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White House revises metal tariffs to widen 15% relief for some imports

The changes lower the U.S.-content threshold to 85% and impose stricter classification and recordkeeping rules that could reshape can costs for brewers

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The White House has revised its Section 232 tariff rules for aluminum, steel and copper imports, widening access to a lower 15% tariff rate for some goods while adding stricter compliance demands that could affect manufacturers across the beverage supply chain, including brewers that rely on metal cans.

The changes were issued in a June 1 proclamation and took effect June 8, according to a trade advisory published by Crane Worldwide Logistics. The update modifies the tariff system created under an earlier April 2 action but keeps the broader structure in place. It expands the group of products eligible for temporary 15% treatment through 2027, broadens coverage for derivative products, lowers the U.S.-content threshold to 85% from 95%, and adds more detailed rules on how importers must classify goods and document metal content.

Under the current framework, tariff liability depends on how a product is classified under the Harmonized Tariff Schedule and which annex it falls into. Goods assigned to Annex I-B face a 25% tariff. Annex III identifies products that can receive temporary relief at 15%. Annex II lists excluded products, while Annex IV sets out definitions and calculation rules for metal content and scope. The advisory says tariff outcomes can be

50%, 25%, or 15%, depending on annex assignment rather than end use.

That distinction matters because even small classification differences can change the duty rate applied to an imported product. U.S. Customs and Border Protection guidance, as cited in the advisory, says Section 232 duties apply to the full entered value of covered goods. Importers are expected to report the correct HTS code, use the proper Chapter 99 tariff reporting, and maintain records that support claims about metal weight, origin and bill of materials.

For beverage companies, the policy is not aimed directly at beer, wine or spirits. But it may still shape costs. Brewers and other drinks producers depend heavily on aluminum packaging, especially cans, ends and related components. If imported metal inputs or derivative products fall under higher tariff categories, packaging costs could rise. If some items qualify for the expanded 15% relief instead, part of that pressure could ease. The result will likely vary by sourcing strategy, product classification and how much U.S. content a supplier can document under the new 85% threshold.

The lower threshold may offer more flexibility than the previous 95% rule for companies trying to qualify goods for favorable treatment. At the same time, it raises the importance of documentation. Annex IV requires importers to substantiate classification with detailed information on metal content and origin. That means companies bringing in packaging materials, machinery parts or other metal-intensive goods may need more precise internal records and closer coordination with suppliers.

The June revisions also broaden derivative product coverage, which could pull additional manufactured items into the Section 232 system. For food and beverage producers, that may extend beyond cans themselves to equipment used in filling lines, processing systems or warehouse operations if those products contain enough covered metal and fall within affected tariff classifications.

Trade lawyers and customs specialists have long warned that Section 232 compliance can become costly when importers misclassify goods or lack supporting records. The latest update appears to increase both the risks and the opportunities. A company that correctly maps a product to an annex may gain access to reduced treatment through 2027. A company that gets the classification wrong could face higher duties and

possible customs scrutiny.

Crane Worldwide Logistics said the June changes refine the April framework by expanding targeted relief while preserving protective tariffs overall. The advisory described accurate classification, annex mapping and documentation readiness as increasingly important under the revised rules.

For brewers already dealing with tight margins, any shift in can costs can matter quickly because packaging is one of the largest input expenses after raw ingredients and labor. Large producers may have more room to adjust sourcing or hedge costs. Smaller craft brewers often have less leverage with suppliers and fewer options if tariffs raise prices on imported packaging or equipment.

The White House proclamation also clarified partner-country treatment, though businesses still need to review product-specific classifications rather than assume a country-based exemption will apply broadly. In practice, importers must determine whether a good is excluded, subject to standard tariffs or eligible for temporary relief based on its tariff code and annex placement.

The updated rules come at a time when many manufacturers are still adjusting supply chains after several years of trade disruptions and cost inflation. In beverages, where canned formats remain central for beer, ready-to-drink cocktails, sparkling water and other packaged drinks, changes in aluminum-related trade policy can ripple through purchasing decisions, contract negotiations and retail pricing.

Companies importing covered goods now face a narrower margin for error. The revised Section 232 framework offers some relief on paper, but it also demands more exact reporting and stronger proof of eligibility. For beverage businesses that buy cans or metal-based equipment from abroad, the practical effect will depend on whether their imports land in the right category and whether they can support that claim when customs asks for evidence.