

FOOD SECURITY: AN ECONOMIC APPROACH AND SUSTAINABILITY FACTORS

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Abstract: The article discusses the economic issues of ensuring food security, food safety, measures taken to develop the food industry, attract investment funds to the sector, and support export activities.

Keywords: Food security, food market, food imports, modernization of agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

Food security is one of the main strategic problems for the modern world economy and social stability. According to the definition given by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), food security is the availability of sufficient, safe and nutritious food for every person at all times for a healthy and active life, both physically and economically.

The appropriate level of development of the national economic system determines the ability of the population to maintain normal living conditions, the sustainable provision of resources for the development of the economy as a whole, as well as the consistent implementation of national and state interests. In recent years, as a result of measures taken to develop the food industry in the republic, attract investment funds to the sector and support export activities, the volume of food production has exceeded 6.1 billion US dollars, and their annual export volume has exceeded 510 million US dollars¹. It is worth noting that filling the domestic market with food, achieving self-sufficiency in their production and ensuring food security are one of the priority areas for the development of agriculture, which is an important sector of the economy of Uzbekistan. Because agriculture in Uzbekistan is considered the leading sector of the economy. In this regard, in order to ensure food security in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to further strengthen legislation aimed at ensuring the productive and effective use of land and water resources in agriculture, and to achieve a high share of food products in the composition of agricultural products. As our President noted, "Strengthening the health of our people and establishing a healthy lifestyle are vital issues for us. I repeat, if we ensure peace and health, we will achieve everything else. The goal of agricultural reforms is to ensure food security and increase the well-being of the people, along with economic benefits. We must never forget this."

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODS

In order to solve the theoretical and practical issues of food security, which is an integral part of the country's economic security, and to substantiate its role in the development of society and the well-being of the population, the monograph "Food Security" by D.V. Zerakalov, one of the economists of various CIS countries, provides a lot of practical analysis of food security issues on a country-wide scale. Ensuring food security has become a global economic problem, as a result of the shortage of water resources in the 21st century, and an analysis of many official statistical materials was carried out.²

¹ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M.Mirziyoev No. PF-36 "On additional measures to ensure food security in the Republic". February 16, 2024.

² D.V. Zerakalov monograph "Food Safety"

Economist L. Revenko, in his article "There is a possibility of finding a solution to food security," examined the issues of ensuring food security in the world, mainly external flows, that is, distribution depending on the production potential and opportunities in countries³.

Some aspects of the problems being studied in Uzbekistan are generally studied in the textbook "Economic Security of the State" by H.P. Abulkasimov. The problem of food security is generally studied.⁴

The necessary information for ensuring food safety was assessed and extensively studied theoretically and practically based on the conducted research. Comparative tables were formed mainly on the basis of official statistical data. In the process of conducting the research, scientific abstraction, analysis and synthesis methods were used as research methodology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to effectively use the production potential of our country to provide the population, which is increasing year by year, with the opportunity to have sufficient food products, a total of 329 thousand hectares of cotton and grain land were optimized in 2016-2022, and high-yield food and feed crops were planted instead.

At the same time, in 2023, an additional 93 thousand hectares of cotton and grain land were reduced, and land was allocated for the population to grow food products for farming.

Along with the positive results achieved in agriculture in recent years, a number of problems and shortcomings have arisen that pose a threat to the optimal and sustainable use of natural resources.

Today, out of a total of 21.2 million hectares of pastures in our republic, 16.9 million hectares (79.5%) are in use, and the remaining 4.3 million hectares are included in the forest land fund and state reserves. According to geobotanical studies conducted on 10.3 million hectares of pastures by 2023, 703 thousand hectares (7.7%) of pastures have been degraded and become unsuitable for agriculture.

Today, the humus content of more than 2.0 million hectares (65%) of irrigated lands has dropped below 1 percent, and 44 percent is saline to varying degrees, including 14 percent to moderate and severe salinity, which negatively affects the expected yield of crops and the sustainable use of these agricultural lands⁵.

