

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY  
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT  
POLICY

Voluntary  Public

**Date:** 11/18/2015

**GAIN Report Number:** BU1540

## **Bulgaria**

**Post:** Sofia

### **FAS Sofia Assists to Promote U.S. Whiskey**

**Report Categories:**

Export Accomplishments - Events

**Approved By:**

Russell J. Nicely, Agricultural Attaché

**Prepared By:**

Alexander Todorov, Marketing Assistant

**Report Highlights:**

FAS Sofia organized the participation of the Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission in the opening of the Whiskey Fest in Sofia to promote U.S. whiskey, culture, and responsible drinking policy. Participation involved an opening remark, tour within the venue and media interviews.

### General Information:

FAS Sofia organized the participation of the Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Martina Strong in the opening of the [Whiskey Fest](#) to promote U.S. whiskey, culture, and responsible drinking policy. The fourth edition of the unique Whiskey Fest Sofia was held in the modern Paradise Center in Sofia from October 30<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>. It was a luxury 3-day event, the largest of its kind on the Balkans, representing all imported whiskey brands in Bulgaria. The target audience included spirits industry, trade partners, media, whiskey enthusiasts, general public, and spirits business related administration. There were 27 special brand stands, including one dedicated to responsible drinking policy. The U.S. whiskey was represented by huge variety of brands such as Jim Beam Family (including Honey, Devil's Cut, and the 12 years old Signature Craft), Maker's Mark, Jack Daniel's (including Gentleman Jack and Honey), Woodford Reserve, Four Roses, Wild Turkey, Bulleit, Knob Creek, Booker's, Baker's, and Basil Hayden's. Fourteen whiskey experts called Brand Ambassadors represented different brands through 28+ Master Classes for selected audience.



*Left to right: President of the Bulgarian Spirits Association; UK Ambassador; DCM Martina Strong; Irish Charge d' Affairs*

The total audience at the opening was about 350 people. The UK Ambassador Emma Hopkins and the Irish Charge d' Affairs Patrick Coleman attended and delivered opening remarks as well. More than 3,200 whiskey lovers visited the show during the three days.

In her opening remark the DCM expressed her satisfaction that the U.S. whiskey is so broadly featured in the event with fifteen brands represented and of the fact that it enjoys a stable presence on the market by setting record exports to Bulgaria for the past several years.

*(FAS Sofia Remark: The U.S. whiskey market share is currently estimated at 17 percent. There are two*

U.S. whiskey brands in the top 10 leading brands in the country – Jim Beam (#2) and Jack Daniel's (#7). Both brands are symbols for charismatic U.S. culture and heritage. U.S. exports of distilled spirits to Bulgaria have grown every year since 2007 and in 2014 set another record at more than **\$11.5 million**, according to the Bulgarian Customs import statistics provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute).



*DCM Martina Strong delivering opening remarks*

“Starting with General George Washington who produced whiskey on his Mt. Vernon estate both before and after he became America’s first president, I think it’s safe to say that whiskey or bourbon are as American as apple pie, as the saying goes. It was another great American - Mark Twain – who once said “*too much of anything is bad, but too much good whiskey is barely enough.*” With eleven American brands and four sub brands represented here today, I have no doubt that even Mark Twain would be happy with the quantity and quality of great whiskey we’re about to enjoy”, Martina Strong added.

The DCM used the opportunity to emphasize on the role of FAS Sofia in helping increase the U.S. distilled spirits exports to Bulgaria.

At the end of her speech she encouraged the audience to respect the responsible drinking policy.

After the opening the DCM, together with the UK Ambassador, Irish Charge d’ Affairs, and the President of the [Bulgarian Association of Producers, Importers, and Traders of Spirits Drinks](#) made a tour around the hall and tasted a few whiskey brands (*see photos below*).

The event was broadly covered by various media. A comprehensive review of the media coverage can

be found in the attached PPT file containing more than 100 slides with different publications.



*DCM Martina Strong; President of the Bulgarian Spirits Association; Irish Charge d' Affairs; and the UK Ambassador at a U.S. brand's stall*





**End of Report**