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EU spirits and liqueur exports jumped 12% in 2026’s first nine months

Sales to the United States helped lift shipments to €6.946 billion, producing the bloc’s second-largest agri-food export increase

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European Union exports of spirits and liqueurs rose sharply in the first nine months of 2026, while wine remained the bloc’s largest beverage export earner but was little changed from a year earlier, according to a European Commission report released on Tuesday, November 24.

From January through September, the EU exported wine and wine-based products worth €12.13 billion to countries outside the bloc, down just €25 million from the same period in 2025. Over the same period, exports of spirits and liqueurs increased by €725 million to €6.946 billion. The Commission said that was the second-largest increase in value among all agri-food categories in the report, which was based on Eurostat data.

The rise in spirits and liqueurs marked a 12% gain from the first nine months of 2025, when exports in the category totaled €6.22 billion. The United States accounted for much of that increase. The value of EU spirits and liqueur exports to the U.S. rose 13%, the Commission said. Shipments to Ukraine and Russia also increased, though Brussels did not provide country-by-country amounts for those gains. The figures cover the category as a whole and do not break out individual products.

The increase came after a weaker 2025 for European spirits. For the full year, EU exports of spirits and liqueurs fell to €8.353 billion from €8.769 billion in 2024, a decline of 4.7%. In the first nine months of 2026, the bloc also imported more spirits and liqueurs from suppliers outside the EU. Imports reached €3.39 billion, up 8% from a year earlier. Because exports rose faster than imports, the trade surplus in the category widened from €3.072 billion to €3.556 billion. That was an improvement of €484 million, or nearly 16%.

Wine exports showed a different pattern. The value of EU wine and wine-based exports slipped 0.2%, from €12.155 billion in the first nine months of 2025 to €12.13 billion in the same period of 2026. Imports fell more sharply, however, dropping from about €1.1 billion to €1.035 billion. That allowed the wine trade surplus to improve even though export revenue edged lower. The Commission put the increase in the surplus at €42 million. At €11.095 billion, wine posted the third-largest trade surplus of any EU agri-food category.

The U.S. market offered a separate signal for wine because the Commission also reported volumes there. Through September, the EU shipped the same volume of wine to the U.S. as it did in the same period of 2025. The Commission described wine as the EU’s leading agri-food export to the American market. It did not publish a value figure for wine sales to the U.S., so the data show volume stability rather than changes in

revenue. In its broader comparison with 2025, the Commission noted that EU agri-food exports to the U.S. were strong in the first quarter of that year and said some orders may have been brought forward after tariff announcements, though it did not assign a specific effect to wine.

Beer moved in the opposite direction in the U.S. market. Among the beverages for which the report gave U.S.-specific data, beer recorded the steepest decline, with the value of EU exports to the country down 35%. For all destinations combined, however, the Commission does not report beer on its own. Instead, it groups beer with cider and other beverages. Exports for that broader category reached €8.169 billion in the first nine months of 2026, up 1% from a year earlier. The report does not show whether beer, cider or another drink accounted for that increase, or which markets drove it.

Taken together, the three beverage groupings in the report, wine and wine-based products, spirits and liqueurs, and beer, cider and other beverages, generated €27.245 billion in EU exports from January through September, up 3% from the same period in 2025. Of the €791 million increase, €725 million came from spirits and liqueurs, underscoring how much of the growth in beverage exports depended on distilled products rather than wine or beer.

Trade in the beer, cider and other beverages category also improved on the import side. EU imports in that grouping fell 4%, from €1.967 billion in the first nine months of 2025 to €1.893 billion in the same period of 2026. The lower import bill, combined with slightly higher exports, lifted the category’s trade surplus from €6.111 billion to €6.276 billion. According to the Commission’s trade balance table, that was an improvement of €165 million, with €91 million coming from higher exports and €74 million from lower imports.