

Surging franc alarms Swiss exporters as sales are hit

Financial Times Europe

16 févr. 2026

MERCEDES RUEHL — ZURICH IAN SMITH — LONDON

The franc has risen 3 per cent this year, on top of a 14 per cent gain last year, taking it to 0.77SFr to the dollar for the first time since its shock 2015 appreciation.

The surge in the haven currency — driven by volatile geopolitics and a slide in the dollar — is increasing the pressure on an economy where exports of goods and services add up to more than 70 per cent of GDP.

Pharma company Roche and watch maker Swatch Group reported hits to 2025 sales of about 5 per cent from the franc's appreciation while Cartier owner Richemont has also flagged currency "headwinds".

Trade associations said the pain had been particularly acute for small and medium-sized companies that generate revenues abroad while incurring most of their costs at home.

"The Swiss franc's appreciation against both the euro and the US dollar is increasingly undermining the competitiveness of Switzerland's machinery, electrical engineering and metals industry," said Nicola R. Tettamanti, president of Swissmechanic, which represents mechanical and electrical engineering SMEs. While productivity gains can offset currency moves in the short term, he warned that "this challenge cannot be offset indefinitely".

If current exchange rate conditions persisted, they risked delaying investment decisions and, over time, weakening the nation's industrial base, he said.

Similar concerns are emerging in the chemicals and pharmaceuticals sector, one of Switzerland's most important export engines.

Roche, which generates most of its revenues overseas, said it now expected a 4 percentage point hit this year.

Swiss exporters have faced a double blow of tariffs and currency strength over the past year.

Switzerland and the US agreed in principle last year to cap additional tariffs on Swiss exports at 15 per cent, down from a rate of 39 per cent, but the deal was set out in a framework understanding rather than a fully binding treaty.

Officials on both sides are still negotiating the legal text, implementation and other details to turn that political agreement into a final, enforceable arrangement.

The currency hit has restrained Swiss stock prices, investors said, with the benchmark Swiss Market Index's 2 per cent rise this year trailing the 4 per cent increase for the pan-regional Stoxx Europe 600 index and 5 per cent jump for London's FTSE 100 index.

UBS estimated that, for every 1 per cent gain in the franc across currency pairs, listed Swiss companies suffer a profit hit of an average of 0.9 per cent.