

14 November, 2011

Winemakers welcome Russia to the WTO

Australian winemakers today welcomed Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation.

Winemakers' Federation of Australia chief executive Stephen Strachan said the move would lead to lower import duty on Australian wines and greater certainty for exporters.

"Russia has the potential to be a major growth market for Australian wine and this should provide a real boost," he said. "We have made the Minister for Trade, Dr Emerson, aware of our support throughout the negotiations."

Russia is already one of the world's largest importers of food and solid economic growth and a stable political environment have led to a boom in consumer spending.

"Wine culture is developing and wine consumption is growing," Mr Strachan said.

"Two thirds of the population identify themselves as wine drinkers, with consumption estimated to be up to 8.9 litres per capita.

"European wines currently account for around 90% of sales but things are changing and Australian wine is well represented in the major supermarket chains in major cities.

"There is also a growing demand for premium wines in the up-market food and wine specialist stores and in the food service sector."

Tariffs on wine will be bound at 12.5% within four years of Russia's accession – below current applied rates of 20%.

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