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MODERN MARKETING APPROACHES TO EXPANDING EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES OF AZERBAIJANI AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

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Abstract:
This article comprehensively analyzes the role of modern marketing approaches in increasing the export potential of Azerbaijan's agricultural products. The primary objective of the study was to assess the potential of innovative marketing strategies to enhance the competitiveness of agricultural products in international markets. The study analyzed Azerbaijan's export potential, taking into account key trends in global agricultural markets, consumer behavior, and digital transformation processes. Methodologically, comparative analysis, systems approach, statistical analysis, and marketing research were used.
The research results demonstrate that, in addition to traditional export mechanisms, the use of modern approaches such as digital marketing, branding, market segmentation, and value chain optimization can significantly strengthen the position of agricultural products in foreign markets. Specifically, promoting the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand, using e-commerce platforms, selecting target markets, and developing logistics infrastructure were identified as key factors for export expansion. Furthermore, ensuring compliance with quality standards, improving the certification system, and effectively managing marketing information are also important.
The article offers practical recommendations for integrating modern marketing tools to enhance Azerbaijan's agricultural export potential, arguing that the application of these approaches will significantly contribute to the development of the country's non-oil sector.

Keywords: agriculture, export potential, agricultural products, modern marketing, digital marketing, market segmentation, branding, Azerbaijani economy, non-oil sector, international markets.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the transformation of the global economy, particularly the need to diversify energy-dependent economies, has further enhanced the strategic importance of the agricultural sector. In this context, the agricultural sector is a priority area of the Azerbaijani economy, playing a significant role not only in ensuring food security but also in expanding non-resource exports. According to official statistics for 2024, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries accounted for 5.7% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and the added value created in this sector reached 12.9 billion manat. Although this figure is low compared to the global average, the sector's high share of employment (approximately 30-34%) further enhances its socioeconomic significance (Atashov, 2024).

An analysis of Azerbaijan's foreign trade structure shows that the country's total exports in 2024 amounted to USD 26.3 billion, a significant portion of which came from energy resources. Over the same period, non-commodity exports amounted to $3.35 billion, of which approximately $1.1 billion were agricultural and agro-industrial products. This indicates that agricultural products account for only 4-5% of total exports and approximately 30% of non-commodity exports. A comparative analysis shows that developed agricultural exporting countries (e.g., the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy) have higher export volumes in both total export volume and value added. This difference is primarily explained by the development of modern marketing strategies, innovative logistics systems, and high-tech processing facilities in these countries (Abbasov, 2020).

Over the past 10-15 years, Azerbaijan's agricultural exports have grown significantly. Agricultural exports, which amounted to $430 million in 2010, increased to $1.1 billion in 2024, more than 2.5 times more than the previous year. This growth was primarily driven by fruit and vegetable exports: in 2024, fruit exports amounted to $500 million, while vegetable exports totaled $330 million. At the same time, products such as hazelnuts ($75 million) and cotton ($70 million) also occupied a significant place in the export structure. However, a structural analysis of exports reveals that raw materials and low-processed products predominate in Azerbaijan, resulting in low added value (Akhundov, 2025).

Table 1.
Macroeconomic and export indicators of the agricultural sector of Azerbaijan (2024)

Indicators	Value	Note
Share of agriculture in GDP	5.7%	Share of agricultural sector in total economy
Added value created in the agricultural sector	7.59 billion USD	Including agriculture, forestry and fisheries
Share in employment	30–34%	Indicator of socio-economic importance
Total export volume	26.3 billion USD	Energy dominates
Non-commodity exports	3.35 billion USD	Diversification indicator
Agricultural exports (total)	1.1 billion USD	Part of non-commodity exports
Share of agricultural exports in total exports	4–5%	Low share
Share of agricultural exports in non-commodity exports	≈30%	Significant role
Fruit exports	500 million USD	Main export product
Vegetable exports	330 million USD	Second main product group
Hazelnut export	75 million USD	Traditional export product
Cotton export	70 million USD	Industrial raw materials
Agricultural exports (2010)	430 million USD	Starting base
Agricultural exports (2024)	1.1 billion USD	2.5 times increase

Source: The table was prepared by the author based on data from the State Statistics Committee

The data in Table 1 show that the agricultural sector occupies an important place in the Azerbaijani economy in terms of both production, employment and exports. However, the low share of agricultural exports in total exports indicates that the sector's potential is not fully realized. At the same time, the dominance of raw materials and low-processed products in the export structure leads to limited added value.

