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Argentina’s varietal wine shipments fell 14.3% in September

Overall domestic shipments dropped 4.7%, undermining hopes that weaker consumption would be cushioned by demand for higher-value wines

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Wine shipments to Argentina’s domestic market fell in September, adding new pressure on an industry that has long argued that lower volumes were being partly offset by a shift toward better-quality bottles.

According to data from Argentina’s National Vitiviniculture Institute, or INV, 707,145 hectoliters were shipped to the local market in September, down 4.7% from the same month a year earlier. The decline was sharper in varietal wines, which fell 14.3% year over year, a setback for one of the categories most closely associated with higher value and premium positioning.

The figures challenge a common assumption in the wine business that consumers may be drinking less overall but are choosing better wines when they do buy. Instead, the September data suggest that the contraction is reaching both volume and parts of the mix that had been seen as more resilient.

Packaging trends also pointed to a more price-sensitive market. Shipments in bottles fell 9.4% from a year earlier, while carton formats rose 7.2%. That split suggests some consumers are moving toward lower-cost presentations rather than trading up, even as overall demand weakens.

The numbers come as Argentina’s wine industry continues to face the effects of a strained consumer economy. With household purchasing power under pressure, products viewed as discretionary are often among the first to be cut back or replaced with cheaper alternatives. Wine producers and distributors have been watching closely to see whether the fall in consumption would be cushioned by stronger demand for premium segments. The September figures indicate that such a buffer is not clearly appearing.

That matters beyond wineries alone. For the broader beverage sector, the shift raises questions about product mix, pricing and packaging strategy across alcoholic drinks. If consumers are moving away from higher-priced wine categories and toward more affordable formats, producers and retailers may need to reassess how they position wines against beer, spirits and other beverages competing for the same limited household spending.

The decline in varietal wines is especially significant because that segment has often been treated as a sign of upgrading within the domestic market. A sustained drop there would suggest that the slowdown is not limited to entry-level demand or to occasional buyers. It could also complicate efforts by producers to defend margins through premium labels at a time when basic affordability appears to be playing a larger role in purchase decisions.

The bottle-to-carton shift reinforces that reading. Bottled wine generally carries a stronger association with higher prices, gifting, restaurant consumption and premium branding. Carton wine, while widely accepted in Argentina, tends to compete more directly on convenience and cost. When cartons gain share while bottles lose ground, the market signal is usually one of defensive consumer behavior rather than trading up.

The September results do not by themselves define a long-term trend, but they add to concern within a sector already dealing with changing drinking habits, inflation-related distortions and tougher competition for discretionary spending. For wineries, the data may increase pressure to review commercial plans, including portfolio balance, promotions, returnable or lower-cost packaging, and channels aimed at retaining consumers who are reducing frequency of purchase.

The figures also suggest that the idea of premiumization in Argentina’s wine market may need to be examined more carefully. A fall in total domestic shipments can coexist with selective strength in some labels or regions, but the latest data do not support a broad-based narrative that consumers are compensating for lower intake by moving decisively into more expensive wines.

For now, the September report points to a market where consumers are buying less wine overall and, within that reduced demand, showing greater caution about what they spend and how they buy it.