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American Whiskey Association Urges U.S. to Challenge Barriers in 17 Export Markets

In a filing for the 2027 trade barriers report, the group said tariffs and market rules threaten a $1.3 billion export business

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The American Whiskey Association asked the Office of the United States Trade Representative on Tuesday, November 10, to press foreign governments to remove tariffs and other barriers that the group says are limiting sales of U.S. whiskey in 17 overseas markets.

The filing was made for the 2027 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers, an annual U.S. government review that catalogs foreign policies seen as obstacles to American exports. The association said it wants federal trade officials to target tariffs, market-access limits and regulatory rules affecting bourbon, Tennessee whiskey, American rye and American single malt.

The request comes as U.S. distillers continue to push for more predictable export conditions after years of tariff disputes and shifting trade rules. According to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, American whiskey represented 54% of total U.S. spirits exports by value in 2024 and generated about $1.3 billion in export revenue. That makes the issue significant not only for whiskey makers but for the broader beverage business, because trade terms for a major export category can shape pricing, distribution and investment decisions across the spirits market and influence how other alcohol producers assess foreign-market risk.

In comments cited by Beverage Information Group, the association said it wants continued tariff-free access to the European Union and the United Kingdom, along with protection against retaliatory trade measures. It also pointed to advertising and marketing limits, excise tax policies and other rules that it says affect competition in those markets.

In India, the group called for tariff cuts and broader access for American whiskey, including bulk shipments. It also raised concerns about regulatory uncertainty and what it described as discriminatory treatment. India has long been a priority market for global spirits producers because of its size and growth potential, but it has also been one of the most difficult major markets for imported alcohol because of tariffs and complex state and federal rules.

In Canada, the association said U.S. spirits need restored access to provincial retail systems where some American products face restrictions. Provincial control over alcohol sales has often made Canada a recurring trade issue for U.S. beverage companies, which argue that access rules can differ sharply by province and can affect shelf space, listings and the ability to compete with domestic products.

The filing also addressed markets across Asia and Latin America, where the association said American whiskey categories need stronger recognition and protection. It asked for changes to labeling, certification, customs and other regulatory requirements that it said add costs or delay shipments. The group also called for more transparency and consistency in how trade rules are written and enforced.

Michael Bilello, the association’s president and chief executive, said in a statement that American whiskey producers need “fair and predictable market access” to compete internationally. He said barriers affecting exports do not stop at the distillery level and reach a wider U.S. supply chain that includes grain farmers, barrel makers, manufacturers and logistics providers.

The association said it has been coordinating on trade issues with other industry groups, including the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States and the American Distilled Spirits Alliance. Its submission reflects a broader industry effort to put trade barriers, product standards and market-access rules at the center of U.S. negotiations with major import markets as distillers look for export growth beyond the domestic market.