A comparative analysis shows that while the bulk of agricultural exports in the European Union are processed products with high added value (e.g., dairy

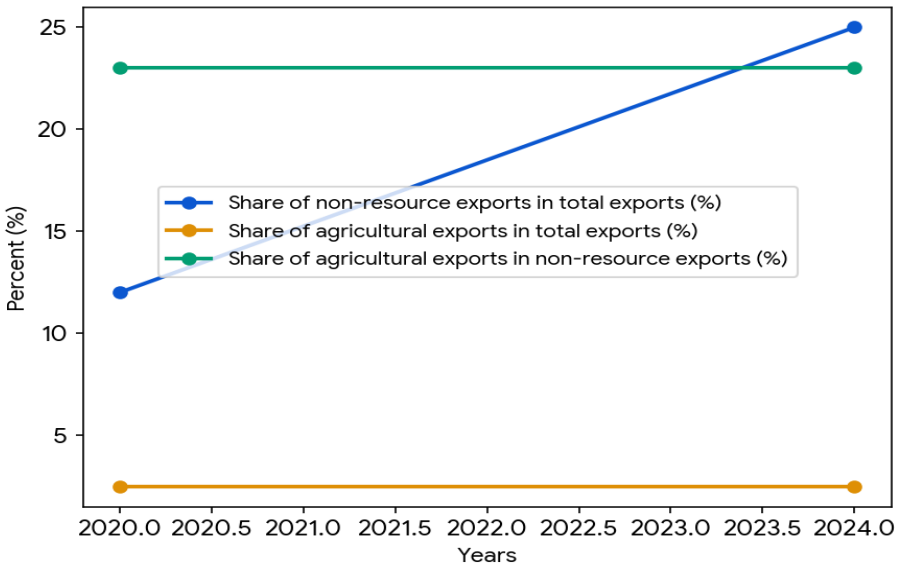
products, meat products, and prepared foods), in Azerbaijan, primary agricultural products predominate. In 2024, the export volume of agricultural trade between the European Union and Azerbaijan amounted to approximately €260 million, which is considered low compared to overall potential. This situation is explained, in particular, by the level of product compliance with international standards, certification issues, and insufficient marketing strategies (Javadzade, 2026).

On the other hand, increased competition in global markets and changes in consumer behavior indicate that traditional approaches to agricultural exports are no longer sufficient. In the modern era, competitive advantage is determined not only by production volume but also by brand value, quality standards, packaging, logistics, and the effectiveness of marketing strategies. In this context, tools such as digital marketing, e-commerce platforms, and market segmentation are particularly important. However, the application of these tools in Azerbaijan's agricultural exports is still limited, and the main export channels are limited to traditional markets (Russia, Turkey, and regional countries) (Amrahova, 2016).

A structural comparison shows that, although agricultural products account for approximately 23% of Azerbaijan's non-resource exports, their share in total exports is only 2-3%. This indicates that the agricultural sector's potential has not been fully realized, and the geographic and product structure of exports is insufficiently diversified. At the same time, the increase in the share of non-resource exports in total exports from 12% in 2020 to 25% in 2024 reflects positive dynamics and indicates that there are still ample opportunities for development in this area.

Chart 1.

Comparative dynamics of Azerbaijan's export structure



As can be seen from Chart 1, although there is a growth dynamic in non-resource exports, the fact that the share of the agricultural sector in total exports remains low indicates the existence of a structural imbalance. This justifies the need to develop the value chain in the export of agricultural products, increase the level of

processing, and expand market diversification.

