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"Korean Government is in a Deep Discussion on Volume-Based Liquor Tax Initiative", Prime Minister Kim

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018101945351>

Summary: Dongyeon Kim, Korean prime minister, replied in a national assembly hearing on October 19 that government offices are currently having an in-depth discussion on the issue of a volume-based liquor tax. In the hearing, several congressmen pointed out that the current value-based liquor tax has been resulting in a rapid expansion of imported beer sales and reduction of local beer production. The congressmen called for a quick government intervention to prevent further shrinkage of the local beer industry. In an answer, Prime Minister Kim said that the government is reviewing the issue seriously with a goal to come up with an optimal structure of liquor taxes for all alcoholic beverage categories.

Michelin Guide Seoul 2019 Designates 26 Restaurants ... Up 2 from 2018

<http://news.donga.com/3/all/20181019/92468246/1>

Summary: Michelin Guide has released its Seoul Guide 2019 on October 18. Twenty-six restaurants in Seoul have received Michelin star recognition in the Guide 2019, which is 2 more than Guide 2018. The number of three-star restaurants in Seoul remains unchanged (2) – Gaon and Rayoun, both offer traditional Korean cuisine. Five restaurants have received two stars, up 2 from last year. Half of the star restaurants listed in Guide 2019 are Korean cuisine restaurants.

The Largest American Grain Company Made Top Secret Visit to North Korea

<http://news.donga.com/3/all/20181017/92431272/1>

Summary: According to a multiple number of information sources on North Korean issues, the largest American grain company (specific name undisclosed in the article) made a top secret visit to North Korea very recently together with another multi-national company in the energy and natural resource business based in Germany. The companies met with North Korean counterparts under a theme of "Economy Tour Delegation". It is reported that the American grain company reviewed the current situation of the North Korean agriculture and discussed potential investment opportunities during the trip. The trip was something unexpected as the U.S. government maintains strong economic sanctions on North Korea. Market analysts assume that the U.S. government approved the visit under the strategy of presenting possible economic benefits to North Korea if North Korea accepts denuclearization.

Younglim Wood Corporation Launches Premium Wood Slabs ... Using American Logs

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018101610891>

Summary: Younglim Wood Corporation, an established Korean manufacturer of wood products for the construction and home furnishing industries, has launched wood slabs for furniture uses. Its manufacturing plant in Dangjin is equipped with state of the art drying machines imported from Japan (\$300,000 each). Younglim's headquarter office in Incheon has recently opened a wood slab gallery for trade visitors and consumers to promote the quality and value of wood slabs offered by Younglim. Younglim mainly uses imported American logs (including walnut and cedar) to cut out the slabs. Drying-sanding-finishing process takes a full year to get a quality product. Younglim expects about \$1 million of sales this year from the slab business, which could grow to \$2 million next year. Younglim's long-term goal is to sell 10,000 slabs a year.



Pierott Shopping to Open Its Third Store in Myongdong, Seoul

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018101612371>

Summary: Pierott Shopping, a new retail business under Shinsegae group, is opening its third store in Myongdong, Seoul, the heart of shopping and tourism destination in downtown Seoul. Just like its sister outlets, the Myongdong store will offer a wide diversity of products, including food and beverages, under a theme of ‘fun, weird, and something unexpected’. The existing two Pierott Shopping stores opened earlier this year in Seoul have generated outstanding early success by attracting a strong traffic of young consumers who were looking for great value and new shopping experiences.

Locally Grown “Western Pear” Appears in Grocery Store for the First Time

<http://news.donga.com/3/all/20181015/92410586/1>

Summary: SSG Food Market, a premium grocery store in Seoul, launched its sales promotion on ‘Sweet Sensation’, a western pear breed grown and harvested in Korea for the first time. The pear has a reddish skin and higher brix than regular Korean pears. A pack of two pears is offered at 9,900 won.



Starbucks Korea to Discontinue 'Red Cups for Year-End Season', an Effort to Reduce Disposable Trash

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018101431101>

Summary: Starbucks Korea has decided not to use red-colored paper cups for the year-end season beginning this year. According to Starbucks Korea, the red cups have limited recycling capacity compared to regular, white cups. Starbucks Korea has been making extra efforts to reduce disposable trash in its stores recently. It removed plastic straws from all stores earlier this year.

Lotte Intends to Become a Top Convenience Store Chain by Acquiring Ministop Korea

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018101152571>

Summary: Lotte Group, a retail giant in Korea that operates Seven Eleven Korea under its umbrella, announced on October 11 that it had a solid intention to acquire Ministop Korea. Ministop Korea, a subsidiary of Ministop Japan with 2,533 stores in Korea, which is being offered for acquisition. Lotte Group says the acquisition will fill instantly the gap between Seven Eleven Korea to the two industry leaders, CU and GS25. The number of stores under Seven Eleven Korea is 9,543 currently, which is about 2,600 less than CU (13,048) and GS25 (12,977). The acquisition will also be a tool for Lotte to contain further expansion of EMART25 (3,505 stores), another potential runner-up competitor in the industry.

The information in this report was compiled by the [Agricultural Trade Office \(ATO\)](#) at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea. The press summaries contained herein do NOT reflect USDA, the U.S. Embassy, or other U.S. government agency official policy or view point. U.S. food exporters can learn more about market opportunities in South Korea by reviewing ATO Seoul's [Exporter Guide](#) and other reports available at www.fas.usda.gov by clicking on "attaché reports."