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Switzerland–USA: How to Shine Despite 39% Tariffs?

Swiss exports to the United States are currently facing tariffs of up to 39%. In a context of heightened global competition—and assuming this situation endures, which is far from certain—this trade barrier might seem insurmountable. Yet, several levers exist to preserve, or even enhance, Switzerland's competitiveness and maintain its status as a top-tier investment destination.

1. Move upmarket and focus on value-added

Switzerland's DNA is built on precision, innovation, and high-end quality. A product that is strongly differentiated by its technology, design, or exclusivity can absorb part of the tariff into its final price, as it targets demand that is relatively price insensitive. This is already the case for segments like luxury watchmaking and medical equipment.

2. Optimize logistics and production chains

Partial setups in the U.S.—through subsidiaries, assembly sites, or industrial partnerships—can reduce the share of a product exposed to tariffs. This strategy, already employed by some Swiss companies, may also include local subcontracting agreements to partially bypass the barrier.

3. Strengthen trade agreements

Although Switzerland does not have a full free trade agreement with the U.S., diplomatic and economic channels can be activated to negotiate preferential terms for specific sectors, such as agriculture or pharmaceuticals. Industry associations and chambers of commerce have a key lobbying role to play here.

4. Diversify markets

Reducing reliance on the U.S. market by expanding into high-growth regions—such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America—can help absorb the impact of trade barriers. This requires a proactive and targeted commercial expansion strategy.

Consequences: between risk and opportunity

In the short term, margins may be squeezed, especially for products facing intense competition and limited differentiation. However, this environment can also serve as a catalyst to accelerate upmarket shifts, innovation, and diversification. Swiss economic history shows that external constraints have often driven creativity and reinforced resilience. The strength of the Swiss franc—long viewed as a handicap to exports—is a prime example.

Looking beyond this specific context with the U.S., Swiss companies remain among the best positioned globally to turn constraints into growth opportunities. Their capacity to innovate, maintain unmatched quality standards, and leverage a solid, agile economic fabric makes them long-term partners of choice. Continuing to invest in these players means betting on a rare combination of resilience, know-how, and international openness—assets that will not only help them overcome trade hurdles but also strengthen their position in tomorrow's global economy.

We have consistently overweighted Swiss equities in our allocation and maintain this conviction bias in the current environment.

Laurent Selvi, CEO, Selvi & Cie SA.