Another important issue related to the development of the agricultural sector is the efficiency of the value chain. In Azerbaijan, a significant portion of agricultural products are exported as raw materials, which creates added value in foreign markets. However, in developed countries, export revenues increase significantly through the processing and branding of agricultural products. Therefore, increasing the export potential of agricultural products requires not only expanding production but also implementing modern marketing approaches, branding, innovative logistics, and developing digital sales channels. An extensive comparative analysis shows that, despite the positive growth dynamics of agricultural exports in recent years, the existing potential has not been fully realized. In particular, the main problems include the predominance of low-grade products in the export structure, limited market diversification, and the insufficient use of modern marketing tools. Therefore, the use of modern marketing approaches to increase agricultural exports should be considered not only as an economic necessity but also as a strategic development direction. This part of the article, in addition to substantiating the relevance of the study, serves as a conceptual basis for the scientific analysis that will be carried out in the following sections (Amrahov, Mahmudov, Rahimov, & Hajiyeva, 2021).

Azerbaijan's agricultural export potential and import needs of modern global markets

The development dynamics of modern global agricultural markets demonstrate that the main trend in international agricultural trade is a shift from raw material exports to standardized and branded products with high added value. In this context, the export potential of Azerbaijan's agricultural products should be assessed not only in terms of production indicators but also in terms of their compliance with global market import requirements (Dzhabrailov, & Mammadov, 2025).

A statistical analysis shows that in 2024, Azerbaijan's non-resource exports amounted to $3.36 billion, of which approximately $1.1 billion were agricultural and agro-industrial products. This indicates that agricultural products account for approximately 30% of non-resource exports (Asgarov, 2025). However, the share of agricultural products in the overall export structure remains at only 4-5%, which is considered low compared to potential. For comparison, the share of agricultural products in the total export volume of the European Union fluctuates between 10-15% in some countries, a figure largely driven by high levels of processing and effective marketing strategies (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020–2024).

Table 2.
Structure of Agricultural Exports in Azerbaijan and International Comparison (2024)

Indicators	Value	Notes
Total non-resource exports	3.36 billion USD	Total non-oil exports
Agricultural and agro-industrial exports	1.1 billion USD	Includes agricultural products
hare of agricultural exports in non-resource exports	≈30%	Relatively high share
Share of agricultural exports in total exports	4–5%	Low level
Share of agricultural exports in the EU (selected countries)	10–15%	Benchmark comparison
Structural gap (Azerbaijan vs EU)	2–3 times lower	Due to processing and marketing differences

Source: The table was prepared by the author based on data from the Ministry of Agriculture of Azerbaijan.

As shown in Table 2, agricultural products account for approximately 30% of Azerbaijan's non-resource exports, indicating their significant role within the non-oil export sector. However, their share in total exports remains relatively low at 4–5%, suggesting that the sector's export potential is not fully realized.

In comparison, the share of agricultural exports in total exports in selected European Union countries ranges between 10–15%, which is approximately 2–3 times higher than in Azerbaijan. This gap can be largely explained by the higher level of value-added processing, the application of modern marketing strategies, and the widespread adoption of international certification systems in EU countries.

Azerbaijan's agricultural exports are highly concentrated. Fruits and vegetables, particularly tomatoes, cucumbers, hazelnuts, and pomegranates, account for the bulk of exports. According to the European Commission, Azerbaijan primarily exports fruits and nuts to the European market, and in some cases (for example, hazelnuts), over 90% of exports are concentrated in this product group. This indicates a low level of export diversification and high market risks.

On the other hand, import requirements in global agricultural markets have changed significantly in recent years. In particular, agricultural imports into the European Union market are subject to strict technical and institutional requirements. These requirements include food safety standards (HACCP), sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS), product origin and traceability, eco-certification, and geographical indications (GI). It should be noted that, although

the process of harmonizing with these standards in Azerbaijan's agricultural sector is ongoing, it has not yet been fully completed. For example, in 2024, the total volume of agricultural products imported by the European Union from Azerbaijan amounted to only €264 million, which is considered low compared to the overall export potential (Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2024).

