

WAYS TO INCREASE NATIONAL EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN TRADE (ON THE EXAMPLE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS)

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Annotation. This thesis examines the strategies to enhance Uzbekistan's national export competitiveness, particularly focusing on agricultural products, within the context of its foreign trade. The paper outlines the significance of agriculture as a key driver of Uzbekistan's economy, given its vast natural resources and fertile lands. However, it highlights that the sector faces numerous challenges, including outdated infrastructure, limited product diversification, and inconsistent quality standards.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, agricultural exports, foreign trade, export competitiveness, trade policy, market access, product diversification, infrastructure development, quality standards, export financing, agricultural modernization, economic growth.

Uzbekistan, a landlocked country in Central Asia, has increasingly recognized the importance of boosting its foreign trade to sustain long-term economic growth. Agricultural products, in particular, have significant potential to drive export competitiveness, as the country possesses vast fertile lands and a diverse range of agricultural resources. However, to fully realize this potential, it is imperative for Uzbekistan to focus on improving the competitiveness of its agricultural exports. This thesis explores several key strategies that can be employed to enhance Uzbekistan's national export competitiveness in the context of foreign trade, particularly in agricultural products.

Modernizing Agricultural Infrastructure and Technology

A critical component in increasing the competitiveness of Uzbekistan's agricultural exports is modernizing its agricultural infrastructure. The country's agricultural sector has largely been dominated by traditional farming techniques and outdated equipment. These methods often lead to low productivity, poor-quality produce, and inefficient use of resources. To enhance productivity, the government and private sector must invest in modern agricultural technologies, including precision farming, automation, and drip irrigation systems. Additionally, the development of efficient storage and transportation systems will reduce post-harvest losses and ensure that agricultural products maintain high quality during transit to foreign markets.

Diversification of Export Products

Uzbekistan's agricultural exports have traditionally been concentrated on a limited range of products, such as cotton, fruits (especially grapes, melons, and apricots), and vegetables. While these products have significant demand in international markets, relying heavily on a narrow export base makes Uzbekistan vulnerable to fluctuations in global demand and market conditions. Diversifying its agricultural export portfolio is therefore essential to improving competitiveness. The government should encourage the production and export of value-added products such as dried fruits, processed food items, and organic agricultural products, which have higher profit margins and appeal to a broader range of international buyers.

Strengthening Trade Relations and Market Access

To increase export competitiveness, Uzbekistan must focus on strengthening its trade relations with key international markets. The country's geographical location provides it with access to both Central Asian and global markets. However, Uzbekistan faces challenges related to trade barriers, tariffs, and a lack of direct access to major shipping ports. To overcome these challenges, the government should negotiate favorable trade agreements with strategic partners and actively participate in regional trade organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Expanding Uzbekistan's trade network will increase market access and create new export opportunities for agricultural products.

Improving Product Quality and Standardization

In the global market, product quality and adherence to international standards are crucial factors in determining export success. Uzbek agricultural products often face issues related to quality inconsistency and lack of compliance with international standards, such as those set by the European Union and other developed countries. To address these challenges, Uzbekistan needs to invest in quality control systems and certification programs, ensuring that agricultural products meet global food safety and quality standards. Additionally, local producers should be educated on the importance of maintaining consistent product quality to enhance the country's reputation as a reliable exporter.

Enhancing Export Financing and Support Services

Another barrier to boosting Uzbekistan's agricultural exports is the limited access to export financing and inadequate support services for local producers. Many small and medium-sized agricultural businesses lack the financial resources to invest in improving production or expanding into new markets. The government should consider providing export subsidies, low-interest loans, and other financial instruments to support the expansion of agricultural exports. Moreover, the establishment of export promotion agencies that offer market research, trade information, and logistical support can further incentivize businesses to explore international markets.

Promoting Agricultural Education and Training

Finally, to build long-term competitiveness, there must be a focus on developing human capital within the agricultural sector. This includes providing training for farmers and agricultural workers on best practices, sustainable farming techniques, and modern agribusiness strategies. Universities and vocational schools can play a pivotal role in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture. By investing in education and skills development, Uzbekistan can ensure a steady supply of skilled labor capable of driving the country's agricultural export sector forward.

Increasing Uzbekistan's national export competitiveness, particularly in agricultural products, requires a multifaceted approach that addresses infrastructure, diversification, trade relations, quality standards, financing, and human capital development. The implementation of these strategies will not only enhance the country's position in the global agricultural market but will also contribute to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, and overall national prosperity. By taking proactive steps to modernize the agricultural sector and improve its competitiveness, Uzbekistan can leverage its natural resources to become a major player in the global agricultural export market.

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