

# Exporting wine to the Belgian market

Due to minor domestic production, Belgium imports most of its wine. Southern European wine producers have a strong market position but Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, is more open to New World wines. Large retailers have a strong bargaining position. If developing country exporters are not able to supply supermarkets, they need to emphasise their Unique Selling Point (USP) and target the specialist retailer segment. Sparkling wine is currently very popular and presents opportunities to developing country exporters.

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## 1. Product Description

Wine is defined as: 'The product obtained exclusively from the total or partial alcoholic fermentation of fresh grapes, whether or not crushed'. Please refer to Table 1 for the Harmonised System (HS) codes for wine.

Table 1: HS codes of wine

Type of wine	HS Code
Sparkling wine	220410
Wine in containers < 2 litres	220421
Wine in containers > 2 litres	220429

## Labelling

The European Union has set [compulsory labelling particulars](#) for wine; labels must provide the following information.

- The name of the Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO)/ Protected geographical Indication (PGI) or Wine of 'producing country'/Produced in 'producing country'/Product of 'producing country'
- Actual Alcoholic strength (AAS)
- Nominal volume
- Lot number
- Importer details
- Allergenic ingredients

The information on allergenic ingredients should include the following points.

- All wines containing over 10 milligrams of sulphite per litre must be labelled with the indication 'Contains sulphites'. This information is crucial for individuals who are sensitive to sulphites and experience problems

such as shortness of breath, coughing, and wheezing. If your wine contains only a few mg or no sulphites, you can mention this on the label to accommodate these consumers.

- Egg and milk derivatives must also be mentioned on the label.
- Allergens must be mentioned in the language of the target market.
- Sugar content (for sparkling wines) must be given.

### Tips:

Legislation does not require the exact composition of a blend on the label. However, rising interest of consumers in the composition of wines increases the need to include such information on the label.

If you target educated consumers, it is worth mentioning the grape variety and vintage. This can have a positive effect on consumer perception of your product's quality.

The use of the term 'Reserve' or even 'Grand Reserve' can help to convince consumers of the high quality of your wine. Ensure compliance with the wine law in your country concerning the use of such terms. Educated wine consumers, however, will be less receptive to this kind of marketing.

The [Food Standards Agency of the United Kingdom](#) provides useful guidance on more detailed labelling requirements in the United Kingdom which might also be relevant to Belgium.

## Packaging

### Bottled and boxed wine

- The selection of the type of stopper should depend on the requirements of the buyer. In Flanders, the screw cap enjoys wide acceptance and is the preferred closure for regular (everyday) drinking wines. In Wallonia, consumers are more conservative and prefer natural cork over screw caps or synthetic corks. For premium wines, natural cork is the preferred stopper both in Flanders and in Wallonia.
- In Belgium, the Bag-in-Box (BiB) is highly accepted. Currently, a third of all wine sold in Belgium is packaged as BiB.
- On the premium wine market in Belgium, glass bottles are the most common type of wine packaging. Glass bottles are usually coloured to reduce the effect of UV light and typically contain 0.75 litres.
- Bottles for sparkling wines need to be strong enough to withstand the pressure resulting from the high CO<sub>2</sub> levels. Although there are no legally binding requirements, the International Technical Centre for Bottling and Related Packaging (CETIE) has published standards that are internationally recognised.

### Tip:

Create an account on the website of CETIE to gain access to the [data sheet on internationally recognised bottling standards](#) (DT 11: 'Bottling specifications for carbonated beverages CO<sub>2</sub>>2g').

### Bulk wine

Packaging-related quality problems with bulk wine hampered development of bulk wine trade for a long time. Recent improvements in storage technology, handling facilities, and quality protocols have contributed to better quality preservation and, consequently, to the wider use of bulk wine.

Different types of packaging are available for the transport of bulk wine. The two most common are:

- Flexi-tanks – disposable plastic bags intended for installation in a standard 20ft shipping container.
- ISO tanks – reusable steel tanks, which need to be cleaned between shipments. ISO tanks offer all the advantages of flexi-tanks, but are more polluting and expensive in transport due to higher weight. One advantage of an ISO tank is its reliability; they have a lower risk of defects compared to flexi-tanks.

Defective seals or the use of permeable material can lead to oxidation, which will degrade the wine. This can result in negative taste alterations and a shorter shelf life.

A relatively small, though increasing amount of premium wine is being transported to Belgium in bulk. Please refer to our study on [bulk wine in Europe](#) for more information on this issue.

## 2. What is the demand for wine in Belgium?

### Large sparkling wine production

Belgium is a medium-sized wine market in Europe. Belgian wine production remains small. Despite an average annual growth of 6.7% between 2011 and 2015, total wine production only amounted to 6100 hectolitres (hl) in 2015. After a bad harvest in 2013 due to adverse weather conditions, production increased again in 2014 due to good weather conditions and an increasing number of vineyards.

