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Russia Proposes to Raise Tariff on Beer From “Unfriendly” Countries to 5 Euros a Liter

The draft budget plan would more than triple the current levy, a change analysts say could lift some imported bottles near 500 rubles.

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Russia’s Finance Ministry is considering a sharp increase in the import duty on beer from countries it classifies as “unfriendly,” a move that would raise the tariff from 1.5 euros to 5 euros per liter under the government’s 2027-2029 budget policy plans.

The proposal, which was included in budget documents submitted to the State Duma on October 1 and later highlighted in Russian media analysis on October 12, is not yet an approved decision. If adopted, it would increase the duty by 3.5 euros per liter, or 233.3%, and could further raise prices on imported beer from the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Australia and other countries on Russia’s official “unfriendly” list.

Interfax, citing the annex to the government’s main directions for tax, budget and customs policy, reported that the ministry wants to set a 5-euro minimum duty on imports of strong alcohol, beer and beer drinks from those countries. Beer is currently subject to a 1.5-euro-per-liter duty, while strong alcohol faces a rate of 20% of customs value, but no less than 3 euros per liter. The explanatory materials to the budget say the higher duties on alcohol and beer could bring the federal budget an extra 30 billion rubles over three years, or about 10 billion rubles a year.

For beer, the increase would be especially large. A 0.5-liter bottle would carry an added customs burden of 1.75 euros before value-added tax, importer costs and retail markups. Russian industry analysts interviewed by 72.ru said that if the full increase were passed on to consumers, some imported European beer now selling for about 250 to 300 rubles per 0.5-liter bottle could rise to roughly 450 to 500 rubles. Those estimates are expert projections, not official forecasts.

The proposal would come after a series of earlier tariff increases. Russia first introduced a special duty on malt beer from “unfriendly” countries in April 2024 at 0.1 euro per liter. Later that year, the rate was raised to 1 euro per liter. In September 2025, the government increased it again by 50% to 1.5 euros per liter, the level now in force and extended through the end of 2027. If the new measure is approved, the tariff would rise again to more than triple the current rate.

The possible increase matters less for the overall beer market than for a narrow but visible imported segment. According to Maxim Chernigovsky, head of the Club of Alcohol Market Professionals, beer from “unfriendly” countries accounts for no more than 5% of Russia’s beer market. He told 72.ru that Russia sells about 8 billion liters of beer and beer drinks a year, leaving the imported segment from those countries relatively small in volume. Even so, it includes many of the better-known European labels found in large supermarkets and premium grocery chains.

Russian stores still carry German, Czech, Austrian and Belgian beers despite sanctions and repeated tariff hikes. Industry participants say those products already sell for about 2.5 to 3 times the price of mass-market beer made in Russia. A further duty increase would make them more expensive still and could lead importers to narrow their product ranges, at least after current inventories are sold.

Trade data cited by 72.ru shows how the market has already shifted. Using United Nations statistics, the publication said Russia imported 357,900 tons of beer in 2019 worth $276.8 million. Germany was then the largest supplier at 132,100 tons, followed by Belarus at 50,800 tons and the Czech Republic at 39,200 tons. By 2024, total beer imports had fallen by nearly 15% to 305,000 tons, even as their value rose by 7% to $296.2 million. Germany remained the leading supplier at 121,800 tons, with the Czech Republic at 39,500 tons and China at 33,900 tons. Poland, Belgium, Latvia and Lithuania also supplied large volumes.

By 2025, according to the same data, Russia’s beer imports had dropped by more than half to 126,300 tons, worth $145.7 million. China became the largest supplier at 46,600 tons. Kazakhstan shipped nearly 16,000 tons and the Czech Republic 15,900 tons. German shipments did not disappear, but fell tenfold to 12,100 tons. Lithuania and Latvia each supplied about 6,700 tons.

That collapse in direct imports from some European suppliers came after Russia raised the duty on beer from “unfriendly” countries tenfold at the start of 2025. Analysts cited by 72.ru said the new cost structure created an economic incentive to reroute supplies through countries that do not face the same tariff treatment.

The same report pointed to a sharp rise in European beer exports to several countries that became more important trading partners for Russia after 2022. Eurostat data cited by the publication showed that European Union beer exports to Belarus rose almost sixfold in 2025, from 14.5 million euros to 84 million euros. German exports to Belarus increased 2.4 times to 16 million euros, while Polish shipments rose from 1.9 million euros to 28.4 million euros. Czech exports to Belarus climbed from 2 million euros to 9 million euros, Belgian exports from 1 million euros to 2.3 million euros, and Latvian exports from 80,000 euros to 16.6 million euros.

The publication also reported that EU beer exports to Armenia in 2025 rose by more than 2.5 times, from 3.5 million euros to 9.2 million euros, while exports to Kyrgyzstan increased by more than 3.5 times, from 2.2 million euros to 7.8 million euros. Analysts cautioned that such figures do not by themselves prove reexports to Russia, but said the pattern is consistent with trade rerouting after direct imports became more expensive.

The government’s stated reason for the broader alcohol duty increase is fiscal. Budget materials say higher tariffs on imported alcohol and beer would generate extra revenue during the 2027-2029 budget period. But the measure also fits a wider trend in Russian trade policy since 2022, which has used tariff and tax tools to put pressure on goods from Western countries while encouraging import substitution and alternative supply chains.

Market specialists told 72.ru that the result is likely to be a deeper shift away from European beer and toward Russian production or suppliers from countries outside the “unfriendly” list, including China, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some said the final duty could end up below 5 euros per liter, even if the government moves ahead, because the budget documents outline a plan rather than a final enacted rate.

The proposed increase would also come alongside a planned 6.5% indexation of excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol in 2027, based on expected inflation. Unlike the import duty, that excise increase would apply more broadly across both domestic and imported products. The customs duty, by contrast, would fall directly on a specific group of foreign beers and could widen the retail price gap with Russian-made brands.

For now, the measure remains a budget proposal rather than a final rule. Its next step is consideration within Russia’s federal budget process, where lawmakers will review the government’s tax and customs plans for 2027 through 2029.