

DISSERTATION REVIEW

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Thesis title: The Export Potential of Uzbekistan in the International Market of Agricultural and Foodstuff Products

Outline of the review:

1. Topicality of the dissertation theme and relevance of the formulated aim
 2. Achievement of the stated objective and the level of analysis of the current state of the problem
 3. The way the methods were applied and the accuracy of the results obtained
 4. Applicability of the results for practice
 5. Demonstration of knowledge and fulfilment of the formal requirements
 6. Final evaluation
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1. Topicality of the dissertation theme and relevance of the formulated aim

This thesis examines Uzbek foreign trade in agricultural products from the perspective of comparative advantages, the effect of economic performance and transportation, the impacts of the institutional regulatory environment, international competitiveness, and the trade balance of the country. The author primarily focuses on the identification of changes in agricultural trade character between Uzbekistan and partner countries.

I consider this topic highly actual as it is well known that in recent years and since the election of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan embarked on the path of rapid economic and social reform, aimed at boosting growth and transforming the country into a true, modern market economy. Agriculture represents an important sector of Uzbekistan's economy, accounting for approximately 25% of the GDP and employing about 26% of the labour force. Exports of agricultural products have been contributing approximately 8% to Uzbekistan's external earnings, and Russia and China have become the major export destinations.

The author formulated the objectives as follows: 1) To discuss the role of agricultural and especially agricultural trade (both exports and imports) in economic development and its significance for Uzbekistan; 2) To identify the views of the average agricultural exporter on the impediments to agricultural export development in Uzbekistan and how these can be resolved; 3) To determine factors affecting country's agricultural trade; and 4) To identify the most important countries (trade partners) representing the pillar of Uzbek agrarian exports activities. He divided the main factors influencing a country's trade competitiveness into two groups: A) Theoretical - 1. The role of international trade in globalization processes, 2. Factors affecting the international trade; 3. Gains from international trade; 4. Restrictions for international trade; 5. The role of trade agreements; and 6. The specifics of international trade in agricultural and foodstuff products in Uzbekistan. B) Practical - 1. The comparative advantages of agrarian international trade in Uzbekistan; 2. The impact of state regulations on international trade in Uzbekistan from the perspective of firm owners and managers; and 3. The factors affecting international trade of



Uzbekistan from the macroeconomic perspective such as geographical distance and GDPs of the trading countries. I consider the goals to be set logically, clearly and proportionately. In this form, they enabled the processing of relevant data through known economic models and statistical-mathematical methods.

The time frame of data used in the dissertation covers the period 2000 – 2018. I recommend that during the defence the applicant shall answer the following actual **question No. 1:**

In June 2021 Uzbekistan and Russia signed an agreement and in November 2021 launched Agroexpress logistical corridor project, which allowed the delivery of agro-food products in refrigerator container trains within 4-7 days. In February 2022, the prime ministers of EAEU countries approved the implementation of the Eurasian AgroExpress project to facilitate trade with and expedite the delivery of agro-food products to Uzbekistan and China. Characterize the possible changes these initiatives might bring into the current Uzbekistan's agricultural trade character.

2. Achievement of the stated objective and the level of analysis of the current state of the problem

I can declare that the goals set out in the doctoral dissertation have been fulfilled. Based on extensive data analysis, the author concludes that the agrarian trade of Uzbekistan is constantly increasing its value and changing both commodity and territorial structure. The analysis showed, however, that the trade balance is still negative due to the very low added value of Uzbek exports, and constantly decreasing food self-sufficiency. Uzbek agricultural trade is extremely vulnerable and dependent on a limited number of partners, primarily from CIS and East-Asian countries. This might lead to significant exclusion from the global trade. The commodity structure has diversified, but competitiveness towards European countries, and North and Latin America is still low. The governmental regulations, such as various certifications, environmental regulations, health and occupational regulations, etc. are still too large and de facto hinder Uzbek companies from their international expansion. All conclusions are based on an objective processing of input data that was collected from verified printed and electronic sources. Their narrative ability is high, the outcomes are relevant and trustworthy. The dissertation represents a creative contribution to the given area of research.

I suggest the applicant shall react to the following **question No. 2:**

Agriculture consumes 90% of Uzbekistan's water resources. The state is subsidizing the adoption of water-saving technologies and plans to save at least 7 billion cubic meters of water by 2026 through efficiency improvements. Uzbekistan currently ranks among the bottom 20 countries in the world in terms of water productivity, according to the World Bank, and produces only \$0.6 per cubic meter of water compared with a global average of \$15 per cubic meter. What technological solutions would you suggest to increase efficiency in water management and security in Uzbekistan?

3. The way the methods were applied and the accuracy of the results obtained

I assess the choice of methods used in the dissertation as correct and fit for purpose. The author used methods of Revealed Symmetric Comparative Advantage, respectively Lafay Index, Trade Balance Index and also the Product Mapping Approach. He worked with statistical tools, such as the Gravity Model, HHI Index, Basic Index, Chain Index, Geomean, Import/Export Coverage Ratio etc. The volume of the processed data is adequate, and the results of the analyses were relevantly used for the argumentation and evaluation of the established hypotheses. I also appreciate the amount of gathered data and pinpointly selected bibliography resources.

4. Applicability of the results for practice

The author's findings and recommendations have a high reporting capacity and wide applicability in practice, both at the level of governments and policymakers and also at the level of companies and investors. Last but not least, the results can also be used in the academic sphere for teaching and research purposes.



5. Demonstration of knowledge and fulfilment of the formal requirements

The author has demonstrated extensive knowledge of the comparative advantages of Uzbekistan's agricultural exports, the impacts of geographical distance and economic power of the trading countries on bilateral international trade flows, and the state regulatory environment that impacts international trade flows from the perspective of firm managers and owners. From a formal point of view, the layout meets the prescribed standards, and the language and stylistics are at an acceptable level, tables and graphs suitably complement the analysis, sources are properly cited, bibliography, lists of tables, figures, graphs and abbreviations used are also formally in order. The scope of the text is in line with the regulations.

6. Final evaluation

Overall, I evaluate the submitted dissertation as adequate scientific work that meets the requirements of doctoral studies at the university. The author has provided new insights into the export potential of Uzbekistan in the area of agricultural and foodstuff products. His conclusions are useful for further theoretical research as well as for practical application. His knowledge and ability to work scientifically have been proven.

I can therefore conclude:

I have read the dissertation "The Export Potential of Uzbekistan in the International Market of Agricultural and Foodstuff Products" and I RECOMMEND it for oral defence in front of the Dissertation Committee of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague.

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