Belgium's climate, geography and soil are best suited to white grape varieties like Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, and Riesling. In 2014, white wine accounted for about 41%, red wine for 17%, rosé wines accounted for 4% and sparkling wines accounted for 38% of total Belgian production.

### Diverse wine consumption

Wine consumption in Belgium is relatively high compared to other European countries. Belgian wine consumption amounted to about 3 million hl in 2015, showing an average annual increase of 1.9% between 2011 and 2015. Sparkling wine consumption accounts for 14% of the total wine consumption in Belgium. Within the still wine category, Belgians favour red wines (52%) over white wines (30%) and rosé wines (18%).

Per capita wine consumption in Belgium amounted to 26.3 litres in 2015, showing an average annual increase of 1.3%. This is well above the European average per capita wine consumption of 23.9 litres.

#### Tips:

Due to an insignificant domestic production, the Belgian wine market is open to wine imports. Keep up to date on the latest trends and developments in this market to benefit from this.

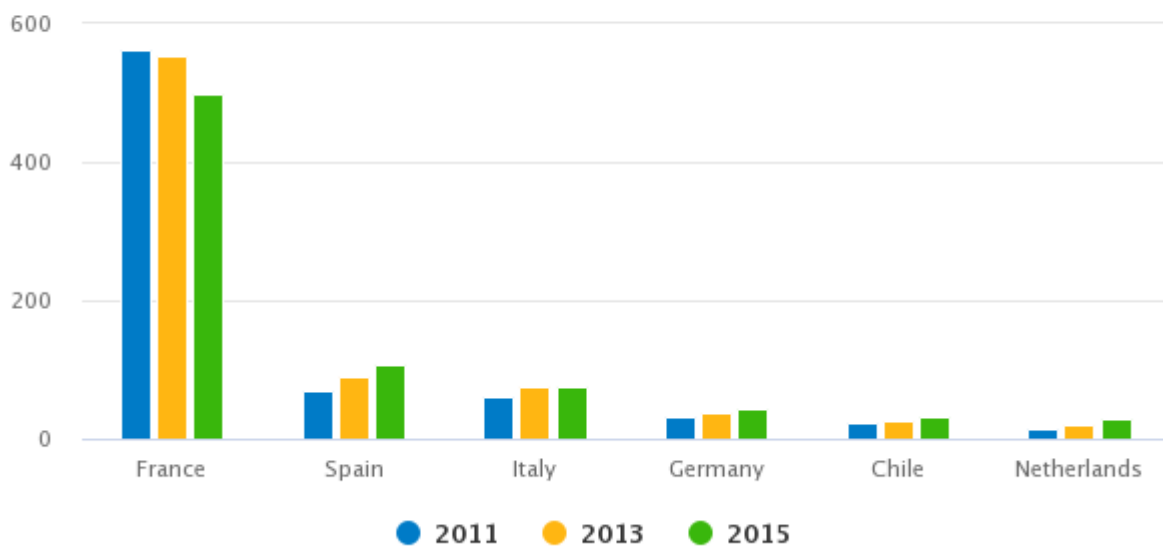
Please refer to our study on [European trade statistics](#) on wine for more information.

### Imports are dominated by French wines

Belgium is the fourth largest importer of wine in Europe with imports amounting to €855 million, showing an average annual increase of 0.7%. Since a significant domestic wine production is lacking in Belgium, wine consumption consists mainly of imported wines.

**Figure 1: Leading six suppliers to the Belgian wine market  
in € million**

2011–2015



Source: Eurostat, 2016

Source: Eurostat, 2016

Wine imports in Belgium are dominated by France, followed at a distant second and third by the other southern European countries. Despite decreasing imports from France over the past years, France is still by far the largest wine supplier to the Belgium wine market with imports amounting to €499 million in 2015 (56.4% of total imports). Imports from Spain and Italy accounted for 12.1% and 8.5% of total Belgian imports.

Wine imports from developing countries amounted to €64 million of total wine imports in Belgium in 2015 (7.3% of total imports), showing an average annual increase of 4.8% since 2011. Belgium is increasingly more open to new world wines. Chile is the largest developing country supplying the Belgian market, followed by South Africa and Argentina. They accounted for respectively 3.5%, 2.3% and 1.2% of total imports in 2015.

### Tips:

Wines from southern European countries have acquired a strong market position in the Belgian wine market. Competing with southern European countries is very difficult. However, there are opportunities for exporters of relatively expensive wines, which offer an interesting alternative to the many high-quality French wines on the market.

Develop a Unique Selling Point (USP) related to such matters as your (authentic or native) grape variety, sustainability or production process to market your wine in the relatively open Belgian wine market.

Sometimes it works to have a 'French look and feel' to your labels; it might make it easier to have your label accepted by a buyer. Use the examples of French wine labels in Figure 2 as a source of inspiration.

