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Britain Secures Wider Swiss Market Access for Farm Exports

The upgraded trade deal cuts Swiss tariffs on British sparkling wine by 34% and opens better terms for beef, lamb and dairy

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The British government has concluded negotiations with Switzerland to upgrade the free trade agreement the United Kingdom inherited after leaving the European Union, opening better access for British farm exports and cutting the tariff on British sparkling wine by 34%, according to the National Farmers' Union.

The NFU said the agreement, announced by the government on July 13, improves market access for beef, lamb, dairy products and some horticultural goods, while giving British sparkling wine what it described as unprecedented preferential treatment in the Swiss market. The deal still has to go through legal drafting, scrutiny and ratification in both countries before it becomes binding.

For drinks producers, the change is notable because Switzerland is a high-value market close to Britain, and lower tariffs could improve the price position of English and Welsh sparkling wine against rival bottles sold in Central Europe. That may affect margins, distribution decisions and export volumes if importers and retailers respond to the new terms.

NFU President Tom Bradshaw called the agreement “a balanced deal” and said it would create “exciting opportunities” for British farmers and growers. He said Switzerland had offered its best-ever access to a trading partner on fresh boneless beef and sparkling wine.

Under the terms outlined by the NFU, Britain secured a 35% reduction in the duty on fresh boneless beef exported to Switzerland. The union said that gives British producers an advantage over other global suppliers. Average annual Swiss imports of British beef between 2023 and 2025 were worth £3.2 million, according to the NFU.

The agreement also removes the in-quota duty on British lamb exports to Switzerland, which means most shipments will enter tariff-free. UK lamb exports to Switzerland were worth more than £5.5 million in 2025, the NFU said. Swiss lamb exports remain excluded from the agreement.

In dairy, tariffs will be reduced by as much as 50% on selected product lines, including milk powder. The NFU said many dairy products already moved under liberalized terms between the two countries, including some cheeses such as cheddar, but that negotiators secured additional openings for a limited number of products. In exchange, Swiss producers will receive improved conditions on a small number of dairy lines entering the UK.

The horticulture provisions go beyond sparkling wine. According to the NFU, Britain also won improved seasonal access for a range of products including peas, carrots and broad beans, with tariffs falling as low as 0% during certain periods.

The union said trading conditions for poultry meat, pork and eggs will not change under this agreement. It also said the government had not commented on whether current access conditions for sugar or sugar beet would be altered.

The NFU has been lobbying on the Swiss negotiations since 2022, when London launched a consultation on its trading arrangements with Bern. The organization said it took part throughout 10 rounds of talks and wrote to Trade Minister Chris Bryant in June urging the government to secure stronger access for beef, lamb and dairy. It argued that Switzerland’s strong consumption of meat and dairy made those sectors a priority.

The Swiss market is attractive not only because of its proximity but also because of its pricing. The NFU noted that food prices in Switzerland are 73% above the EU average, making it a potentially lucrative destination for premium agricultural exports, including sparkling wine.

The group also stressed that the agreement does not weaken British food standards. Imports into the UK will still have to meet domestic food safety and biosecurity rules, it said. The NFU pointed to a March 2026 arrangement between Switzerland and the EU to establish a Common Food Safety Area based on dynamic alignment. Under that framework, Switzerland applies relevant EU agri-food regulations, including future changes in areas covered by the arrangement.

That matters for British exporters because London is also negotiating a sanitary and phytosanitary agreement with Brussels. The NFU said that under the expected EU-UK SPS framework, both Britain and Switzerland would work from the EU rule book for sanitary and phytosanitary legislation in scope, aligning Swiss standards with those expected of UK producers.

Before any of the new trade terms take effect, the two governments must finalize the legal text of the revised free trade agreement and sign it in the coming months. In Britain, the deal will then face review by the Trade and Agriculture Commission and

government reporting requirements before going through pre-ratification scrutiny under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act. Any legislative changes needed to implement it must also pass through Parliament.

Only after both Britain and Switzerland complete their ratification procedures will the upgraded agreement become legally binding. Until then, exporters in sectors from beef to sparkling wine have clearer visibility on future market access, but not yet a final start date for the new tariff terms.