

Media release

US tariffs on Swiss exports: scienceindustries warns of impact on trade and security of supply

Zurich, 03.04.2025. The import tariffs on Swiss products announced by the US government on 2 April 2025 also affect the chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries. As far as we know at present, pharmaceutical products will not be subject to the general tariff of 10% and will not be included in the higher reciprocal tariff of 31%. However, other segments such as chemicals and diagnostics are directly affected by the new measures. scienceindustries warns of possible impacts on international supply chains, trade flows and access to essential medical products.

"Even if pharmaceutical products are apparently not directly affected by the new US tariffs as things stand, the measures as a whole are creating considerable uncertainty," says Dr Stephan Mumenthaler, director of scienceindustries. "Significant tariff increases on life sciences and chemical products put the internationally intertwined value and supply chains under pressure. Protectionist tendencies endanger not only free trade, but also the availability of essential medical products, the security of supply and the innovative strength of a highly networked global sector."

The chemical-pharmaceutical industry is Switzerland's most important export industry, with an annual export volume of around CHF 100 billion – accounting for almost half of all goods exports. Exports to the USA in 2024 amounted to around CHF 35 billion, and to the European Union to around CHF 80 billion. The sector is therefore central to Switzerland's foreign trade position, particularly with regard to its two most important trading partners.

In 2024, 94.2% of industry-specific exports to the US were pharmaceutical products, vitamins and diagnostics. Organic raw and basic materials and pesticides each accounted for 1.9%. Around 94% of these exports have been duty-free to date. With a 64.7% share of total exports to the US and a 42.9% share of imports, the sector is the backbone of bilateral trade in goods.

Swiss companies also have a strong presence in the US: they invest in research, clinical development, production and logistics, creating local value and skilled jobs. For its part, Switzerland offers US companies open access to a highly innovative market.

scienceindustries recognises the economic and political sovereignty of the USA, but warns of the long-term risks for research, innovation and security of supply if international cooperation is weakened by administrative or tariff barriers.

In view of current developments, the negotiations on the Bilateral Agreements III are becoming even more important. Further free trade agreements must also be vigorously pursued – scienceindustries welcomes the fact that SECO is actively supporting this. The current environment offers a favourable momentum for securing long-term access to important markets.

Further information:

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About scienceindustries:

scienceindustries, the Swiss business association for the chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries, is committed to creating internationally outstanding framework conditions for its approximately 250 member companies. Around 80,000 people are employed in the chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industry in Switzerland. As Switzerland's largest export industry, it makes a significant contribution to Swiss prosperity.