In recent years, systematic work on diversifying agriculture, more rational use of available land, water and other resources, and the use of modern and intensive technologies to grow agricultural and food products is gradually bearing fruit. In particular, due to the effective use of arable land throughout the year, agricultural and food crops have been planted as main, intermediate and repeated crops, and high yields have been obtained from them, creating an opportunity to increase trade volumes not only in the domestic market, but also in foreign markets.

Food supply and security primarily rely on the potential of the agricultural sector. Although the share of gross agricultural product in the country's gross domestic product decreased from 34.4 to 28.2% in 2019-2024, and the annual growth rate of gross agricultural product decreased from 3.1 to 2.8% compared to previous years, the agricultural sector still remains one of the largest supporting sectors of the country's economy (Table 1).

Table 1

Dynamics of the main macroeconomic indicators of the development of the agricultural sector in the Kashkadarya region⁶

³ L. Revenko's article "A solution to food security is possible."

⁴ H.P. Abulkasimov's textbook "Economic Security of the State".

⁵ Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.-www.stat.uz

⁶ Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.-www.stat.uz

Indicators	2019-y.	2020-y.	2021-y.	2022-y.	2023-y.	2024-y.
Share of agriculture in gross domestic product, %	34,4	29,5	32,9	34,1	28,1	28,2
Annual growth rate of gross agricultural product,	103,1	105,4	106,3	106,1	102,5	102,8
relative to the previous year	5,7	4,4	3,5	3,3	8,0	8,9

In our country, certain results have been achieved in terms of systematically increasing the volume of agricultural production in both quantity and quality and strengthening food supply on this basis. As a result, the volume of production of the main types of agricultural products has increased from year to year (Table 2).

According to the Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, despite the fact that the permanent population of our country increased by 1.38 times and the total area of agricultural land decreased by 10.8% between 2000 and 2020, the production of wheat from food products increased by 1.80, potatoes by 4.29, vegetables by 3.95, melons by 4.73, fruits by 3.62, grapes by 262, meat (in live weight) by 3.00, milk by 3.03 and eggs by 6.23 times. Most importantly, this growth was driven by intensive factors, such as productivity and yield, rather than extensive factors.

Table 2

Dynamics of production of the main types of agricultural products in the republic (in all categories of farms), in thousand tons

Indicators	2019-y.	2020-y.	2021-y.	2022-y.	2023-y.	2024-y.	2024 y. 2019y.on y., %
Grains, total	3 929,4	6 401,8	7 404,1	8 173,5	7 187,4	7566,6	192,5
Including: Wheat	3 532,0	5 927,8	6 657,3	6 964,7	6 121,1	6366,8	180,2
Potatoes	731,1	924,2	1 693,9	2 696,9	2 950,9	3143,5	429,9
Vegetables	2 644,7	3517,5	6 346,5	10129,3	9 945,5	10459,5	395,4
Melons	451,1	615,3	1 182,4	1 853,6	1 922,2	2134,4	473,1
Fruits	790,9	949,3	1 710,3	2 746,1	2 739,6	2864,0	362,1
Grapes	624,2	641,6	987,3	1 579,3	1 595,2	1639,2	262,6
Meat (live	841,0	1 061,2	1 461,4	2 033,4	2 465,0	2526,2	300,3

weight)							
Milk	3 632,5	4 554,5	6 169,0	9 027,8	10 710,8	11009,9	303.1
Eggs, million units	1 254,4	1 966,7	3 061,2	5 535,4	7 757,4	7825.0	623.8

When analyzing the distribution of the share of agricultural products by farm category by region, it was observed that the highest indicators correspond to dehqan (personal subsidiary) farms in all regions.