Analyzing the structure of imports in global markets, it can be seen that the main areas of demand are as follows: (i) high-quality and certified products, (ii) processed and packaged agricultural products, (iii) environmentally friendly and organic products, and (iv) products that meet sustainable production standards. According to the European Commission, EU countries primarily prefer to import processed foods, dairy and meat products, high-quality vegetable oils, and specialized agricultural products. This contrasts sharply with the fact that Azerbaijan's export structure is primarily focused on raw materials (Hajiyeva, 2022).

A comparative analysis shows that the level of agricultural processing in Azerbaijan remains low. Available data indicate that approximately 70-75% of the country's agricultural products are exported in their primary form (raw or with low levels of processing). However, in developed countries, this figure is reversed: 60-80% of exports are processed products with high added value. This difference directly impacts export revenue. For example, the export price of processed products can be 2-3 times higher than that of the same volume of raw products (Aliyev, Atakishiyeva, Mammadova, Tanriverdiyeva, & Lemishko, 2024).

At the same time, logistics and market access play a key role in realizing the export potential of agricultural products. In 2024, Azerbaijan exported products to 122 countries, but the bulk of its agricultural output was concentrated in regional markets (Russia, Turkey, and the CIS). Its weak position in global markets, particularly in Europe and the Middle East, reflects the insufficient development of marketing strategies and compliance with international standards (Gasimova, Mammadova, Hasanova, Ismayilova, & Hajiyeva, 2026).

The analysis reveals that, although the export potential of Azerbaijan's agricultural products is quite high, its realization directly depends on adapting to the growing and increasingly complex import requirements of global markets. Specifically, key priorities in this area include improving product quality, increasing processing levels, implementing international certification systems, and integrating modern marketing tools. Therefore, aligning the agricultural export strategy with the demand structure of global markets can be seen as one of the key factors ensuring the sustainable growth of Azerbaijan's non-resource exports.

Digital marketing approaches and e-commerce integration in the agricultural sector

At the current stage of economic development, the role of digital technologies, and particularly digital marketing approaches, in enhancing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector has significantly increased. Along with global agricultural production, bringing agricultural products to market, diversifying distribution channels, and establishing direct connections with consumers are closely linked to

digitalization processes. In this context, e-commerce is an important tool for reducing the role of traditional intermediaries in agricultural product marketing, increasing producer incomes, and expanding market access (Abbasov, 2024).

Statistics also confirm the strengthening of this trend. For example, the global agricultural e-commerce market was worth $14.8 billion in 2025 and is projected to reach $52.3 billion by 2034, representing a CAGR of 15.1%. Other estimates indicate that this market size has already reached $55.9 billion in 2026 and is expected to grow to $113 billion by 2034. This dynamic demonstrates that digital platforms are rapidly gaining a dominant position in agricultural sales.

The impact of digital marketing on the agricultural sector is not limited to expanding sales channels but also creates significant advantages in terms of collecting and analyzing market data. Research has shown that the application of big data and digital analytics tools has reduced demand forecasting errors for agricultural products by 13%, decreased unsold inventory by 23%, and increased sales conversion rates by 128.6%. These results demonstrate that digital marketing is not only a communication tool but also a tool for strategic decision-making.

Comparative analysis shows that there is a direct correlation between the level of digitalization in the agricultural sector and export potential in developed countries. For example, while 30–60% of agricultural enterprises in Europe and Asia already use online ordering systems, this figure remains significantly lower in developing countries. At the same time, the introduction of digital technologies into the global agricultural value chain expands market accessibility, providing producers with direct access to consumers and reducing intermediary costs.

Digital marketing approaches in the agricultural sector are manifested in several key areas: (i) social media marketing and social commerce, (ii) search engine optimization (SEO) and digital advertising, (iii) e-commerce platforms and marketplaces, and (iv) personalized marketing strategies and consumer behavior analysis. In particular, the development of social commerce mechanisms has created new opportunities for agricultural product sales. Research shows that over 1,000 academic studies have been conducted in the field of social commerce over the past decade, and this area has been identified as a key factor in shaping consumer behavior (Mammadova, 2025).

