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Italy’s wine bottling decline slowed to 0.3% in the third quarter.

September bottlings rose 4.9%, but red wines and IGT labels kept weakening as inventories stayed high.

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Italy’s wine bottling slowdown nearly stopped in the third quarter, offering the clearest sign yet that the sharp weakness seen at the start of the year has eased, even as red wines and lower-tier appellations continue to lose ground.

Data from Valoritalia’s business intelligence unit, covering 219 certified denominations, showed bottlings were down 0.3% in the July-to-September period from a year earlier. That was a marked improvement from the 7.7% drop recorded in the first quarter and the 0.6% decline in the second quarter. For the first nine months of 2026, bottlings totaled about 9.86 million hectoliters, down 3% from the same period in 2025 and 4.2% below the 2023-2025 average.

September itself turned positive, with bottlings up 4.9% from the same month last year. The figures point to stabilization rather than a broad recovery, but they suggest that the pace of decline has slowed sharply after a difficult start to the year.

The improvement comes in a market that remains under pressure from weak demand and trade uncertainty. Valoritalia’s report cited International Organisation of Vine and Wine data showing global wine consumption fell 2.7% in 2025, including a 3.1% decline in the European Union. It also referred to Nomisma Wine Monitor data showing the value of wine imports across 12 major global markets fell 11% in the first seven months of 2026, with the U.S. down 23%.

Within the overall picture, performance differed widely by category. Bottlings of DOC wines rose 5% in the third quarter from a year earlier, while DOCG wines increased 4.9%. Over the first nine months, DOC bottlings were down 0.5% and DOCG bottlings were down 0.2%, putting both categories close to flat for the year to date.

IGT wines moved in the opposite direction. Their bottlings fell 18.9% in the third quarter and were down 13% in the first nine months of the year. The gap suggests the Italian wine market is not recovering evenly and that higher-certified categories are proving more resilient than broader classifications.

The divide is even clearer by wine style. Still white wines rose 6.7% in the third quarter, while white sparkling wines increased 7.6%. Red wines fell 6.7% over the same period. Across the first nine months, still whites were up 1.8%, white sparkling wines were up 1.3%, and reds were down 8.8%.

That split matters beyond the immediate production data because it may affect how wineries, distributors, and other beverage businesses plan purchases and shape their product mix in coming months. If demand continues to favor whites and sparkling wines over reds, producers may need to adjust output, inventories, and commercial strategy accordingly rather than treat the market as moving in one direction.

Regional results also varied. In the first nine months, bottlings fell 4.7% in central Italy and 4.1% in the northeast. Northwest Italy returned to growth with a 1.4% increase. Southern Italy posted a 26.7% rise, though on much smaller volumes within Valoritalia's coverage.

Valoritalia said those geographic figures require caution because the sample is not equally representative across the country. In northern regions, the certification body said the wines it certifies account for more than 90% of total denomination-of-origin volumes, making the data especially significant for the north.

A major restraint on any stronger recovery remains inventory. As of July 31, before the new vintage entered the system and using the last month comparable on a statistical basis, stocks stood at about 15.96 million hectoliters, up from 13.67 million a year earlier. That is an increase of 16.8%.

The higher stock level means that even if bottlings have become better at absorbing supply during the third quarter, the market is still carrying a heavy volume of wine into the new harvest. The balance between available product and final demand is likely to remain a central issue for producers and traders through the rest of the year.

Francesco Liantonio, president of Valoritalia, said the third-quarter numbers were an encouraging sign after the difficulties of early 2026 but warned against reading them as proof of a lasting reversal. He said the near-stability in bottlings and the return to growth for DOC and DOCG wines showed the sector's ability to respond, even in an international environment shaped by geopolitical tensions, commercial uncertainty, and changing consumption patterns.

Liantonio also pointed to the uneven nature of the market, saying whites and sparkling wines were performing much better than reds, and DOC and DOCG wines better than IGT. He said the data generated by certification activity could help companies and consortia identify those shifts quickly.

The figures do not yet support calling a full restart for Italian wine. They do, however, show a clear break from the trajectory of the first quarter, when the decline was much steeper. For companies across the beverage sector, that creates a more complex operating picture: volumes are no longer falling at the same speed, but category performance is diverging, export demand remains fragile, and large inventories still hang over the market as the final quarter begins.