

AGRICULTURAL FOOD ORIENTATION UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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Abstract: *The article explores the need and directions for strengthening the food orientation of agriculture in the context of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.*

Key words: *agriculture, agrarian reforms, food security, agro-industrial integration, specialization, structure of agriculture.*

One of the fundamental tasks of the functioning of the economy is the production of food products and the provision of them to the population. According to world experience, it is obvious that only market agriculture is able to provide a sufficient abundance of food and state support for agriculture should be carried out mainly by market methods, the widespread introduction of market institutions. This way also allows us to successfully solve the problems of overcoming poverty in rural areas. Poverty is concretely expressed in the absence of real access to the corresponding benefits, including the underconsumption of food. Thus the two phenomena are interrelated.

In Uzbekistan, the real liberalization of economic relations in the agricultural sector of the economy is associated with the adoption of the C strategy and actions for the further development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021. It, which, in its content and direction, provided for the creation of a modern competitive economy. It also outlined the deepening of structural changes in agriculture, its consistent development, the further strengthening of the country's food independence, the expansion of the production of environmentally friendly products, and a significant increase in the export potential of the agricultural sector. This was supposed to happen by optimizing the sown areas by reducing the sowing of cotton and spiked grain crops, placing potatoes, vegetables, fodder and oilseeds on the released areas, new intensive orchards and vineyards (1).

When implementing this course, it was meant that without the liberalization of agrarian relations, the course towards the modernization of production in this sector would most likely be declarative, since it is the material interests of producers that are the driving force in any sector of the economy. On the other hand, as the President of the country Sh.M. Mirziyoyev has repeatedly pointed out, the ultimate goal of the ongoing reforms is to achieve a decent standard of living for the population of the country.

Therefore, agriculture in Uzbekistan is increasingly focused on ensuring the food security of the country and the welfare of the rural population. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to further ensure the food security of the country" outlined further actions necessary to fully meet the demand of the population for high-quality food products available to the population (2).

An important measure in this direction was the specialization of 55 districts (tumans) of the country in the production of fruits and vegetables. They will operate specialized farms. Such farms will also operate in other regions. The significance of this measure lies in the fact that the monopoly position of cotton growing is abolished in the competition between agricultural crops for their placement on sown areas. The placement of crops will take place according to the market principle, that is, according to the degree of profitability for producers. In addition, personal household plots and family dekhkan farms are traditionally focused on gardening, vegetable growing and viticulture. The ongoing institutional changes should create the necessary conditions for increasing their marketability.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, 86 clusters and 125 cooperatives were organized to accelerate the processes of agro-industrial integration in the fruit and vegetable industry. The activities of these structures should contribute to strengthening the material interest of producers in the production of competitive and demanded food products in the domestic and foreign markets. Clusters and cooperatives should organize not only the sale, but also its storage and processing, which will create a value chain in the industry. All this will give a tangible socio-economic effect.

In a free market, economic entities are by nature the most receptive to innovation. However, all this should be supported by positive trends in technological renewal, the rapid growth of bank lending to agricultural economic entities, and a reduction in the tax burden on private business. Therefore, the financing of the production infrastructure by the state is expanding, a new market infrastructure is being created for the sale of the industry's products, which orients the industry to meet the steady demand for products in the domestic and foreign markets.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, food security, as well as export orientation, are becoming key points in the development of the agricultural sector. It is important not only to achieve an appropriate level of food consumption, but also sustainable and secure production of the main types of food products in the country. Uzbekistan does not have transport communications that go directly to the world's waterways. Therefore, in crisis situations here, agriculture must provide specific volumes of certain types of food products, that is, not only the total volume of agricultural production, but also its structure matters. In 2020, the country produced 7566.6 thousand tons of grain, 3143.5 thousand tons of potatoes, 10459.5 thousand tons of vegetables, 2864.0 thousand tons of fruits and berries, 1639.2 thousand tons of grapes, 2526.2 thousand tons of meat, 11009.9 thousand tons of milk, 7825 million eggs.

It should be noted that at present Uzbekistan has fully covered the needs for food grains at the expense of its own production. Vegetable growing and horticulture are developing, which not only provide for domestic needs, but are also largely export-oriented.