Furthermore, the integration of digital marketing and e-commerce also helps address structural challenges in the agricultural sector. Issues such as information asymmetries, logistical delays, and market inconsistencies that exist in traditional sales systems are significantly reduced by digital platforms. Especially since the pandemic, the digital agricultural market has seen rapid development, growing from $5.6 billion in 2020 to $11 billion in 2025. This demonstrates that digitalization has become a key focus for sustainable development in the agro-industrial sector.

In the context of Azerbaijan, the application of digital marketing and e-commerce tools in the agro-industrial sector is still in its infancy. The dominance of traditional distribution channels in the existing export structure, the limited use of digital platforms, and the underdevelopment of marketing strategies are considered the main factors limiting the competitiveness of agricultural products in international

markets. However, global experience shows that organizing sales through digital platforms, in addition to providing producers with access to broader markets, creates the conditions for building brand value and increasing export revenues (Atashov, & Ibrahimov, 2024).

Thus, the analysis demonstrates that the integration of digital marketing and e-commerce approaches in the agro-industrial sector is not only a technological innovation but also a comprehensive strategic approach aimed at improving economic efficiency. This integration makes it possible to increase market transparency, strengthen producer-consumer relationships, optimize distribution channels, and ultimately increase the export potential of agricultural products. Therefore, the widespread use of digital marketing and e-commerce mechanisms in Azerbaijan's agricultural sector should be considered an important component of the country's strategy for developing non-resource exports.

National agricultural branding and enhancing the global reputation of the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand.

In a global economic environment, not only a product's physical characteristics but also its origin, image, and perceived value play a decisive role in ensuring competitiveness. In this context, the concept of nation branding serves as an important strategic tool for strengthening countries' positions in international markets. In the agricultural sector, a national brand reflects not only a product's quality but also its environmental friendliness, geographical origin, cultural heritage, and production traditions. In Azerbaijan, the "Made in Azerbaijan" initiative was created for this purpose and has been implemented as an institutional mechanism for promoting the export of non-resource products, particularly agricultural products.

According to official data, as a result of measures taken in recent years to promote the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand, there has been a steady growth in non-resource exports. In 2023, Azerbaijan's non-resource exports exceeded $3.3 billion, a 9.8% increase compared to the previous year, with products exported to more than 110 countries. In 2025, this figure reached USD 3.6 billion, while food exports increased by 18.4% to USD 1.2 billion. This trend, in addition to demonstrating the effectiveness of national branding policies and export promotion mechanisms, demonstrates the growing recognition of agricultural products in international markets.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of agricultural product branding is the dominance of fruit and vegetable products in their structure. For example, in 2025, tomato exports amounted to USD 192.5 million, ranking second among non-oil products. Moreover, in the first half of 2026, fruit and vegetable exports showed an increase of 18-19%. However, the fact that most of these products are exported raw or at a low level of processing hinders the full development of their brand value. A comparative analysis shows that in European Union countries, most agricultural products are presented as high-value-added products and under private labels, creating the conditions for faster growth in export revenues.

At the product level, tomato exports (192.5 million USD) rank among the leading

non-oil export items, while fruit and vegetable exports continue to grow, recording 18–19% growth in the first half of 2026. Despite these positive trends, the export structure remains dominated by raw or low-processed products, which limits the full realization of branding potential and value-added generation.

Comparative analysis indicates that, unlike Azerbaijan, European Union countries predominantly export high value-added agricultural products under strong private labels, enabling faster export revenue growth and stronger international market positioning. This highlights the need for Azerbaijan to enhance agro-processing, branding strategies, and value chain development to fully capitalize on its agricultural export potential.

Institutional support mechanisms play a significant role in enhancing the global reputation of the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand. The Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Agency (AZPROMO), the Azexport portal, and other government initiatives are particularly significant in this regard. For example, the Azexport portal, acting as a unified database, facilitates the presentation of local products on international markets and enables market demand forecasting using big data tools. Order information obtained through the portal helps determine the geographic scope of product demand and more accurately formulate marketing strategies. This demonstrates the growing role of digital marketing and data-driven decision-making mechanisms in national branding.

