vinetur

Italian wine producers face a global slowdown after U.S. imports fall 18%

Data presented in Rome showed weaker demand in the United Kingdom, Germany and Italian supermarkets, where still-wine sales dropped 3.6% in 2026

Thursday, November 19, 2026



Italian wine producers are facing weaker demand at home and abroad as imports fall in some of their biggest foreign markets and domestic retail sales continue to slip, according to data presented in Rome during WIN&, a wine culture event organized by Consorzio Italia del Vino on Tuesday, November 17 and Wednesday, November 18.

The discussion brought together producers, market analysts and public officials at the Horti Sallustiani in Rome. At the center was a sector that is dealing with slower consumption, softer international markets, climate pressures and changing consumer attitudes toward alcohol and health. Those trends, speakers said, are forcing companies to rethink how they sell and how they speak to consumers.

Roberta Corrà, president of Consorzio Italia del Vino, said the industry could no longer focus only on export volumes and short-term commercial performance. “The future of Italian wine will not depend only on how much we manage to export, but on the value we are able to build around our production,” she said, pointing to quality, sustainability, culture and a better reading of new markets as the main drivers for growth.

The consortium represents 24 wine producers with combined revenue of more than 1.5 billion euros and accounts for about 15% of Italian wine exports, according to the organization. Its message in Rome was that the industry needs closer coordination among companies, institutions and research groups as market conditions become more difficult.

Denis Pantini, head of Nomisma Wine Monitor, presented data showing a broad slowdown. In Italy, the total value of food and beverage consumption fell to 83 billion euros in 2025 from 88 billion euros in 2019. In horeca, the channel that includes hotels, restaurants and catering, 61% of operators said wine sales were broadly stable over the past two years, while 29% reported a decline. The sharper weakness appeared in large-scale retail, where wine consumption has dropped 20% over eight years.

In the first nine months of 2026, sales of still wines in Italian supermarkets and other large retail outlets fell 3.6%, with red wines down 5.4%, Nomisma said. Sparkling wines moved in the opposite direction, rising 1.3%, helped by a 12.3% increase in traditional method sparkling wines.

The same pattern is visible outside Italy. Global wine consumption fell to 208 million hectoliters in 2025 from 232 million in 2020, according to the data presented at the event. Between January and September 2026, wine imports declined 18% in the United States, 4.8% in the United Kingdom and 6.1% in Germany. For the drinks industry, the simultaneous retreat in three major buying markets could add pressure to export sales and reinforce the need for producers to diversify where they sell, especially if weakness in mature markets persists.

Despite the slowdown, speakers said the answer is not only geographic diversification but also a broader effort to reconnect with consumers. Nomisma's analysis showed that people under 35 drink wine with roughly the same frequency as they did 20 years ago, while the sharper decline has come from older age groups. Consumers up to age 24 now account for 2% of consumption, and those between 25 and 34 account for 6%. The industry sees that as a sign that wine needs simpler language and more accessible communication if it wants to attract newer drinkers without losing its identity.

Another shift is how people buy and consume wine. Growth in by-the-glass sales relative to full bottles suggests consumers are looking for more flexibility and tighter spending control. That has implications for producers, distributors and restaurants, which may need to adapt packaging, pricing and promotion to match demand that is more selective than it was in earlier years.

With the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany still considered strategic markets, much of the conversation in Rome focused on where growth might come from next. Pantini pointed to Romania, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Vietnam, Poland, Thailand, South Korea, Mexico, Australia and Brazil as countries to watch. Together, those markets posted growth of 5.9% in the first half of 2026, running against the broader trend.

Public officials attending the event said policy support would matter as much as private strategy. Antonella Sberna, vice president of the European Parliament, described wine as a cultural asset that should be passed on to younger generations and said simpler rules and stronger promotion could help the sector. Teresa Nicolazzi, director general at Italy's Ministry of Agriculture, said support and co-financing tools need to be easier for companies to access as they seek new outlets abroad and navigate weaker demand in

established markets. Companies also continue to watch the United States closely, where uncertainty around tariffs and trade policy remains a risk for exporters.