# Wilmington breweries face uncertainty with new steel and aluminium tariffs



The recent decision by the Trump Administration to impose a 25% tariff on all steel and aluminum imports has sparked significant concern within the brewing industry, particularly in Wilmington, North Carolina. This policy, announced last week, is poised to affect numerous businesses that rely on these metals for manufacturing and storage, including local breweries that are integral to the community’s economy and culture.

Wrightsville Beach Brewery is one such establishment that could see considerable implications from this tariff. In discussions with WECT, Jud Watkins, the owner of the brewery, remarked on the potential ripple effects the tariff might have on breweries of varying sizes. He stated, “There will be some price increases for breweries smaller than us, breweries our size, breweries bigger than us. We don’t know how much yet.” This uncertainty looms large as businesses grapple with fluctuating costs that could impact both their operations and pricing strategies.

The brewery typically utilises stainless steel containers for fermentation processes, eventually transferring the beer into aluminium cans. In a fortunate twist, Watkins noted that they are currently not in the middle of a large order for new tanks, which may provide some breathing room for the business. However, he expressed concern about future costs, especially with regards to their canned products, indicating that they might experience price hikes as the tariff takes full effect on March 12, 2025.

In response to the anticipated increase in costs, Wrightsville Beach Brewery is proactively adapting its canning process. Watkins disclosed their transition to a new can design that employs digital printing technology, allowing for a more cost-effective and environmentally friendly approach. “The new technology we are moving to is digital printing which is a really neat new technology which will hopefully save us some money,” he said. This shift not only promises to reduce expenses but will also enhance their product’s aesthetic by eliminating traditional shrink-wrap labels, potentially making their offerings more appealing to consumers.

As the deadline for the tariff approaches, Watkins is making strategic preparations to mitigate potential financial impacts. He mentioned plans to purchase cans in larger quantities than usual to stabilise their current pricing, expressing a proactive stance: “We might buy more cans than we normally do for this time of year. Just to protect ourselves and try to secure our current can pricing because we don’t know what the pricing will be next month.”

The brewing industry stands at a crossroads as it faces this impending trade policy, highlighting broader trends of vulnerability among producers relying on imported materials. As many local breweries monitor developments, the situation underscores the importance of adapting to external market conditions—a necessity for ensuring sustainability and growth in an increasingly unpredictable economic environment.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2025/02/trump-administration-issues-section-232-tariffs-on-steel-and-aluminum> - This URL supports the claim that the Trump Administration has imposed a 25% tariff on all steel and aluminum imports, effective March 12, 2025, revoking previous country-specific exemptions.
* <https://www.skadden.com/insights/publications/2025/02/the-return-of-steel-and-aluminum-tariffs> - This URL corroborates the information about the reinstatement of steel and aluminum tariffs, highlighting the termination of past exemptions and potential for retaliatory measures from trading partners.
* <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-alert/president-trump-expands-steel-and-aluminum-tariffs-all-countries-effective-march-12> - This URL provides details on the expansion of steel and aluminum tariffs to all countries, including the increase in aluminum tariffs from 10% to 25%, and the termination of existing exemptions.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is the source of the original article discussing the impact of the tariffs on the brewing industry, particularly in Wilmington, North Carolina.
* <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/rulesofcourt.pdf> - This URL does not directly relate to the article's content but provides general legal context, which is not applicable in this scenario.