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# Britain says wine will stay outside the proposed UK-EU SPS agreement

The clarification signals that cross-Channel traders should not expect the talks to erase existing divergence in wine regulation

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The British government told Parliament on Tuesday, November 17, that wine will remain outside the scope of the proposed UK-EU sanitary and phytosanitary agreement, meaning the deal would not force Britain or the European Union to reverse

or amend existing differences in wine regulation.

The clarification came in a written parliamentary answer from Stephen Morgan, responding on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He was answering a question from Conservative lawmaker Mike Wood, who asked whether the future SPS agreement between the UK and the EU would require current regulatory divergence on wine to be either reversed or changed.

Morgan’s reply was direct. “Wine remains outside the scope of the proposed UK-EU SPS Agreement,” he said. “The Agreement will therefore not require existing regulatory divergence on wine regulation to be reversed or amended.”

The exchange adds a more precise statement to the government’s position on a subject that has drawn attention from businesses involved in cross-border trade. Wood’s question referred back to an earlier government answer issued on October 28 in response to a separate parliamentary question on wine regulation. In his follow-up, he asked specifically whether the planned agreement would affect the way wine rules have diverged since Britain left the EU framework.

The answer indicates that, at least under the agreement now being proposed, wine is being treated differently from products that fall under sanitary and phytosanitary rules more broadly. SPS arrangements generally deal with food safety and the protection of animal and plant health. By stating that wine is outside the deal’s scope, the government signaled that negotiations in this area are not intended to serve as a route to bring wine rules back into alignment.

That point is significant for the drinks industry because it suggests producers, importers and exporters should not expect the SPS talks alone to remove separate UK-EU differences in wine regulation. For companies selling wine across the Channel, the response provides a clearer indication that any compliance issues tied to existing divergence are likely to remain unless they are addressed through another policy or negotiation track.

The government’s wording was also notable for what it did not say. Morgan did not announce any new policy on wine regulation, and he did not suggest that the UK plans to revisit current differences through domestic legislation. He also did not outline any separate discussions with the EU on wine-specific rules. The answer was limited to the effect of the proposed SPS agreement itself.

The issue matters because regulatory divergence can shape how businesses plan trade, certification, product approvals and market access. Even a short parliamentary answer can carry weight when it narrows expectations about what a wider UK-EU deal may or may not deliver. In this case, the government used unambiguous language to say that the SPS agreement will not be the mechanism that changes the current position on wine.

The parliamentary response came through the House of Commons written questions system, which allows lawmakers to press ministers for specific policy clarifications on the record. Wood’s question asked whether divergence on wine would have to be “reversed” or “amended.” Morgan’s answer addressed both possibilities by saying neither would be required because wine is not covered by the proposed agreement.

The government has not, in this exchange, provided further detail on the practical boundaries of the exclusion or on whether particular wine-related regulatory matters could be considered elsewhere. It also did not say whether the exclusion was requested by one side or jointly accepted in the talks. The written answer focused only on the basic point that the proposed SPS agreement does not extend to wine and would leave existing divergence in place.