Figure 2: French wine labels

Chateau Saint-Cloud

Source: [Delcampe](#), 2016

Chateau Laroze Labatisse

Source: [Wine-searcher](#), 2016

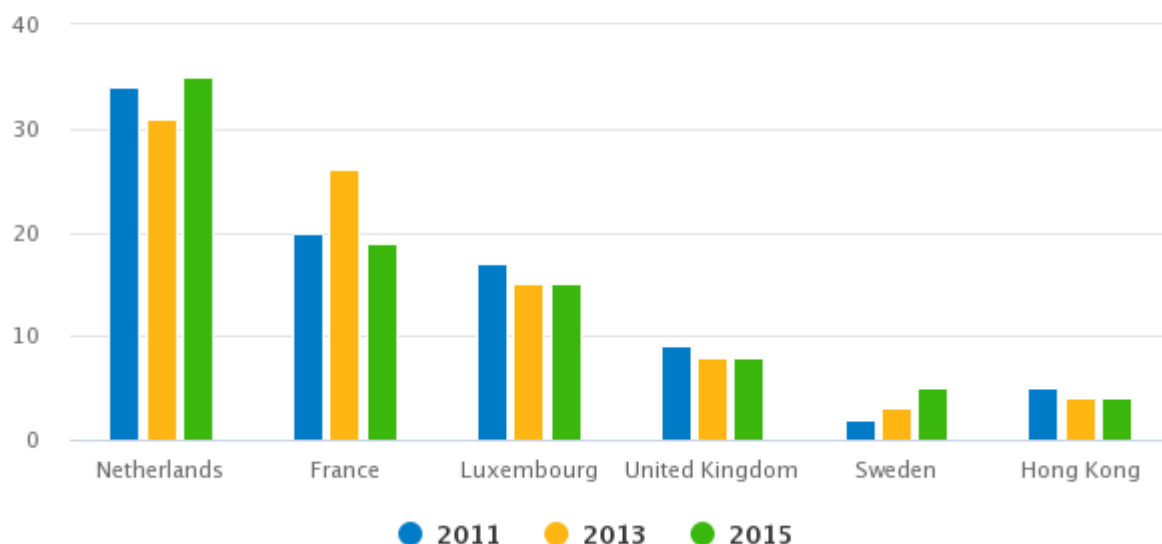
Chateau Lansade

Source: [Delcampe](#), 2016

## Wine exports are mainly re-exports

Belgium is a small wine exporter in Europe with exports amounting to €125 million in 2015, showing an average annual increase of 2.4% since 2011. As domestic wine production is very low and for the Belgian wine market only, exports consist mainly of re-exports. The largest export markets for Belgium are neighbouring European countries.

Figure 3: leading six export destinations for wine from Belgium in € million  
2011-2015



Source: Eurostat, 2016

Source: Eurostat, 2016

### Tips:

Consider the Belgium as a hub to market your wines in its neighbouring countries (the Netherlands and Luxembourg in particular) through re-exports.

Please refer to our study on [European trade statistics for wine](#) for more information about trade

statistics for wine in Europe.

### 3. Which trends offer opportunities on the Belgian wine market?

#### Brands and varieties matter

Belgium has a rather mature wine market consisting of well-educated consumers opting for good-quality wines. To this end, brand and grape variety are major purchasing criteria in Belgium. Belgian consumers attach more value to brands and grape varieties than consumers in several other European countries. In contrast, Belgian consumers attach less value to price and country of origin than consumers in other countries. High-quality private labels of the leading supermarkets (such as [Carrefour](#), [Delhaize](#) and [Colruyt](#)) perform particularly well.

#### Tips:

As a developing country supplier of wine willing to enter the Belgian market, you may develop a competitive advantage over other suppliers if you make use of popular well-known grape varieties to produce your wine. This is particularly profitable if you are able to deliver a popular variety at a competitive price.

If you have difficulties establishing a name of your own, consider supplying supermarkets to sell your wine under their private label.

#### Lighter wines

Belgian consumers increasingly opt for lighter and fresher wines with softer tannins which match better with lighter meals. This trend is caused by concerns about healthy diets.

#### Tip:

If you are a developing country supplier of a wine with soft tannins and a smooth taste, consider marketing your wine as a perfect match to several dishes. Include tips on the back label of your wine about the dishes which best suit the wine. This can be done using either text or simply with logos to depict different food types such as meat, fish, cheese or desserts.

#### Belgians like bubbles

Sparkling wine comprised about 14% of total wine consumption in Belgium in 2015 and has become more popular in recent years. Although per capita champagne consumption in Belgium is the highest in the world, cava and prosecco are becoming more attractive due to a favourable price/quality ratio. Competition from traditional wine suppliers remains strong, but the growing sparkling wine segment offers opportunities for developing country suppliers, especially in Flanders where the sparkling wine segment is growing fastest.

#### Tips:

If you can supply a sparkling wine at a competitive price/quality ratio, consider entering the Belgian

market.

Depending on the quality of your wine, position it as a wine for special occasions (premium wine) or for everyday consumption. If you aim for the everyday consumption market, keep your prices competitive with similar quality prosecco and cava wines.

