives view the new law as an attempt to create a more balanced regulatory framework that both supports the alcoholic beverage sector and mitigates the social harms associated with excessive drinking.

One notable change concerns the long-standing restriction on alcohol sales between 2pm and 5pm. The government has temporarily lifted this ban for a 180-day trial period, primarily to stimulate tourism and economic activity. Authorities will assess the policy's impact and gather public feedback before deciding whether the relaxation should become permanent. Meanwhile, rules have been clarified to allow customers who began drinking before the restricted period to continue consuming alcohol for up to one hour after the ban begins.

The amended Act also expands the responsibilities of alcohol sellers, particularly in relation to refusing service to intoxicated individuals. Previously, the law prohibited selling alcohol to individuals under the age of 20 and to persons who had lost consciousness due to intoxication. The updated law broadens this provision by banning sales to anyone considered "drunk", which raises practical challenges for businesses in determining when a customer is legally intoxicated.

To support enforcement, authorities have proposed guidelines for assessing intoxication, including behavioural tests such as the "walk and turn" test. However, restaurant operators have expressed concern that the lack of clear procedures could expose them to legal liability if intoxicated patrons later cause harm. Businesses may need to implement additional measures, such as CCTV monitoring, to demonstrate compliance with the law.

Further uncertainty remains regarding alcohol advertising rules and other operational details because several subordinate regulations have yet to be issued. These implementing rules are expected to clarify the scope of permissible advertising and other compliance requirements. Under the Act, all necessary subordinate legislation must be finalised by November 2026, though the timeline may be affected by ongoing political transitions.