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Italian sparkling wine exports held at nearly €1 billion in the first half of 2026.

The category gained 0.4% in value against a 6.16% drop in overall wine exports, with Prosecco contributing 82%.

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Italian sparkling wine exports held steady in the first half of 2026, reaching about €1 billion, even as the broader Italian wine sector posted a clear decline, according to Istat data reviewed by WineNews.

The figures point to a split inside one of Italy’s most important food and beverage industries. Total Italian wine exports in the first six months of the year fell to €3.6 billion, down 6.16% from the same period in 2025, while export volumes dropped 4% to 989.6 million liters. Sparkling wines moved against that trend. Export value for Italian sparkling wines rose a slight 0.4% from a year earlier, while volumes slipped just 0.7% to 252.2 million liters.

The contrast suggests that foreign demand weakened more sharply for still wines than for bubbles, continuing a pattern that has been visible for some time in international wine markets. Italian producers have faced softer demand in several countries, but sparkling wines have shown greater resilience in value terms, helped by established brands, broad retail presence, and steady use in lower-alcohol consumption occasions and cocktails.

The United States remained the top foreign market for Italian sparkling wine by value, though it also recorded a decline. U.S. imports of Italian sparkling wine totaled €263 million in the first half of 2026, down 6.6% from the same period a year earlier. Volumes shipped to the U.S. fell 2.4% to 60 million liters. Even so, the decline in sparkling wine was less severe than the overall drop in Italian wine exports to the American market, which WineNews said was 14.1% across all categories.

The United Kingdom ranked second among export markets for Italian sparkling wine. Shipments there were worth €151.5 million in the first half, down 10.8% from a year earlier. Germany, by contrast, posted modest growth. Exports of Italian sparkling wine to Germany reached €64.4 million, up 2.7%.

The performance of sparkling wine exports remains closely tied to Prosecco, which continues to dominate the category and serve as the main driver of Italy’s sales abroad. Prosecco DOC accounted for €825.4 million in export value in the first six months of 2026, equal to roughly 82% of all Italian sparkling wine exports during the period. That was down 1.3% from the first half of 2025, a limited decline compared with the broader wine market. Export volumes of Prosecco were 194.6 million liters, down 0.3%.

The United States also remained the leading market for Prosecco DOC. American imports of the wine totaled €236.9 million in the first half, down 7.2% from the same period last year. That figure underscores how heavily the Italian sparkling segment depends on U.S. demand, while also showing that the category has been able to absorb some pressure better than still wines.

The numbers indicate that stability in sparkling wine helped cushion the wider downturn in Italian wine exports, but they also show that the category was not immune to weaker market conditions. The slight gain in value alongside a small drop in volume suggests that pricing held up relatively well, even as shipments softened. That pattern can reflect a mix of factors, including brand strength, product mix, and consumer willingness in some markets to keep spending on affordable premium sparkling wines.

For Italy’s wine sector, the first-half data add to evidence of an uneven export environment. Still wines appear to be bearing the brunt of lower demand, while sparkling wines continue to benefit from broader international recognition and from consumption habits that favor fresher, lighter styles. Producers and trade groups have for years pointed to sparkling wine, and especially Prosecco, as a strategic asset in export markets because it reaches both traditional wine consumers and younger buyers who are also encountered through aperitif culture and mixology.

That role appears even more important in a year when the wider export market has become more difficult. With total wine export value down more than 6% and overall volumes lower, the near-flat result for sparkling wines stands out as one of the few areas of relative stability in the Italian wine trade.

The first-half figures also show how concentrated that stability remains. Prosecco’s overwhelming share of sparkling exports means the performance of the category depends heavily on one denomination and on a handful of major markets, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. When those markets weaken, even modestly, the effect is visible across the whole segment.

Even so, the data suggest that international buyers continued to support Italian sparkling wine more than other wine categories through June. That was clear in both the narrow change in overall sparkling export value, up 0.4%, and the limited volume

decline of 0.7%, compared with the sharper contraction in Italy’s wine exports as a whole.

For producers, exporters, and policymakers watching the sector, the message from the first half of 2026 is that Italian bubbles continue to perform better than still wines, but the pace of growth that once defined the category has slowed. The market remains positive in relative terms, not in absolute momentum, with the strongest support still coming from Prosecco and from countries where Italian sparkling wine has already built a large, established customer base.