## Innovative packaging

In Belgium, there is a need for new and exciting packaging to attract consumer attention. Therefore companies are offering wine in single-serve packages like cans or PET bottles and Bag-in-Box. Belgian wine consumers are very receptive to Bag-in-Box (BiB) wines. About one-third of all wine sales in Belgium is packaged as BiB. Consumer concerns about the environment have further stimulated the use of the BiB concept, as BiBs are easily recyclable. Additionally, lighter weight packaging reduces transport costs and CO2 emissions.

### Tips:

If you supply ready-to-drink low-cost wines, consider offering your wine in a BiB, since this is a highly accepted packaging type in Belgium for cheap wines with a short shelf life.

Decrease transport costs by using BiB. A container can contain more wine if the wine is packed in boxes instead of bottles. This lowers transport costs per litre.

For more information about packaging trends, please read our study on [trends on the European wine market](#).

## Sustainable wines

Belgians are increasingly becoming interested in sustainable wines. The growth of retail chain Bio-planet shows how much potential the organic market has. Bio-planet only offers organic products, including many wines. Between 2008 and 2013, Bio-planet grew from a chain of five stores to a chain of eleven. Most organic wine in Belgium is of French origin, but organic wines from other origins are also welcome.

Sustainable wine production is not limited to organic and biodynamic production. Sustainability can also refer to energy and water conservation, use of renewable resources and reduction of CO2 emissions during transport.

### Tips:

If conversion costs to organic production are low, consider organic production and obtain certification to improve your chances in this growing Belgian segment.

Ensure that the conversion to organic production does not lead to quality deterioration. Consumers do not accept organic wines of a lower quality than conventional wines at the same price point.

You can make sustainable wine by reducing energy use, water use and waste, or by enabling recycling of waste materials.

For more information about sustainability, please refer to our study on [sustainable wines in Europe](#).

## Belgians are open to New World wines

Wine imports in Belgium saw an increase in New World wines (4.1% annually) since 2011. At the same time, wine imports from France (most dominant supplier to the Belgian wine market), saw an average decrease of 2.9% annually since 2011. New World wines are gaining market share in Belgium, particularly in Flanders where almost 70% of the New World wines is consumed. In Wallonia, consumers mainly stick to French wines.

### Tips:

Focus on Flanders, since consumers from this region tend to be more willing to experiment with unknown wines. Also keep in mind the slight preference for white wine in Flanders compared to Wallonia.

If your country is a new supplier to the Belgian market, ensure the first wine you bring to this market is a statement wine of high quality in order to establish a good name.

## 4. With which requirements should wine comply to be allowed on the Belgian market?

You can only export your wine to Europe if you comply with [buyer requirements for wine](#).

### With which legal and non-legal requirements must my product comply?

[Buyer requirements for wine](#) can be divided into legal and non-legal requirements, both of which your product must comply with if you want to sell to Europe. These include the following points.

- Compliance with [European Oenological practices](#): To prove compliance with allowed oenological practices, all wine imported to Europe needs to be accompanied with a certificate and analysis report for wine.
- [Labelling and presentation](#): There are strict rules on which information should be shown on the label and how this information has to be visible.
- Food safety – traceability, hygiene and control: Read more about [health control](#) at the EU Export Helpdesk. Search the [European Union's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed \(RASFF\) database](#) for wine to see examples of withdrawals.
- Avoid ochratoxin A and lead contamination: Check the European Commission's [factsheet on food contaminants](#). Read more about [contaminants at the EU Export Helpdesk](#). Find out more about prevention and reduction of [ochratoxin A](#) and [lead contamination](#) in wine in the Codes of Practice published by the Codex Alimentarius.
- For a full list of requirements, consult the [EU Export Helpdesk](#) where you can select your specific product code under Chapter 2204. Note that there is also non-product-specific legislation on [packaging](#) and [liability](#) that applies to all goods marketed in Europe.

### Tips:

Check whether your current practices comply with the European requirements for winemaking.

Ensure compliance with European legislation on hygiene of foodstuffs ([HACCP](#): hazard analysis and critical control points).



## Which additional requirements do buyers often have?

Besides the legally binding requirements, you also have to comply with the following non-legal requirements in order to be able to find a buyer.

- **Food safety certification:** Many importers of wine require the implementation of a food-safety management system. Examples of internationally acknowledged systems are [HACCP](#), [BRC](#), [IFS](#), [FSSC 22000](#) and [SQF](#).
- **Corporate social responsibility:** Several larger retailers participate in initiatives such as the [Ethical Trading Initiative](#) (ETI), or the [Business Social Compliance Initiative](#) (BSCI). These initiatives focus on improving social conditions in their members' supply chains. This implies that you, as a supplier, are also required to act in compliance with their principles.
- Buyers generally prefer low sulphite levels (e.g. < 100 mg/l for white wine). However, sulphite is a preservative and lower sulphite levels may lead to off-tastes and reduced shelf life.

