New Zealand wine exports surge 28% in January on booming bulk sales and Australian rebound

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January 2023 · Generated 6 July 2026 · Source: Stats NZ overseas merchandise trade (HS 2204)

Wine exports jumped to $146.6 million in January 2023, propelled by a 74% leap in bulk shipments and resurgent demand from Australia, which nearly doubled its purchases year-on-year.

Strong start to the year

New Zealand exported $146.6 million of wine in January 2023, up 27.7% on the same month last year, according to official merchandise trade data. Shipment volume rose 26.8% to 19.7 million litres, with the average price reaching $7.46 per litre. Wine reached 55 destination markets during the month.

The January result brought the rolling 12-month total to $2,274.9 million, a 17.4% increase on the year-earlier period, underscoring sustained momentum in offshore demand for New Zealand wine.

Seasonal context and recent trend

January is typically a quieter month in the export calendar. The $146.6 million recorded in January 2023 compares with $114.8 million in January 2022, but sits well below the peaks of recent months-September through December 2022 all exceeded $250 million as the industry shipped the new vintage.

Australian demand rebounds sharply

Australia delivered the most striking performance among major markets, with purchases surging 93.6% to $28.1 million and claiming a 19.2% share of January exports. The United States remained the largest destination at $51.0 million, up a more modest 8.7% and accounting for 34.8% of total value.

The United Kingdom posted robust growth of 42.9% to $35.9 million, securing a 24.5% market share. Canada climbed 27.1% to $10.9 million, representing 7.4% of exports.

France emerged as another standout, more than doubling its purchases with a 114.5% gain to $4.6 million. The month's fastest-growing markets above $500,000 included Poland (up 224.3% to $0.8 million), Bulgaria (up 216.4% to $0.9 million), Denmark (up 113.4% to $0.7 million), and Latvia (up 105.8% to $1.1 million).

Offsetting the gains, Japan fell 56.9% to $1.1 million and South Korea dropped 63.0% to $0.6 million. Ireland declined 22.3% to $1.7 million and the Netherlands slipped 12.9% to $1.7 million.

Bulk exports drive the increase

The packaging breakdown reveals the composition of January's growth. Bulk wine shipped in containers exceeding 10 litres surged 73.9% in value to $41.1 million, accounting for 28.0% of total export value. Bottled wine in containers of two litres or less rose a more moderate 15.2% to $104.9 million.

The price differential between formats was pronounced: bottled wine averaged $9.33 per litre compared with $4.95 per litre for bulk. That $4.38 gap reflects the fundamentally different market positions-bulk wine is typically shipped for bottling offshore, often for own-brand and private-label programmes, while bottled exports carry New Zealand branding and command higher returns.

The sharp rise in bulk shipments suggests strong demand from offshore bottling operations, particularly as Australian purchases-often bulk-weighted-nearly doubled during the month.

Data note

Figures are derived from Statistics New Zealand's monthly merchandise trade data for HS code 2204 (wine of fresh grapes) on a free-on-board basis. As with all trade statistics, the most recent month's data are provisional and subject to revision as late declarations are processed.