

SA's Six Dogs Distillery expands footprint to Europe

Six Dogs Distillery, located near Worcester in the Western Cape, is eyeing growth in Europe and will be setting up an office in the Netherlands to help accomplish this goal.



Glenn Bryant, co-founder and director of Six Dogs Distillery

“We set out to make a gin that would make a difference in the craft distillery industry in South Africa,” says Glenn Bryant, co-founder and director of Six Dogs Distillery near Worcester. “Now we are looking forward to expanding our reach in Europe and beyond, and growing the pack of Six Dogs fans on a global scale.”

From distilling gin in a farm shed normally used to house the distiller’s six dogs, the brand began with Six Dogs Karoo gin, a classic London dry-style spirit using botanicals from the succulent Karoo. This gin landed Six Dogs Distillery a spot at Junipalooza gin festival in London in 2018.

Six Dogs Karoo was soon followed by Six Dogs Blue, Six Dogs Pinotage Stained and their newly launched Honey Lime. All of the gins are entirely natural, made by hand and make use of proudly South African botanicals such as lemon buchu, Karoo thorn flower and pinotage grapes.



Six Dogs Distillery in Worcester

Export success

After establishing a footprint in South Africa, gin maker sought to expand its base and now exports to more than 22 countries, including Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Malta and the United Kingdom. These sales allowed the business to trade despite the numerous alcohol bans implemented during the national lockdown. While these challenges had a negative effect on sales in 2020, sales into Europe, on the other hand, increased by more than 60%.

The decision to establish a physical European presence was thus two-fold: to expand sales and to create a global brand. The Netherlands was chosen as the base for Six Dogs' expansion for its positioning as a gateway to Europe, advanced transport and logistics infrastructure, English language competency and assistance from the Dutch Government's foreign investment agency.



The business will start by focusing on the Dutch market, lending support to existing import and distribution partners in Europe and exploring opportunities for new partnerships where Six Dogs is not currently represented.

The Six Dogs Dutch office will operate from The Hague from June 2021. Gerrit Visser, previously the national marketing manager in South Africa, will head up the European sales drive along with Glenn Bryant. Fellow directors, Charles Bryant and Luigi Marucchi, will continue to support the South African market, producing Six Dogs gin from their distilleries near Worcester and George.



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2 Mar 2021



“Our business has always been fundamentally relationship-driven,” says Bryant, “and we want to create good relationships with trade partners in Europe.”

While Six Dogs is mindful of the extreme competition that they will face, the opportunities are abundant with six of the top ten gin-consuming countries being located in Europe, according to Statista’s 2017 research on gin consumption per country.

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