### Tip:

Suppliers can apply a basic [HACCP](#) system. However, many buyers appreciate certified food-safety management systems recognised by the Global Food Safety Initiative, such as ISO22000, BRC or [IFS: Food Safety Management Systems](#).

## What are the requirements for niche markets?

In addition to the requirements you have to comply with to be allowed on the European market or to find a buyer, complying with the following additional requirements could be a competitive advantage and make finding a buyer easier.

- **Fair-trade certification:** A niche market is the market for wine produced with extra focus on the social conditions in the producing areas. Having your wine [Fairtrade](#) certified is the most convincing way to prove your business performance for social conditions in your supply chain.
- **Organic niche market:** To market organic wine in the European Union, grapes must be grown using organic production methods which are laid down in [European legislation](#) and the grapes and the wine production facilities must be audited by an accredited certifier. Only then can you put the European organic logo on your products, as well as the logo of the standard holder (e.g. [Soil Association](#) in the United Kingdom).

### Tip:

Consult the [Standards Map database](#) for the different labels and standards relevant for wine.

## 5. What competition will I be facing on the European market for wine?

### What are the opportunities and barriers when trying to enter the Belgian market?

#### Sparkling and rosé wine market most accessible

Sparkling and rosé wines are often not sorted by country in supermarkets. This presents opportunities for developing country exporters as consumers pay less attention to origin and tend to opt more often for New World wines.

Still red and white wines are sorted by country and consumers usually choose wines from traditional wine countries, which are known for their wines, instead of from New World wine countries. This is particularly the case in Wallonia, where consumers still have a rather traditional taste.

**Tip:**

If you can supply rosé or sparkling wine, you can benefit from the fact that these wines are not sorted by country on shop shelves.

**High listing fees**

Supermarkets often have many wine suppliers to choose from and they can charge high fees for the use of shelf space. Additionally, supermarkets often demand the exclusive right to sell a wine brand in their country. Suppliers may not sell that wine brand to another retailer.

**Tip:**

If you are a new entrant, do not supply supermarkets or retailers directly, but supply wine to importers. Importers can generally decrease the risks of trading directly with supermarkets.

**Country of origin matters**

Belgian consumers particularly pay attention to the country of origin. Some countries, such as France, are often associated with high-quality wines, while others, such as South Africa, are often perceived as suppliers of inferior-quality wines. Consumers have a tendency to avoid wines from countries which they do not know at all, such as Georgia. This complicates the market entry of suppliers from those countries. In 2015, only 10% of total Belgian wine imports came from New World countries.

**Tips:**

Improve demand for your wine by increasing recognition amongst consumers. Invite a Belgian wine writer to promotion events or even to your country. This can lead to media coverage and result in higher demand.

Small companies with a supply capacity of 10–30 thousand bottles annually of each wine can find smaller importers in Belgium, who prefer to buy exclusive wines for which they are the only importer and distributor. Exclusivity motivates importers to work with you.

Adapt the look and feel of your label to a classic French look to draw the attention of wine buyers in Belgium.

**Supermarkets prefer existing suppliers**

Belgian supermarkets generally prefer to expand trade relationships with their current suppliers instead of establishing trade relationships with new, unknown suppliers. Expansion of trade with an existing supplier

requires less investment and fortifies the existing trade relationship. Setting up a new trade relationship with a new supplier involves certain risks for buyers concerning the quality of the wine, the continuity of supply and the credibility of the supplier.

### **Tip:**

To create lower risks for supermarkets in establishing a new trade relationship, always remember to: quickly respond to e-mails; answer all questions and only make promises which you can live up to; provide certification of quality management to show that you can supply consistent quality; make sure you have technical documentation available.

## **What are substitute products?**

### **Excise duties**

The current excise duties of €74.91 per hectolitre on still wine and €256.32 per hectolitre on sparkling wine are relatively low compared to other European countries. If alcohol content is lower than 8.5% excise duties on still and sparkling wine is €23.91 per hectolitre. There are additional packaging taxes. For reusable packaging this is €1.41 per hectolitre and for non-reusable packaging of €9.86 per hectolitre.

Although excise duties have increased in recent years, consumers will continue to drink wine. However, it is expected that consumers will search for more value for money. This may lead to increased competition on the Belgian wine market. While the major portion of the excise duty will be passed on to consumers through higher retail prices, profit margins for suppliers are also expected to become tighter.

### **Tips:**

Benefit from the low taxes on reusable packaging by using reusable packaging (for example Bag-in-Box).

If you offer a decent wine at a competitive price, focus your marketing strategy on the price/quality ratio of your wine in order to persuade consumers to buy your product. For example, if you supply a wine made of a grape variety that is often more expensive, make sure to highlight the fact that your wine is made from this particular grape variety.