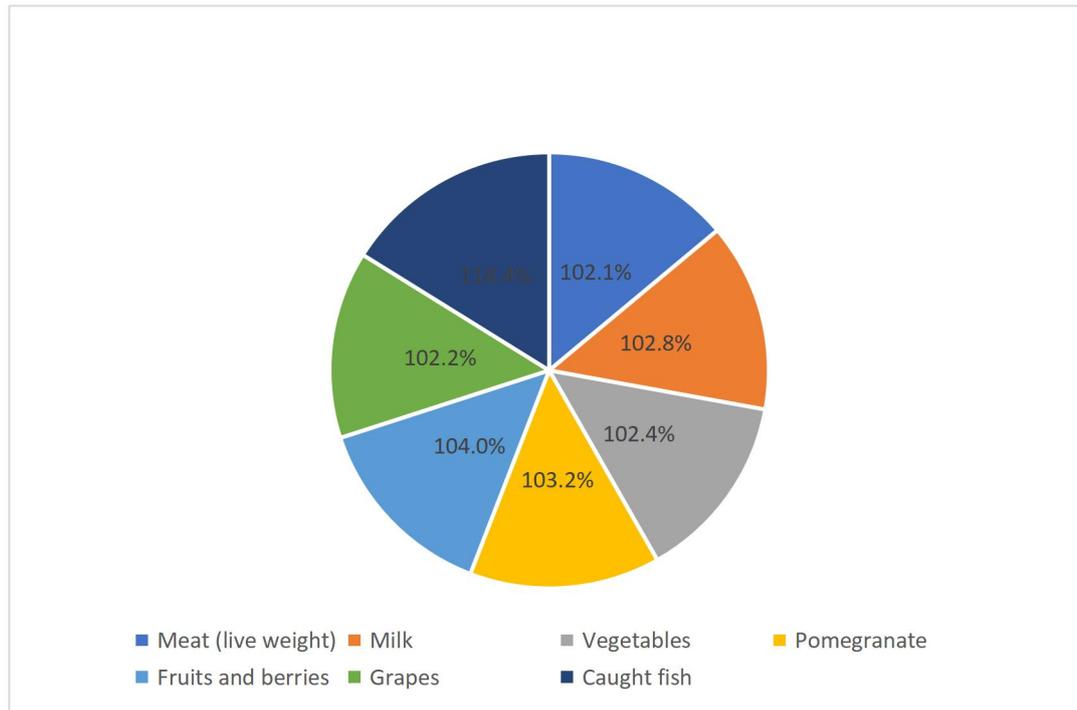


Figure 1. Growth rate of agricultural production in peasant farms⁷

According to preliminary data, the positive growth rate of the industry in January-December 2024 was achieved mainly due to the higher growth rate of the following products compared to the corresponding period in 2023.

CONCLUSION

The demand for food products in the regions is particularly high in densely populated areas. Based on a comparative analysis of the amount of products produced in the regions with the normative consumption rates, regions were identified that do not meet the demand for food products. These include the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Kashkadarya region, and Syrdarya region. This situation can be eliminated by redirecting the flow of products from areas with excess production to areas with production, thereby satisfying market demand and maintaining price moderation.

Providing the population with safe food is of particular social and political importance. The fate of people depends on how uninterrupted and sufficient medical supply of basic food products is

⁷ O‘zbekiston Respublikasi milliy statistika qo‘mitasi-www.stat.uz

established. Deterioration of the population's nutrition causes demographic changes, increases social and interregional tensions, and threatens the internal security of the state.

In conclusion, it can be said that the well-developed mechanism of the activities of industrial enterprises in the production of safe food products and the expansion of its share and weight in the economy will ultimately lead to the provision of the population with safe and high-quality food. To assess the activities of food industry enterprises and their profitability, it is recommended to use an integral indicator of the economic activity of food industry enterprises, which includes not only the efficiency of material activity, but also the efficiency of internal resource potential. Ensuring the compliance of the management system of such enterprises with their strategic goals, maintaining their presence in the market or strengthening competitive positions is the most urgent issue in today's competitive struggle of this industry and the production of safe food.

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