New Zealand wine exports slip 2.9% in March as bulk shipments tumble

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Wine exports fell to $152.2 million in March 2022, weighed down by a sharp contraction in bulk shipments even as bottled wine sales surged in key North American markets.

March shipments decline despite strong US demand

New Zealand exported $152.2 million of wine in March 2022, down 2.9 per cent on the same month a year earlier. Volume fell more steeply, dropping 19.8 per cent to 20.2 million litres. The average export price rose to $7.54 per litre, reflecting a shift in the product mix as lower-value bulk shipments contracted.

The month's result brought the rolling 12-month total to March 2022 to $1.92 billion, up 345.4 per cent year-on-year-though this figure reflects an exceptional comparison base affected by the early pandemic period.

Bottled wine drives value growth, bulk collapses

The divergence between packaging formats was stark in March. Bottled wine exports-products in containers of two litres or less, including sparkling-rose 18.3 per cent year-on-year to $117.1 million. Bulk shipments in containers exceeding 10 litres, by contrast, fell 39.2 per cent to $34.9 million, accounting for 22.9 per cent of total export value.

The pricing gap between formats remained wide: bottled wine averaged $9.60 per litre compared with $4.39 per litre for bulk. This $5.21 differential underscores the continued premium New Zealand commands for finished, branded product versus wine destined for blending or foreign bottling operations.

United States and Canada power gains, European markets retreat

New Zealand wine reached 54 destination markets in March. The United States consolidated its position as the dominant market, absorbing $63.1 million-41.5 per cent of total exports-with shipments up 24.7 per cent year-on-year. The United Kingdom took $36.6 million, up 8.2 per cent, maintaining a 24.0 per cent share.

Canada emerged as the month's standout performer among major markets, more than doubling its intake with a 118.5 per cent surge to $14.3 million, capturing a 9.4 per cent share. Thailand also recorded exceptional growth, jumping 475.6 per cent to $0.6 million from a smaller base.

Australia, the third-largest destination, fell 38.6 per cent to $20.7 million, a 13.6 per cent share. Several European markets retreated sharply: Germany plunged 82.9 per cent to $1.2 million, France dropped 56.9 per cent to $1.1 million, and Ireland fell 54.2 per cent to $1.4 million. China declined 52.9 per cent to $1.7 million, while the Netherlands was down 46.4 per cent to $1.2 million and Hong Kong dropped 44.7 per cent to $0.6 million.

North America diverges from rest of world

The March figures reveal a clear geographical split. North American demand remained robust, with both the US and Canadian markets posting strong gains. Much of the rest of the world-particularly Europe and established Asia-Pacific markets-saw material contractions. The Republic of Korea ($1.9 million, up 32.1 per cent) and Denmark ($1.0 million, up 44.2 per cent) offered rare bright spots outside North America.

Provisional data

These figures are drawn from Stats NZ merchandise trade data for March 2022. Monthly export statistics for the most recent period are provisional and subject to revision as late declarations are processed and classifications are refined.