According to the recommendations of the World Health Organization, the norms for the consumption of fruits and vegetables for an adult are 400 граммов per day. According to this

indicator, the diet of the inhabitants of Uzbekistan is five times higher than this norm, which is also due to the historical traditions of national food consumption.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the task of ensuring and maintaining food security is set broader and deeper, i.e. in the following areas:

- production of the most important types of products in stable volumes, its sustainable growth;
- competitiveness of products in the domestic and foreign markets, maintaining and strengthening the export orientation;
- increasing the efficiency of production on the basis of innovative development (new technologies and agricultural technology, variety change, the introduction of the production of organically pure products, water and energy saving, the highest culture of agriculture);
- ensuring the harmonization of the development of the fruit and vegetable industry with environmental requirements.

Equally important is the task of ensuring the well-being of the rural population and overcoming poverty. Therefore, the state has taken measures to support the traditionally existing institution of personal household plots of the population. In Uzbekistan, their number is 4.5 million and they own 435 thousand hectares of land. On April 15, 2020, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan was adopted on the effective use of lands of dekhkan farms and household plots of the population and the systematic organization of sowing work. In 2020, 300 billion soums of state budget funds and 100 billion soums of loans were allocated to support them. In addition, the state allocated 600 billion soums for the construction of lightweight greenhouses. In 2020, the production of fruits and vegetables in this sector doubled.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the structure of foreign economic relations between countries, on the structure of exports and imports. Significantly increased the importance of food exports. It was important before. In a pandemic, not only the nutritional and energy properties of products, but also their value in terms of impact on human immunity, have become especially important. These factors have opened up new opportunities for the export of fruits and vegetables, their producers get access to large markets.

It is obvious that Uzbekistan is becoming an important subject of the world economy, the development of which will have a significant impact not only on the countries bordering it. These achievements are to a decisive extent due to the consistent implementation of market reforms. The reforms also cover the subjects, the development of which previously took place without state participation. So, in 2020, in the Chartak district of Namangan region, 1,000 lightweight greenhouses were built and handed over to rural families, where it is possible to get three crops a year. The family's income from the greenhouse is 30-40 million soums a year, and this makes it possible to overcome poverty. 13 billion soums were spent on the construction of these greenhouses, of which 6.7 billion

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soums is a state subsidy and 6.3 billion soums are preferential bank loans. With the normal functioning of the greenhouse, an individual family has a real opportunity to repay the amount of a bank loan (6.3 million soums) after the first year. This project is secured by other institutional measures. A cluster is being organized here, which is headed by a private business structure. It provides greenhouse owners with seeds, buys their products on a contract basis, organizes agronomic services and consulting, as well as the supply of plant protection products. A training center for agribusiness is organized here.

In the Fergana region, 20 clusters and 125 fruit and vegetable cooperatives have been organized with the allocation of 10,840 hectares of land for them. In 2020-2021, they are implementing 172 investment projects worth 253.4 billion soums.

For producers of most types of agricultural products, demand from processors is crucial. On July 29, 2019, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On additional measures for the further development of in-depth processing of agricultural products and the food industry” was adopted. It included the implementation of 174 investment projects for the processing of agricultural products, as well as 24 large investment projects for the production of import-substituting products based on local raw materials, which should lead to a significant increase in demand for agricultural food raw materials (3). Growth in demand and real competition from buyers of raw materials should provide significant economic benefits for producers and stimulate production.

In Uzbekistan, in particular, in the regions of the Fergana Valley, there are favorable economic and organizational conditions:

- a) historical traditions, agrotechnical culture and skills in growing fruits and vegetables and grapes have been preserved and continued in households;
- b) there are specialized farms and dekhkan farms in this direction;
- c) there is an acceleration of agro-industrial integration in the production of vegetables, fruits and grapes (farmers tend to process products on their own farms, mini-technologies are becoming widespread);
- d) agrotechnical and technological renewal of the industry has begun;
- e) lending to farms and dekhkan farms, rural family businesses is expanding;
- f) a sparing taxation regime is introduced;
- g) the production infrastructure of agriculture is mainly financed by the state;
- h) developing a market infrastructure for the sale of industry products;
- i) the presence of demand for products in the domestic and foreign markets;

j) the products of the industry at cost and consumer qualities are competitive in the domestic and foreign markets (4).

The successful development of agriculture, including the production of fruits and vegetables, is based on the existence of legal (inviolability of private property, observance of the rights of agricultural producers, organizational and legal norms), organizational and institutional (presence of state and non-state institutions that support agricultural producers), economic (presence of economic entities with necessary volumes of capital), financial (the possibility of attracting financial resources from other areas and industries, state financial support), personnel (training and retraining of personnel), research and development (scientific research, selection work) prerequisites, market infrastructure and, which is also important, preservation of national traditions of growing food crops, respect for dekhkan labor. In Uzbekistan, in the process of reforming agriculture, these prerequisites are further strengthened.

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