## **How much power do I have as a supplier when negotiating with buyers?**

### **French competitors due to cross border shopping**

Particularly in Wallonia, the southern part of Belgium, suppliers in developing countries will face strong competition from French wine suppliers. The French hypermarkets, mainly offering French wines, actively market their products in southern Belgium. The prices of the France retailers are also low due to lower taxes for wine in France compared to Belgium.

France neighbours Belgium and the two countries show many similarities in terms of wine consumption patterns. Moreover, it is relatively easy and cheap for Belgian importers to import wine from France.

## Private labels are increasing rivalry

In the off-trade channel, the majority of the wines are sold via a supermarket bottling system under their own private labels.

## Need for scale or a Unique Selling Point (USP)

The bulk of the market comprises good quality wines from large-scale suppliers. Only such large-scale suppliers can compete on price, which is a main purchasing criterion for most consumers. In the much smaller market for premium wines, suppliers need to produce not only exceptional quality, but also a strong USP. This USP can be related such matters as origin or even geographical indication, stories about production (e.g. high altitude), wine show medals, sustainability or packaging.

### Tips:

Expand your regional market until your production capacity, quality and market experience allows you to export successfully to Europe.

As an individual exporter, there are not many things you can do to increase your competitiveness other than improving quality and price. Another possibility would be storytelling or promotion via expert reviews. However, if your country is not yet an established wine supplier to Belgium, industry experts recommend introducing a premium wine first. This will lead to a more positive perception by consumers of your country as a supplier of wine.

If you are a supplier of a quality sparkling wine and are able to deliver it at a competitive price, consider supplying your wine to Belgium. Consumers in this market are looking for sparkling wine, comparable to cava, at a relatively low price.

## Who are my rivals?

### Competition from other countries

France is by far the largest wine supplier to the Belgian wine market and is known for its high quality. Spain and Italy are strong competitor based on price, not only for still wines, but also for sparkling wines (prosecco and cava).

Developing countries supplying the Belgian wine market (Chile, South Africa and Argentina) do so mainly in the high-volume segment. They are able to export low-cost bulk wine to Belgium. Developing country exporters who are not able to cater the high volume market, should emphasise their Unique Selling Point. Currently, Chinese and Indian wine is still too expensive (given its quality) for consumers in Belgium. This is likely to change in the medium to long term.

### Tips:

Wines from southern European countries have acquired a strong market position in the Belgian wine market. Competing with southern European countries is very difficult. However, there are opportunities for exporters of relatively expensive wines, which offer an interesting alternative to the many high-quality French wines on the market.

To compete with other developing countries, either emphasize your Unique Selling Point or aim to supply bulk at low costs for the private label market.

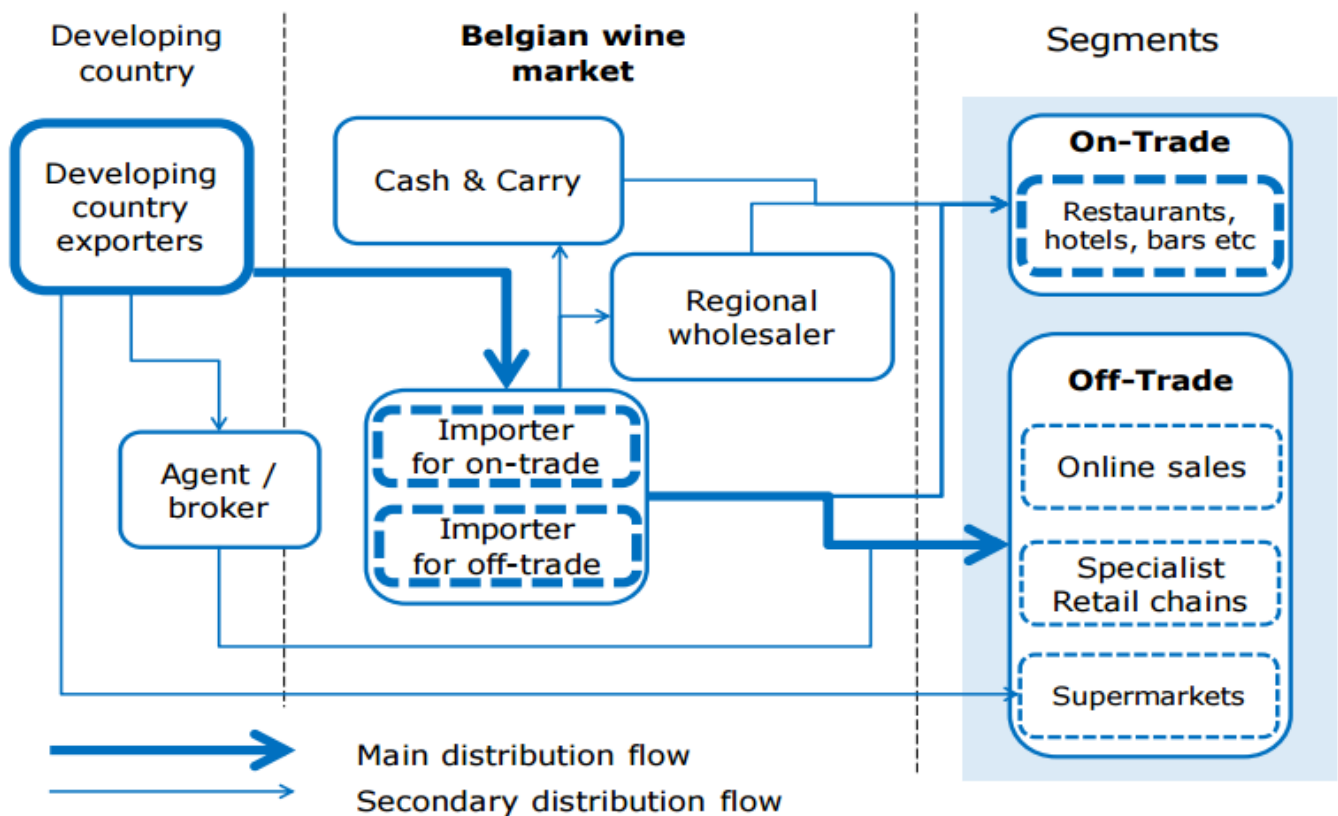
Keep a close eye on your Chinese and Indian competition through newsletters, trade fairs and [attaché](#)

