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Italian wine bottling nearly stabilized in the third quarter

Valoritalia reported a 0.3% annual decline, alongside a 16.8% inventory increase and persistent weakness in reds and IGT wines.

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Italian wine bottling under Valoritalia’s certification system slowed its decline in the third quarter, but the sector is still carrying much heavier inventories and uneven demand across product categories, according to data released by the certification group on Oct. 7.

Between January and September, certified bottling volumes in Italy totaled about 9.86 million hectoliters, down 3% from the same period in 2025 and 4.2% below the average for 2023 through 2025, Valoritalia said. Based on those comparisons, the market processed roughly 305,000 fewer hectoliters than a year earlier and about 432,000 fewer than the recent three-year average.

The figures point to a clear change in direction after a weak start to the year. The year-over-year drop was 7.7% in the first quarter, then narrowed to 0.6% in the second quarter and to just 0.3% in the third quarter. September alone posted a 4.9% increase from the same month in 2025.

Even so, the data do not yet show a broad recovery. The improvement in quarterly bottling came alongside a sharp buildup in stocks and continued weakness in red wines and IGT wines, suggesting that the rebound is concentrated in only part of the market.

Valoritalia’s data cover 219 denominations and products submitted to its certification process. The company said that makes the figures a useful indicator of certified Italian wine production, but not a measure of all wine bottled in Italy. Its coverage is also stronger in northern Italy than in other parts of the country.

The third-quarter breakdown shows that higher-end denominations performed better than the broader market. DOC bottling rose 5% from a year earlier and DOCG increased 4.9%, while IGT fell 18.9%. Over the first nine months, DOC volumes were down 0.5% and DOCG slipped 0.2%, both much closer to stability than the overall market. IGT remained under much stronger pressure, with a 13% decline over the same period.

The product mix also shifted. Still white wines rose 6.7% in the third quarter and white sparkling wines were up 7.6%, while red wines fell 6.7%. For the January-through-September period, still whites increased 1.8% and white sparkling wines gained 1.3%, while reds dropped 8.8%.

That pattern suggests that the recent stabilization has been driven mainly by whites and sparkling wines rather than by a broad-based rise in demand. It also points to a growing split in the market between wines with stronger denomination positioning and categories that remain under pressure.

Regional data showed the same uneven picture. In the first nine months of the year, bottling volumes fell 4.7% in central Italy and 4.1% in the Northeast. The Northwest returned to positive territory with 1.4% growth, while southern Italy posted a 26.7% increase, though from a much smaller base within the denominations certified by Valoritalia.

The inventory data remain one of the clearest warnings in the report. As of July 31, before the certification of the new harvest, wine stocks stood at about 15.96 million hectoliters, up from 13.67 million hectoliters a year earlier. That is an increase of 2.29 million hectoliters, or 16.8%.

Those higher inventories mean that even if bottling has stopped falling as quickly, the market still has a large volume of wine to absorb. The stock buildup is especially important because it comes as producers face slower international demand, trade uncertainty, and changing consumer habits.

Valoritalia linked the market backdrop to both short-term and structural factors. It said geopolitical tensions, U.S. trade policy, and uncertainty over tariffs continue to weigh on business decisions, especially for operators exposed to export markets. At the same time, producers are dealing with longer-term shifts in consumption patterns.

The group cited estimates from the International Organisation of Vine and Wine showing global wine consumption expected to fall 2.7% in 2025, with consumption in the European Union down 3.1%. It also pointed to Nomisma Wine Monitor data showing that the value of wine imports in the world’s 12 leading markets fell 11% in the first seven months of the year, with the steepest contraction in the United States at 23%.

Francesco Liantonio, Valoritalia’s president, said the third-quarter numbers were encouraging after a difficult first half, but he stopped short of calling the turn a lasting recovery. He said the near-stability in bottling and the return to growth for DOC and DOCG wines showed that the sector still had the ability to react even in a difficult international setting shaped by geopolitical tensions, trade uncertainty, and changes in consumption.

The latest figures support that cautious reading. Bottling volumes are no longer falling at the pace seen early in the year, and September delivered outright growth. But the recovery is not evenly shared across the sector. Whites and sparkling wines are doing better than reds. DOC and DOCG are faring better than IGT. And inventories remain far above last year’s level as the market enters the next phase of the production cycle.

For producers, bottlers, and consortia, that means the main question is no longer only whether volumes are still falling, but whether demand can absorb the wine already in storage. The answer will matter more in the coming months as the new harvest moves through certification and as exporters continue to watch demand trends in the United States and other major markets.

Because Valoritalia’s certification network is more representative in the north, the data should be read as a strong indicator of trends in a large part of the Italian wine industry rather than as a full census of national bottling. Still, the pattern in the figures is clear: after a sharp contraction at the start of 2026, certified bottling in Italy has stabilized, but the industry is moving at different speeds and is still burdened by a large stock overhang.