

When everything comes down to a matter of tariffs...

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 30 Ottobre 2025



Fabio Piccoli's editorial criticizes the Italian wine sector for using US tariffs as an excuse to avoid structural reform. He argues the real problems are outdated business models and communication, calling for urgent self-criticism, new ideas, and a move away from the "sterile whining" that prevents real progress.

It's too easy to blame US tariffs: behind the difficulties of Italian wine lies a system that is struggling to innovate. **Fabio Piccoli denounces the absence of self-criticism, the stagnation of representative bodies, and calls for a new culture of business, communication, and promotion, in line with contemporary markets and consumers.**

Since I earned the reputation of being a "pain in the neck" on

the field a long time ago, I might as well continue not to hide. Also because a large part of our wine sector is very good at hiding, not a day goes by that it doesn't find a reason to cry and complain.

And for some months now, the US tariffs issue has become an enormous onion that makes tears spring to eyes left and right.

Fortunately, there are some exceptions of wine entrepreneurs and managers who quietly try to state that the problems of our wine are not the tariffs, but a structuring of our companies that, at various levels, is decidedly not contemporary or adequate for today's market dynamics.

In this regard, the CEO of Terra Moretti, Massimo Tuzzi, rightly declared a few days ago to the excellent Nicola Dante Basile on the Sole 24 Ore's TerraNostra blog: "To hypothesize that the eventual introduction of tariffs, should they be confirmed, could significantly alter the fundamentals of trade appears, at the moment, to be a premature assessment."

Not forgetting, Tuzzi always emphasized, that customs tariffs are a constant in international trade and, like it or not, they will exist in the future and must be considered for what they are in a company's commercial strategies.

In short, dismissing the current problems of Italian wine on the issue of increased tariffs seems to be yet another attempt by our sector to hide all its limitations under the rug.

And, forgive me if I'm repetitive, but I truly struggle to understand how we can't even try to confront what needs to be done, always preferring to feel sorry for ourselves.

I don't want to seem naive, so I can imagine that the smokescreen triggered on the tariff issue by our wine system, particularly by the professional organizations, also represents a sort of appeal and stimulus to government institutions, first and foremost the European Union, to reach

into their wallets to support the European wine sector more.

And, for heaven's sake, I understand this: **I am not engaging in easy moralizing or demagoguery regarding financial support for our wine businesses.**

What is becoming increasingly difficult for me to understand, however, and is frankly becoming indigestible, **is never reading any self-criticism from the system and no operational proposals to overcome the structural and organizational limitations**, which are increasingly evident even within the trade representation of our wine supply chain.

There is no need to tear our garments for lèse-majesté; in every phase of great change like the current one, everyone, and I stress everyone, starting with those who do our job as "wine chroniclers," must question themselves. **Defending one's "institutional" role, one's professional task with a sword, regardless of the effective and concrete contribution we manage to make in such a complex era, risks turning us into those Japanese soldiers who for decades fought finished wars in abandoned lands.**

In essence: **if we do not want to shoot at ghosts, we must finally design clear objectives that today are very different from those of the past.**

Regarding this last point, I am very pleased that an important Italian protection Consortium, which for professional correctness I cannot name at the moment, is planning a new model for promoting the denomination in a more accessible key, **far from the models that have alienated not only young people from wine but many other potential enthusiasts**, starting with the classic and often unbearable "masterclasses."

Likewise, the Envisioning 2035 initiative itself, about which I have already written extensively in two of my recent editorials (Wine is less and less "habit" and more and more "choice" and Revolution in the wine world: provocative

insights from the Envisioning 2035 summit), has opened new fronts for discussion which I hope will soon lead to concrete proposals on today's fundamental topics such as **new skills within wine businesses, new commercial strategies, new communication formats and content**, just to stick to the most obvious emergencies.

But in order for new ideas for changing our wine system to find space, **it is essential that at least the sterile whining is reduced and that we accept profound self-questioning.**

At stake is not the survival of some institution president, some sector journalist, some entrepreneur or company manager, but **that of an entire system that must find a new structure to guarantee it real competitiveness today and in the near future.**

There is no shortage of ideas, but let's also let them come from many new voices, because **the mix of "old ideas from old voices" could truly become lethal for Italian wine.**

Key points

1. **US tariffs are an excuse**, not the real problem for Italian wine.
2. **The sector needs urgent self-criticism** and structural reform.
3. **Business, sales, and communication models are outdated** and inadequate.
4. **New ideas and new voices are essential** to ensure future competitiveness.
5. **The "sterile whining" must stop** to allow for real change.

