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Canadian demand for European wine rises after CETA

A study says imports have grown faster since the 2017 trade deal, boosting Italian exports to a market with strong purchasing power.

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Canadian demand for European wine has grown at an average annual rate of 5.1% since the CETA trade agreement took effect in 2017, outpacing the 1.4% average growth recorded by wines from outside the European Union, according to a study released Tuesday by Fondosviluppo and Confcooperative at Vinitaly in Verona.

The findings were presented during a business-to-business tasting event organized by Confcooperative with ICE, Italy’s trade agency, under the patronage of the foreign ministry. The event brought together 50 cooperative wineries and more than 90 international buyers.

Raffaele Drei, president of Confcooperative Fedagripesca, said the agreement between the European Union and Canada had become a key tool for expanding Italian wine exports and strengthening the broader food and beverage sector. He said the data showed that the pact had helped European producers secure a stronger position in a market with high purchasing power and a growing preference for quality products.

Confcooperative said one of the most important effects of CETA has been the wider protection of geographical indications. Before the agreement, protection in the EU-Canada relationship was limited to wines and spirits. Under CETA, that protection was extended to 171 agri-food names, including 41 Italian ones. Those names account for about 98% of the value of Italy’s PDO and PGI exports to Canada.

The study also found that removing Canada’s 6.9% tariff helped lift beverage exports, led by wine, to more than €120 million on average each year in the period after CETA took effect.

Luca Rigotti, who heads Confcooperative Fedagripesca’s wine sector, said cooperative wineries see CETA as a practical example of how Italian producers can grow abroad by relying on quality, identity and coordination among businesses. He added that Italy still sends 60% of its exports to just 10 markets and nearly 30% to North America, underscoring the need to diversify sales more broadly.