At the same time, government export promotion measures—such as foreign market research, participation in international exhibitions, subsidized certification costs, and the establishment of trading houses—have had a positive impact on increasing brand awareness of the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand. According to statistics, Azerbaijani products are now exported to over 120 countries, demonstrating the brand's expanding geographic reach. However, the concentration of almost 50% of exports in a few key markets (Russia – 32%, Turkey – 16%, etc.) indicates that national branding is not fully diversified at the global level.

In the context of modern marketing approaches, the effectiveness of national agricultural branding depends on several key components: product compliance with quality standards, the use of geographical indications (GIs), the use of digital marketing tools, and consumer-focused communication strategies. Global trends show that consumers increasingly prefer environmentally friendly, organic, and traceable products. In this context, Azerbaijani products such as pomegranates, hazelnuts, tea, and grapes possess significant branding potential. However, realizing this potential requires the development of a unified branding strategy, product differentiation, and the widespread use of international certificates.

Furthermore, the role of digital platforms in enhancing the effectiveness of national branding is particularly noteworthy. The development of e-commerce and online marketing channels expands direct access of products to consumers, reducing intermediary costs and leading to increased export revenues. A positive outcome of the reforms and digital transformation implemented in this area can be considered a 16-17% increase in non-resource exports in the first half of 2026.

The analysis revealed that while the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand plays a significant role in expanding Azerbaijan's agricultural exports, further strengthening its global

reputation requires the application of comprehensive and integrated marketing approaches. Specifically, key priorities in this area include increasing the share of high-value-added products, improving branding strategies, widely utilizing digital marketing tools, and securing access to new markets. Implementing these approaches will not only strengthen the international competitiveness of Azerbaijan's agricultural sector but also significantly contribute to the sustainable growth of non-resource exports (Ahmadov, 2010).

Target market segmentation and implementation of green marketing strategies (organic/eco-friendly)

Ensuring a competitive advantage in today's global agricultural markets is not only about production volume but also about selecting the right target markets and implementing marketing strategies that meet consumer demands. Therefore, market segmentation and green marketing (organic and environmentally friendly approaches) are particularly important in increasing the export potential of Azerbaijani agricultural products (Huseynov, 2018).

In terms of market segmentation, global agricultural importers differ in income levels, consumption culture, and quality requirements. A comparative analysis shows that demand for organic and environmentally friendly products is higher in high-income countries (USA, Germany, Switzerland). For example, per capita consumption of organic products in Switzerland in 2024 was €481, making this figure the highest in the world. Meanwhile, the US organic market recorded sales of €60.4 billion, while in Germany, it was €17 billion. These figures demonstrate that high-income markets are the primary target segments for premium products.

The global organic market is expected to reach approximately €145 billion by 2025, demonstrating a steady growth trend. Furthermore, organic imports to markets such as the EU and the US reached 5.9 million tons, a 12.3% increase compared to the previous year. This trend demonstrates that international trade in organic products is expanding, and countries participating in this segment have the potential to earn higher revenues (Musayeva, Atakishiyeva, Mammadova, Tanriverdiyeva, & Lemishko, 2024).

An analysis of the current situation in Azerbaijan reveals that organic agriculture is still in its infancy. According to the latest statistics, the country's organic agricultural area is approximately 38,000-40,000 hectares, representing less than 1% of the total agricultural land. For comparison, in European countries, this figure ranges from 10-25% (for example, in Austria, it is 27.5%). This difference demonstrates Azerbaijan's significant potential for development in the production and export of organic products.

The indicators clearly demonstrate that the global organic agricultural market is in a dynamic growth phase and that purchasing power for high-quality, environmentally friendly products is particularly strong in high-income countries such as the USA, Switzerland, and Germany. The fact that the global market will reach ~145 billion euros by 2025 and that organic imports from the EU and the USA will increase by 12.3% to 5.9 million tons confirms the importance of green marketing approaches in Azerbaijan’s agro-export strategy.

Although the share of organically cultivated areas (38,000–40,000 ha) in our country is less than 1% of the total agricultural land, which is significantly lower than the European indicators (10–27.5%), this difference indicates that Azerbaijan has great potential to enrich its production portfolio with certified organic products and gain access to highly profitable foreign markets.

