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Italy more than doubled wine export promotion funding to €19 million in 2026.

The push backs 63 initiatives in 26 markets after exports slipped from their 2024 peak of €8.07 billion.

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Italian wine exports have more than doubled in the past 20 years, even as the industry now faces weaker demand and growing pressure in key foreign markets.

According to ISTAT data analyzed by WineNews, exports of Italian wine rose from €3 billion in 2005 to a record €8.07 billion in 2024, an increase of 169%. The figure then slipped to €7.7 billion in 2025. Data for the first half of 2026 point to a further decline of 6.2% from the same period a year earlier, although that drop was smaller than the double-digit fall seen at the start of the year.

The slowdown reflects a broader crisis affecting wine producers in Italy and elsewhere. The problems include U.S. tariffs, inflation, international tensions, health-driven changes in consumer behavior, demographic shifts and changing tastes. Even so, the long-term export trend shows how strongly Italian producers expanded abroad over two decades, navigating through the global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 and the Covid-19 shock between 2020 and 2023.

Industry officials and trade groups say that growth came first from the work of wineries and exporters themselves, but also from a mix of European support and coordinated promotion between the private sector and public institutions. One of the main actors in recent years has been ITA, the Italian Trade Agency, formerly known as ICE, which is marking 100 years of activity in 2026. The agency works mainly under Italy’s Foreign Ministry, while also answering to the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy and cooperating with other ministries depending on the sector.

With stronger backing from the Italian government, ITA has expanded its support for wine significantly. According to figures provided by the agency to WineNews, funding earmarked for the wine supply chain totaled €9 million in 2025 and then more than doubled to €19 million in 2026.

That higher spending has been matched by a broader promotional effort. In 2025, ITA’s agrifood office carried out 158 promotional initiatives worldwide, including 50 focused on wine and other alcoholic beverages. Within that group, the agency organized 14 collective or institutional activities abroad, four communications campaigns in China, Taiwan, South Korea and the United States, 12 direct initiatives such as exhibitions, tastings and workshops, 10 buyer and trade incoming programs in Italy, and six training courses centered mainly on wine. Those programs involved 959 companies from the sector. The agency also continued work with foreign retail chains and e-

commerce channels.

The activity is set to grow again in 2026. By the end of the year, more than 240 agrifood initiatives are planned or already under way, including 63 dedicated to wine, across 26 foreign markets. The projects range from advertising campaigns and agreements with distributors to direct events, support for trade fairs in Italy and stronger incoming programs for buyers and professionals. The United States remains the main focus, but ITA is also targeting France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China and Japan, while trying to open new space in the Gulf countries, the Balkans, Asia, Latin America and Africa.

One of the next major events on the calendar is Italian Wine Week, scheduled for Oct. 12 through Oct. 25 in the New York metropolitan area. The two-week campaign will involve more than 100 wine shops in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and Jersey City, with a stated aim of highlighting the range, tradition, quality-to-price ratio and reputation of Italian wine.

“Italian wine is a pillar of New York’s vibrant food culture,” Erica Di Giovancarlo, director of the ITA office for the United States, said in comments released by the agency. She said the initiative would use special discounts and exclusive tastings to help consumers discover the diversity of Italian wine.

Italian Wine Week will lead directly into the third edition of Vinitaly.USA, which will be held in New York on Oct. 26 and Oct. 27 after its first two editions in Chicago. Organizers say the event has already sold out. ITA will take part with 100 exhibiting companies and an incoming program for industry operators from the United States, Mexico and Canada.

The broader Italian presence at the fair will include about 300 exhibitors, made up of companies, regional and association groups and several consortia. Among the regional or association participants are Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Sardinia, Umbria, the regional wine shop of Emilia-Romagna, Italia del Vino and the Matelica wine producers’ cooperative. Consortia expected to attend include Asti DOCG, Brunello di Montalcino, Prosecco DOC, Vini dell’Elba, Lugana DOC and Vini delle Venezie DOC. Organizers say the event will showcase 2,500 labels in New York.

Alongside tastings and business meetings, the wine2wine Vinitaly Business Forum on Oct. 26 will include the announcement by the U.S. magazine Wine Spectator of the producers selected for Vinitaly OperaWine 2027, the high-profile tasting that opens Vinitaly in Verona each year.

The New York event is also a sign of the close working relationship between ITA and Veronafiere, the trade fair group behind Vinitaly. The Italian government agency has made Vinitaly a central platform in its internationalization strategy for wine. Funds allocated by ITA for the U.S. event amount to €1.5 million, part of a total €5.8 million investment supporting Vinitaly activities in Italy and abroad. That overall commitment is up 66.1% from 2025.

For Italian wine producers, the push comes at a difficult moment. The United States remains the country’s largest foreign market for wine, and any disruption there has an immediate effect on exporters. Rising costs, weaker consumption and changes in how younger consumers approach alcohol have added to the strain. At the same time, officials and business groups argue that Italy’s broad range of wines, strong regional identity and deep presence in restaurants and retail abroad still give the sector room to defend market share and look for growth in newer destinations.

The current export figures suggest that the industry is no longer moving at the pace seen in the years leading up to the 2024 record. But the scale of public support and the concentration of promotional efforts in major markets show how much importance Italy continues to place on wine as one of its key export products.