

An American importer's appeal to producers and policy makers

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 27 Marzo 2025



An American wine importer launches a heartfelt appeal to Italian producers to prevent a tariff crisis with the U.S. The threat of up to 200% duties on European wines could devastate Italian exports. With shipments in transit, immediate political pressure is urged to delay or block these punitive measures.

On the brink of new U.S. tariffs on European wines, an American importer makes an urgent appeal to Italian producers to take political action and prevent a trade crisis. The risk? Shipments returned, price hikes, staff cuts, and major damage to Italian wine exports.

I'm dedicating this Friday's editorial to the voice of an American importer, who, in a heartfelt letter to his producer clients (special thanks to Felice Di Biase, General Manager of Cantina Frentana, for sharing it), highlights the severe consequences Italian wine exports to the U.S. would face if Trump's tariffs are enforced, while also urging lobbying efforts toward policymakers who might help avoid this dangerous "economic war."

The importer calls for at least a delay in the implementation of any tariffs, to allow for the completion and customs clearance of wine shipments to the U.S.

Unfortunately, this option appears to be the most realistic, as the imposition of tariffs on EU wines and spirits by the U.S. seems almost inevitable at this stage.

The importer's plea to EU policymakers to reach agreements with the U.S. administration is more than justified – it's nearly desperate.

We truly hope for a positive resolution, because the impact on our wine sector – given the significance of the U.S. market (exports reached nearly €2 billion in 2024) – would be nothing short of devastating.

Just consider how Australia's wine exports to China were virtually wiped out for three years, dropping from around €720 million in 2020 to just a few million annually between 2021 and 2023, due to tariffs exceeding 200%.

Frankly speaking, it's hard to be optimistic, given a level of conflict between the EU and U.S. not seen since World War II.

This senseless war could severely damage our sector, which is already under market pressure and facing shifts in consumption patterns.

Wine Meridian also adds its voice to this appeal, in hopes of

finding a reasonable solution to preserve the economic sustainability of such a strategic sector for our country.

Dear friends,

As you know, the U.S. government is threatening to impose tariffs of up to 200% on wine and spirits from the European Union, in response to the EU's threat of a 50% tariff on American Whiskey/Bourbon. Initially, the EU stated the tariff would begin April 2, and the U.S. said it would retaliate on April 3. Last week, the EU revised its stance and postponed the timeline to April 13, making a U.S. response likely on April 14.

We have many shipments en route, and many won't arrive before April 14. If they don't, we'll have to return them to Italy because it would be unfeasible to pay the tariffs – the wine would become unsellable. We'd bear the cost of shipping it to the U.S., then returning it, leaving us with only the current U.S. stock – enough for 4 months. This would devastate our business: staff cuts, higher prices, and a shift toward only the cheapest products.

This week, the U.S. Wine Trade Alliance advised all importers to STOP all EU shipments, because the risk of tariffs between 50% and 200% starting April 14 is too high. The U.S. government plans to use a fast-track mechanism to impose these tariffs immediately – a method never used before. Normally, tariffs require a months-long investigation and review of trade imbalances across product categories, likely pushing implementation to fall. But now, a new emergency process allows for immediate application without review.

The U.S. Wine Trade Alliance has learned that the government plans to apply tariffs at double the rate imposed by the EU. So if the EU imposes a 50% tariff on American whiskey, the U.S. will respond with a 100% tariff.

We urgently ask for your help – please call and write to your

government officials, asking them to urge EU decision-makers not to impose tariffs on American whiskey. Ask them to delay decisions, allowing in-transit shipments to arrive before tariffs are applied. Without this, shipments will be returned and producers will lose sales. **Postponing decisions until early or mid-May would allow many shipments to arrive in time.**

We also ask everyone we know to contact our U.S. government representatives.

Thank you all.

Key points

- U.S. tariffs up to 200% threaten Italian wine exports.
- Importers urge political lobbying to delay or block duties.
- Shipments arriving after April 14 risk being returned.
- The U.S. is using an emergency fast-track tariff process.
- Wine Meridian calls for a common-sense resolution.