## 6. Which channels can you use to put wine on the Belgian market?

### Trade channels

The trade channels for wine in Belgium are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Trade channels for wine in Belgium



### Consumers buy almost all their wine from major retailers

In Belgium, 76% of all wine was sold in the off-trade channel in 2015. In the off-trade channel, supermarkets accounted for about 70% of the wine sales. This places supermarkets in Belgium in a very strong position during price negotiations. Major retailers such as [Carrefour](#), [Delhaize](#) and [Colruyt](#) strongly focus on lowering prices for consumers of both entry level and premium wines. Although most of their wine assortment comprises entry level wines, supermarkets also offer premium wines at very sharp prices.

Small retailers are unable to offer the same low prices as supermarkets and discounters. These small retailers purchase many of their premium wines from small importers, which often promote their wines at wine tasting events for special occasions. They target a relatively small group of consumers that is more interested in more exclusive, less industrial wines from small-scale vineyards. They want to know more about the wines they buy.

### Tips:

Only target Belgian supermarkets if you are able and willing to become a long-term supplier. You are ready when you can: supply full containers on a weekly basis; plan your production and meet logistical

requirements for programmed short-term delivery; hire a product developer who knows the quality characteristics desired by the targeted supermarket; negotiate long-term contracts in which risks and profit are split equally.

If you do not target supermarkets, but rather supply specialist retailers, focus on small importers who can provide marketing support.

## Online sales

Belgian online wine sales is estimated to be around 3% of the market. In general, retailers with physical stores lead the development of online sales. Major retail chains such as [Delhaize](#) and [Colruyt](#) sell approximately 4% of their wines online. Many small Belgian premium wine importers without physical stores offer their wines through an online shop too. Premium wines sell well online as consumers are willing to pay more for a more exclusive wine which they cannot buy at the supermarket.

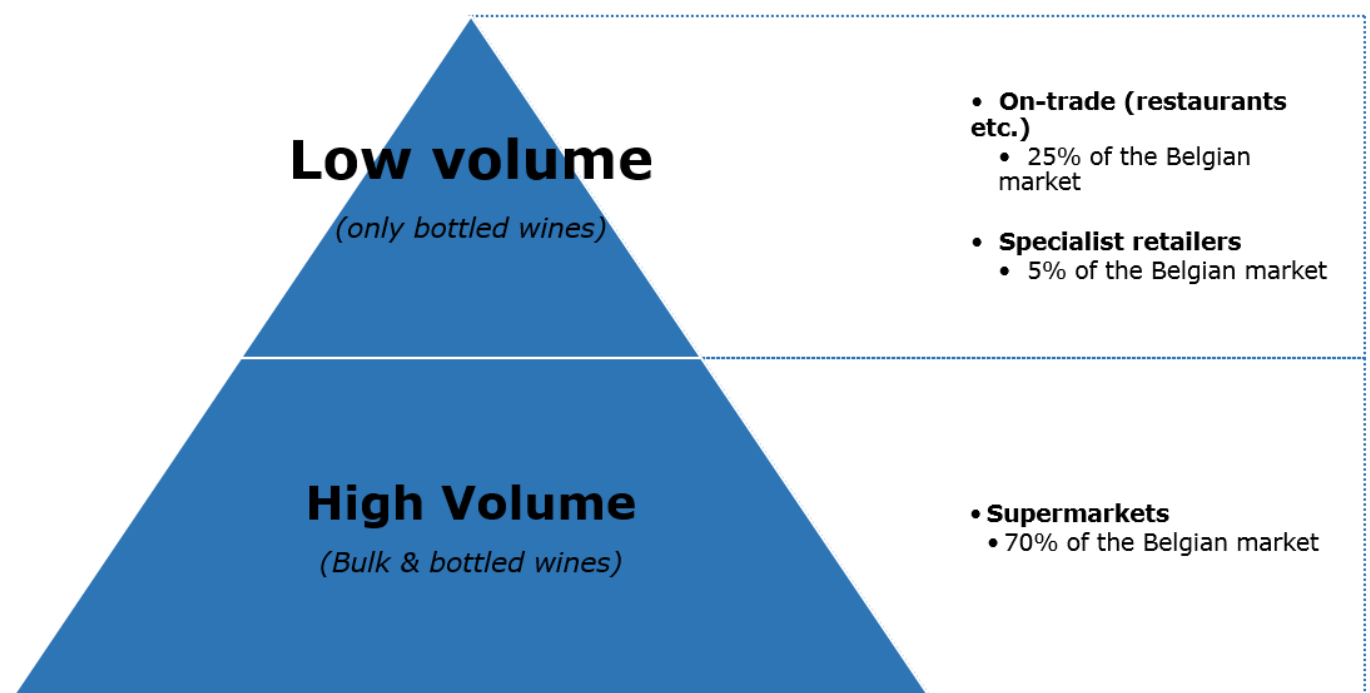
### Tip:

