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U.S. tariffs cut Italian wine exports 6.2% in the first half of 2026

Sales to the United States, Italy’s biggest foreign market, dropped 14.1% to €849 million, prompting a push into smaller markets

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Italian wine exports weakened in the first half of 2026 as U.S. demand slowed under the weight of tariffs, while a group of smaller emerging markets posted stronger growth, according to industry data presented Friday, November 20, in Rome.

The figures were discussed at Win&, an event on Italian wine culture promoted by the Consorzio Italia del Vino. They drew on Istat data processed by the Unione Italiana Vini observatory and on analysis from Wine Monitor, the wine market unit of Nomisma. A report in Il Sole 24 Ore on Wednesday, November 18, also cited the findings.

According to the Istat-based data, Italian wine exports totaled just over €3.6 billion in the first six months of 2026, down 6.2% in value and 4% in volume from a year earlier. Sales to the United States, still Italy's largest foreign market for wine, fell 14.1% to €849 million. Separate calculations from Nomisma presented at the Rome event pointed to a decline of more than 18% in the U.S. market, underscoring the extent of the slowdown even as the estimates differ.

The downturn is not limited to Italy. Among major global wine exporters, Italy's exports were down 2% in the first nine months of 2026, according to the data cited at the event. France slipped 0.4%, while Spain fell 8% and Chile 11%.

The pressure on shipments to the United States is being closely watched across the broader beverage business because it highlights how exposed a major drinks exporter can be to one market. It also suggests that wine producers, and potentially other beverage exporters, may need to diversify faster when trade tensions begin to affect volumes, pricing and distribution.

Wine Monitor said it has begun tracking a basket of 13 emerging markets this year: Angola, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ivory Coast, India, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Mexico, Peru, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Thailand. The group represents about 5% of the global value of imported wine, but it includes developing economies with rising urbanization and an expanding middle class.

The Czech Republic led growth in the first half, with Italian wine sales there rising 22% by value and 16.5% by volume. It became the top destination in the monitored group for bottled still and lightly sparkling wines. Poland and Mexico, by contrast, posted double-digit declines in that same category.

Sparkling wine remained the strongest segment in most of the emerging markets tracked by Nomisma. Sales rose by double digits in Colombia and by more than 50% in Kazakhstan, although from a relatively small base. Nomisma also noted that in its 2025 report, Prosecco did not record declines in either value or volume in any of the 13 markets.

Longer-term trends point in the same direction. Between 2015 and 2025, Italian wine exports rose 507% in Romania, 325% in Turkey and 264% in Vietnam, compared with a 45% increase in the world average, according to the figures presented in Rome. Denis Pantini, who heads Wine Monitor, also pointed to Brazil, where sales of Italian wine increased 6% while the overall market grew 2.1%.

Brazil could gain further importance if the European Union-Mercosur agreement is gradually implemented as planned, because the accord provides for a phased reduction in import tariffs. Speakers at the event also argued that producers will need to invest more in sustainability, culture and technical skills, while using simpler and more direct communication with consumers.

The issue is especially important for the Veneto region, Italy’s largest wine exporter and one of the areas most exposed to a slowdown in overseas demand. According to the economic observatory of Veneto Agricoltura, using Istat data, Veneto’s wine exports reached €1.32 billion in the first half of 2026, down 8.4%. That was more than two percentage points worse than the national decline. Even so, Veneto still accounted for 36.3% of the total value of Italian wine exports.

The weakness had already been visible in 2025. Export volumes from Veneto rose 1.2%, but export value fell 1.1% to €2.93 billion, indicating a decline in average prices. Veneto wine is sold in about 150 countries, yet 89% of its export value is concentrated in just 20 markets, a level of concentration that leaves producers more vulnerable to sudden trade shocks such as U.S. tariffs.

Confagricoltura Veneto said the data show that market diversification is no longer optional for wine companies. The farm group said producers should make fuller use of promotion funds available under wine-sector support measures in non-EU countries, including higher-potential emerging markets. It also called for companies to take

advantage of trade agreements such as EU-Mercosur while pressing for reciprocal rules, and for continued management of supply and production potential to support prices.

The organization also said exporters need stronger training in foreign markets, marketing and changing consumer habits. That reflects a broader problem for Italy’s wine business in 2026: even as established destinations remain critical, weaker demand in the United States is pushing producers to search for growth in smaller, less developed markets that may offer more room to expand but also require new commercial strategies.