

Subject:

FW: [EXTERNAL] Large Civil Aircraft Dispute: Comment

Dear Amb. Lighthizer:

Last January, I was selected among several colleagues to testify in regards to the potential increase on French sparkling wine tariffs in relation to the DST. We were pleased that the USTR committee listened to our voices and postpone any actions.

We understand that the W.T.O. allowed the U.S. to raise taxes regarding a dispute over subsidies given to Airbus by European countries. Our wine industry, the consumers should not be involved and impacted.

The 25% increase of tariffs had tremendously put a burden on our wine boutique import company Avant-Garde to grow. Last October, our goal was to add more staff so we can increase our presence in several states around America. The effect of these tariffs was counter-productive as I did not have the necessary cash-flow. Instead, it was used to pay additional taxes.

Moreover, these tariffs have slow down our sales. We are focused on providing restaurants and retailers with small and medium size European wineries from specific areas that are not replaceable. Adding an extra 25% to pay at customs resulted in a decline of our sales as we had to increase our prices which was passed on to the US consumer.

The idea that one passionate consumer of say French wine from Burgundy can replace it with a domestic wine is not true. Wine is subjective, such as music, food, sport. You can't force consumer to go in one direction, plus they should have a choice and not pay extra.

Last, I would strongly remind you that this tax is only hurting our American industry at large. We are the only one to suffer from these tariffs not the Europeans; the AMERICAN companies (importers, wholesalers, retailers, restaurants, trucking companies....) and therefor AMERICAN JOBS are the one impacted. The wine industry in the US since last October has been going through a lot. We will get through the most important crisis of our life time, and I implore specially in this time to put an end to these tariffs. It will help all my colleagues in the wine industry and the restaurants across America who are so in need to reduce their costs in order to re-open and survive.

Thank you again for letting us at Avant-Garde Wine & Spirits post our comments,

Sincerely,

Geoffroy Ducroux



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