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Wine Producers Appeal for European Unity After Trump Remarks

Europe’s Wine Sector Strains for Stability as Political Tensions Rise

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European wine producers are facing renewed uncertainty after former President Donald Trump, now back in office, threatened to impose a 200% tariff on French wine and champagne. The threat came after France declined to join the U.S.-proposed “Board of Peace” for Gaza. Trump’s comments, made Monday evening, have added new tension to an already strained transatlantic trade relationship.

The European wine and spirits sector has been at the center of U.S.-EU trade disputes since Trump’s return to power in 2025. The United States remains the largest export market for European producers, accounting for 29% of EU wine exports last year. Industry leaders say the impact of these threats goes beyond bottles and brands, touching on broader geopolitical issues.

On Tuesday, the French Federation of Wine and Spirits Exporters (FEVS) released a statement urging calm but emphasizing that the matter must be handled at the European level. “These geopolitical questions go beyond the sectoral interests of wine and spirits,” the statement read. “Trade policy is an exclusive competence of the European Union. The matter must therefore be addressed in a united and coordinated way at the European level.”

Negotiations over exemptions from existing 15% U.S. tariffs on European wines have dragged on since last summer’s EU-U.S. trade agreement. That deal did not secure special treatment for wines and spirits, despite efforts by the European Commission. The situation became more complicated this weekend when members of the European Parliament questioned the agreement after Trump renewed threats against Greenland.

French producers are hoping that talks this week in Davos between U.S., French, and EU officials will help defuse the crisis. Gabriel Picard, president of FEVS, said, “These statements by the President of the United States must be taken seriously, but with composure.” Brussels-based industry representatives echoed this approach.

Ignacio Sánchez Recarte, secretary general of the European Committee of Wine Companies, explained why wine has become a frequent target in trade disputes: “When we talk about wine, we talk about terroir products, about very well-known brands; it is an iconic product in France as well as in Europe.” He noted that last year’s strong exports to the U.S. were partly driven by American companies stockpiling inventory ahead of possible new tariffs.

However, after the EU-U.S. trade agreement took effect in July and August 2025, there was a significant drop in the average value of exported wines. According to Eurostat data, EU spirits exports to the U.S. fell by 25% between August and November 2025 compared to the same period in 2024.

The sector is considered strategic for Europe’s economy and cultural identity. Despite ongoing efforts to secure better terms for wine and spirits under transatlantic trade rules, producers remain vulnerable to political decisions made far from their vineyards and distilleries.

Trump’s latest threat has put additional pressure on both sides to find a solution that protects one of Europe’s most valuable export industries while navigating complex diplomatic challenges. As negotiations continue in Davos and Brussels, industry leaders are watching closely for signs of progress or further escalation.