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French Spirits Exports to Japan Fell 2% in the First Half of 2026

The drop contrasted with a 3.3% rise in overall French agri-food shipments to €652 million, Treasury data showed.

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French exports of spirits to Japan fell 2% in the first half of 2026, according to data published Thursday by France’s Directorate General of the Treasury, pointing to weakness in a key Asian market even as broader French food and farm shipments to Japan continued to grow.

The decline covered the period from January through June. The Treasury said the figure was based on French customs data and Trade Data Monitor. The publication did not provide a euro amount, shipment volume or average export price for the spirits category, limiting what can be verified beyond the reported 2% drop.

The weakness in spirits stood apart from the wider trend in French agri-food trade with Japan. Total French agri-food exports to the country rose 3.3% in the same six-month period, reaching €652 million, the Treasury said. That broader figure includes a range of food and agricultural products and should not be read as a measure of alcoholic beverage performance.

The data point matters because Japan is considered a high-value market for premium imported goods, including alcoholic drinks. French producers have long treated the country as an important destination for branded products that tend to command higher margins than in some other export markets. A decline in spirits exports, even a modest one, can therefore draw attention out of proportion to its size.

The Treasury’s release did not identify which products were behind the drop. It did not separate cognac, brandy, whisky, gin or other spirits, and it did not say whether the decline reflected lower sales values, lower shipped volumes or a mix of both. Without that detail, it is not possible to determine whether exporters sold fewer bottles, accepted lower prices or were affected by product mix changes.

The publication also did not give a cause for the decline. It offered no explanation linked to consumer demand, exchange-rate movements, inventory cycles, distribution changes or competition from other suppliers. That leaves the reported 2% change as a narrow indicator of direction rather than a full picture of market conditions.

The contrast between falling spirits shipments and rising agri-food exports suggests the slowdown was specific to this category rather than part of a broad weakening in French sales to Japan. It also underlines the risk of drawing conclusions from headline trade totals alone. A gain in overall food and agricultural exports can mask pressure in individual product groups, especially in categories where brand positioning, pricing and inventory decisions can shift results from one half-year to the next.

Trade data for alcoholic beverages can also be difficult to interpret without category detail. In premium segments, small changes in the mix of products shipped can affect export values significantly. A market may look weaker in aggregate even if high-end labels remain resilient, or the reverse may happen if volumes hold up but pricing softens. The Treasury’s release did not provide enough information to distinguish between those possibilities in Japan.

The figures published Thursday nonetheless provide an early sign that French spirits did not match the performance of the wider agri-food sector in Japan during the first half of 2026. For exporters and analysts watching Asia’s mature import markets, the number points to a specific area of softness at a time when broader bilateral food trade between France and Japan is still expanding.