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Russian Beer Exports Surge 25%

Export volumes topped 33,000 metric tons in the first quarter, driven by demand in Central Asia and China

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In the first quarter of 2025, Russian beer exports surpassed 33,000 metric tons, according to preliminary data released by AgroExport, a state-affiliated agro-industrial body. This marks a 25% increase in physical volume compared to the same period in 2024. The rise in exports coincides with a sharp contraction in domestic alcoholic beverage production, which dropped by 25.6% year-over-year in February, reaching its lowest level since 2017 for the initial months of the year.

The primary markets for Russian beer exports are now Belarus, Kazakhstan, China, Abkhazia, and Tajikistan. These destinations reflect a shift in export strategy among Russian brewers, who are adjusting to lower domestic demand and increasingly strict fiscal policies and public health campaigns aimed at reducing alcohol consumption. The combination of internal pressure and changing economic priorities has driven producers to seek growth opportunities in neighboring and regional markets.

The Russian alcoholic beverage industry also continues to be affected by international sanctions linked to the war in Ukraine. The European Union's ban on imports of Russian vodka has removed a significant market for the sector, with products disappearing from retail shelves across Europe. This has further pushed Russian companies to redirect their focus toward Central Asia and nearby countries where political and economic relationships remain intact.

Before the escalation of conflict in February 2022, the beverage sector in Russia had been among the fastest-growing parts of the food industry, with certain segments experiencing annual growth rates of up to 15%. However, economic isolation and state intervention have altered that trajectory. Foreign companies operating in the country have been forced to reconsider their positions.

AB InBev, the largest global brewer by volume, announced in 2022 the sale of its stake in its Russian joint venture to Turkish partner Anadolu Efes. But in April 2023, under a presidential decree, the Russian government placed those shares under temporary state management, effectively blocking the transaction.

Carlsberg also attempted to exit the Russian market. After prolonged negotiations, it completed the sale of its Russian subsidiary, Baltika Breweries. The deal followed state control of the company, with two of its former employees establishing a new company that assumed ownership. Though the identities of the buyers have not been formally confirmed, they are believed to be Yegor Guselnikov and Alexander Tolmachev. Baltika operates eight breweries across Russia and manufactures over 50 beer brands.