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Germany overtakes the United States to become the world's largest wine buyer

Germany overtook the United States to become the world's largest wine importer by volume, but more than half of the wine purchased is in bulk

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In the first half of 2023, Germany exhibited a slight increase of 1% in its wine import volume, reaching 649.4 million liters. This modest growth follows a particularly negative trend observed in the first half of 2022. However, the average price per liter dropped by 5% from €2.09 to €1.98, resulting in a 4.1% decrease in total spending, down to €1.287 billion. This shift contrasts sharply with the trends of 2022, which concluded with an 8.4% decline in volume and a 5.3% rise in average price, slightly cushioning the fall in value to -3.6%.

The year 2023 began promisingly for German wine imports, with a value growth exceeding 15% in January. However, this was followed by five consecutive months of decline. January, February, and April were notable for increases in volume. In terms of volume, Germany has now overtaken the United States as the world's leading wine importer, although it still trails significantly behind the US and the UK in terms of value.

Germany serves as both a key consumer and a major distributor of foreign wines to other European markets. The country primarily imports bulk wine, which constituted 3.63 million hectoliters (a 6.6% increase), representing 56% of the total volume. This preference for bulk wine explains why Germany's average purchase price is significantly lower than the global average.

Bottled wine, meanwhile, has lost its market share as the second most imported type of wine in Germany, decreasing by 6.3% to 240.8 million liters (37% of the total). Despite this, bottled wine clearly leads in value, accounting for €801.6 million (a 9.2% decrease), which is 62% of the total spending. It's noteworthy that bottled wine was the only category to experience a decrease in value compared to the first half of 2022. In contrast, bulk wine saw a 6.7% increase in volume, reaching €238.8 million, representing 18.5% of the total.

This disparity between the categories is further highlighted by the difference in average prices: bottled wine stands at €3.33 per liter (a 3.1% decrease), while bulk wine remains stable at 66 cents per liter.

In another segment, the volume of imported sparkling wine dropped by 5% to 30.7 million liters, but the expenditure increased by 3.4% to nearly €221 million, driven by a significant price increase of 8.9% to €7.20 per liter.

The most notable growth was seen in the bag-in-box category, which saw a 13.7% increase in volume and a 21.7% increase in value. This category reached 14.8 million liters and €26.2 million, with an average price of €1.78 per liter (a 7.1% increase).

Germany sourced its wine from 61 international suppliers in the first half of 2023. The majority of imports were concentrated from the top three suppliers: Italy, Spain, and France, collectively accounting for 80% of Germany's total wine imports. Italy and France saw a significant decline in value, by 6.8% and 5.4% respectively, although they remained the top two sellers. Spain solidified its third position with a 5.2% growth, reaching nearly €176 million. In terms of volume, Italy led with 232.3 million liters (a 4% increase), followed closely by Spain with a significant 16.6% increase to 196.4 million liters. France experienced a decline in volume, dropping 6.3% to 88.7 million liters.

The price trends among these top suppliers were varied: both Italy (€2.06/liter) and Spain (90 cents/liter) saw around a 10% decrease in price, with Spanish wine being the only one not to breach the one euro mark. France, on the other hand, maintained a higher average price of €4.26 per liter, a 1% increase.

Beyond these leading suppliers, South Africa and Austria showed mixed trends. South Africa, as the fourth-largest volume supplier, saw a 30% decline to 21.2 million liters, while Austria maintained its fourth position in value with €47.7 million (a 1.2% increase). The United States, despite a significant price increase of 31%, saw a decrease in value to €26.5 million.

New Zealand emerged as a notable player, with a staggering 197% increase in sales revenue and a 145% increase in volume, positioning it at the 12th spot. New Zealand's wine was priced at €3.68 per liter, the second-highest after France.

Lastly, Germany reduced its wine imports from Australia, Portugal, and Chile, indicating a shift in its import preferences and market dynamics.