For more information about online wine sales, please read our study on [online wine sales in Europe](#).

## Segmentation of the wine market

The segmentation of the Belgian wine market is presented in Figure 4. In general, there is a clear segmentation in Belgium between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia. Wallonia is more focused on the French wine market, while consumers in Flanders are more open to other wine countries.

Figure 5: Market segments for wine in Belgium, including an indication of share in sales per segment



## Premium versus entry level

Premium wines (costing over €7) account for about 5% of total Belgian wine sales. Consumers are only prepared to pay a small price premium for better-quality wines. Most Belgian consumers will only pay more if they need a wine for a special occasion. Only a small group of consumers invests time in searching for a specific wine which matches their particular requirements. They are also willing to spend more money. Expensive premium wines (up to €15) sell relatively well at specialist retailers, compared to the neighbouring Dutch market.

### Tips:

If your production costs are high and you require a high price for your wine (over €7), the quality of your wine must be exceptional and this must be confirmed by awards or influential wine writers.

Develop a Unique Selling Point (USP) and a passionate story, such as the great taste of your wine as a result of the unique combination of grape variety, climate conditions and winemaking skills of your company. This is particularly important if you target the premium market.

## Increase in bulk wine trade

In the last decade, bulk wine imports have grown significantly in Belgium. Large importers and retail chains with their own brands lead developments in this trade. The import of bulk wine gives them control over the blending and bottling process. It enables them to change wine blends if their product needs a quality or price improvement. The import of bulk wine, as opposed to bottled wine, also enables them to build their own brand. This branding can fortify their position in the market.

### Tips:

Prove that you are a reliable exporter. Make sure you can supply the required volumes at the agreed price and at the right time. Plan your production to meet the buyer's requirements for regular programmed bottling.

Focus on long-term agreements with importers as opposed to targeting supermarkets directly. Importers are generally more able to lower the risks of trading with supermarkets directly.

Visit the [World Bulk Wine Exhibition](#) to learn more about the possibilities.

## Growing market for organic wine

The market share of organic wine is estimated to be about 3% of total wine sales. However, there is an increasing interest in organic wines among Belgium wine consumers. As wine consumption in Belgium is considerable, the organic wine market is expected to offer opportunities in the future.

### Tips:

If conversion costs to organic production are low, consider organic production and certification to improve your competitiveness.

Ensure that the conversion to organic production does not lead to quality deterioration. Consumers do not accept organic wines of a lower quality than conventional wines at the same price point.

## Product appreciation in the Belgian wine market

Table 2 provides some insight into which product options are appreciated in the Belgian wine market. High volume and low volume refers to matching target segments to your export capacity. For more detailed information on specific segments, please read our studies on [sustainable wine](#) and [bulk wine](#) in Europe.

Table 2: Appreciation for product options in the Belgian wine market

	<i>Organic</i>		QMS	CSR	Screw cap	Bag-in-box	Bulk wine	Online sales
<i>High-volume segment</i>	+		+	+	++	+	+++	+
<i>Low-volume segment</i>	++		+	+	+	--	-	+++

## 7. What are the end-market prices in the Belgium wine market?

Average Belgian consumer price indications for wine are presented for on-trade and off-trade in Table 3. The large price difference between the segments is mostly due to the price calculation in the on-trade channel which also has to cover exploitation costs of the hospitality facility.

Table 3: Average consumer prices per trade channel

Trade channel	Price indication per bottle
<i>Off-trade</i>	
Supermarkets	€3.50
Specialist retailers	€7.00
<i>On-trade</i>	€20.00

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#)