Regarding market segmentation, it is observed that Azerbaijan's agricultural exports are primarily directed to regional countries (Russia, Turkey, etc.), and these markets are characterized by more price-sensitive consumer segments. However, in the high-income markets of Europe and North America, priority is given to product quality, certification, and environmental friendliness. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt production and marketing strategies to ensure access for Azerbaijani products in these markets (Ibrahimov, 2003).

The use of "green marketing" strategies is one of the key tools in this process. Green marketing encompasses not only emphasizing a product's environmental properties but also organizing the production process, packaging, and logistics in accordance with environmental standards. Modern consumers are increasingly interested in attributes such as eco-labels, organic certification, and sustainable production. In this context, compliance with international certification systems (EU Organic, USDA Organic, etc.) can significantly enhance the competitiveness of Azerbaijani products (Huseynov, & Huseynov, 2022).

Statistical analysis shows that organic products sell for 20-50% more than traditional products, creating a significant advantage in terms of increasing export revenue. At the same time, optimizing resources used in organic production (reducing the use of chemical fertilizers, efficient water management, etc.) ensures long-term sustainable development (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020–2024).

One of the priority areas for Azerbaijan is the diversification of its product portfolio in the "green" segment. In particular, the production and branding of products such as hazelnuts, pomegranates, grapes, tea, and honey as organic products could create a significant competitive advantage in international markets. Introducing these products under the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand with an environmentally friendly concept could pave the way for expanding export geography.

The analysis shows that proper segmentation of target markets and the application of green marketing strategies are essential for increasing the export potential of Azerbaijani agricultural products. Specifically, targeting markets with high demand for high-yield and environmentally friendly products, implementing international certification systems, and integrating digital marketing tools are key areas for realizing the country's agricultural export potential.

The role of value chain marketing and international certification (GLOBALG.A.P., ISO) in promoting exports

In a modern agricultural economy, increasing exports is not limited to expanding production volumes but also requires effective product management across the entire value chain. The concept of value chain marketing involves creating added value at all stages from production to the end consumer (production, processing,

packaging, logistics, and sales) and coordinating these processes. This approach is particularly important for increasing the competitiveness of agricultural exports, as demand in global markets is determined not only by the physical quality of the product but also by its origin, safety, traceability, and compliance with standards (Mustafayeva, Suleymanov, Hatamov, & Hasanova, 2022).

Global experience shows that the effective application of the value chain approach in international agricultural markets leads to a change in export structure and an increase in the share of high-value-added products. For example, while processed products account for the majority of agricultural exports in the European Union, primary products predominate in developing countries, including Azerbaijan. This difference is primarily due to the location of products at lower stages of the value chain and underdeveloped marketing mechanisms.

One important component of value chain marketing is the use of international certification systems. In particular, GLOBALG.A.P. and ISO standards act as gateways for agricultural products to international markets. The GLOBALG.A.P. standard is currently applied in over 130 countries, covering over 4.2 million hectares of land and over 184,000 producers. This demonstrates its widespread acceptance in global agricultural value chains and its important role in international trade. At the same time, this standard expands opportunities for exporting countries to access high-income markets by ensuring compliance with key criteria such as food safety, environmental protection, and product traceability (Mahmudov, Aliyev, Abbasova, Nadirkhanova, Museyibli, & Huseynova, 2023).

Empirical studies show that international certification has a direct positive impact on export performance. For example, according to economic modeling, GLOBALG.A.P. certification increases the likelihood of exports by an average of 2%, and in some cases leads to an increase in imports into European markets of up to 6%. Another study found that certified farms increased sales to high-value markets by 12% and increased farmer income by up to 20%. These results demonstrate that certification not only ensures market access but also facilitates a transition to more profitable segments of the value chain.

There is a close relationship between the value chain approach and certification. Thus, international standards cover not only the production stage, but also the entire supply chain - collection, storage, transportation and distribution of products. This is of great importance in terms of maintaining the quality of agricultural products and reducing losses. According to global data, certified production systems have lower product losses and logistics costs, which increases the economic efficiency of exports.

At the same time, the development of digital technologies and marketing tools further enhances the effectiveness of value chain marketing. Recent studies show that the share of enterprises with international certificates averages 31.8%, and in enterprises using digital technologies this figure rises to 48.7%. This indicates that when digital marketing and certification are used together, the growth of export potential becomes faster and more sustainable.

In the context of Azerbaijan, the relevance of this issue is even more pronounced. In the current environment, most agricultural exports are exported at low levels of

processing, and the level of compliance with international standards remains limited. However, the widespread use of GLOBALG.A.P., ISO 22000 (food safety management system) and other international standards can significantly increase product access to markets in the European Union and other high-income countries. At the same time, these standards contribute to increasing transparency and reliability in the value chain, thereby creating conditions for the formation of brand value of Azerbaijani products.

The analysis shows that the use of value chain marketing and the expansion of international certification act as complementary mechanisms for increasing the export of agricultural products. This approach helps not only to increase export volumes, but also to improve the structure of exports, increase the share of products with high added value and strengthen the country's competitiveness in global agricultural markets.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive analysis and comparative assessment demonstrate that integrating value chain marketing and international certification mechanisms is strategically important for increasing the export potential of Azerbaijan's agricultural products. Specifically, the application of GLOBALG.A.P. and ISO standards not only enhances the competitiveness of agricultural products in international markets but also creates the conditions for a qualitative transformation of the export structure. According to empirical studies, international certification increases the likelihood of exports by an average of 2%, and in some markets leads to an increase in imports by up to 6%. Furthermore, certified farms' sales to high-income markets increased by 12%, while farmer incomes increased by up to 20%. These results confirm that certification is not only a tool for technical compliance but also a mechanism for economic efficiency and market expansion.

Furthermore, global experience shows that the application of voluntary standards (VSS) has a significant impact on export value elasticity, with this indicator varying between 0.2 and 0.7. This means that expanding certified production has the potential to increase both the volume and value of exports. On the other hand, the fact that the share of certified farms in international practice averages 31.8%, rising to 48.7% for enterprises using digital technologies, demonstrates that the synergy between certification and digital marketing tools plays a significant role in increasing export potential.

The scientific novelty lies in the fact that this study systematically examines the problem of increasing agricultural exports not only from the perspective of production and trade, but also in the context of the integrative effect of value chain marketing and certification mechanisms. For the first time, the interaction between the stages of the value chain (production-processing-logistics-sales) and the application of international standards for the agricultural sector in Azerbaijan is substantiated using an integrated approach. The impact of this relationship on the volume and structure of exports is assessed using a comparative statistical

approach. At the same time, the impact of certification on export potential, market access, and income levels is summarized using specific empirical indicators.

Practical recommendations and implementation mechanisms cover the following areas:

– Implementation of a phased certification model for agricultural producers (pilot farms initially, followed by expansion through a cluster approach);

– Strengthening government subsidies and technical support mechanisms to ensure compliance with GLOBALG.A.P., ISO 22000, and other international standards;

– Creating export-oriented value chain clusters (agroparks, processing plants, logistics centers) for agricultural products and managing them using a unified marketing strategy;

– Expanding digital marketing platforms and e-commerce channels to promote the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand in international markets;

– Diversifying export markets for certified products (the European Union, the Middle East, and Asian markets) and applying market segmentation strategies;

– Digitalization of agricultural information systems and tracking mechanisms.

As a promising development direction and conclusion, it can be noted that in the near and medium term, Azerbaijan's agricultural export strategy should be transformed from the traditional model to one based on the production of high-value-added products, innovative and certified production. The following results are expected as a result of this transformation:

– a 1.5- to 2-fold increase in agricultural export volumes in the medium term;

– an increase in the share of high-value-added products in exports from 20-25% to 40%;

– a more than doubling of the share of internationally certified farms;

– an expansion of the share of European and other high-income markets in the geographic structure of export markets.

Thus, this study demonstrates that value chain marketing and the integration of international certification, in addition to being key factors in increasing the export potential of Azerbaijan's agricultural products, can make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of the country's non-oil sector and strengthening its competitiveness in global agricultural markets.

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