

THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF AGRARIAN REFORMS ON TELEVISION IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This article analyzes the essence of the agrarian reforms carried out in Uzbekistan, and the role of television in their coverage for the general public. Television as a prompt and reliable source of information plays an important role in covering the processes of agrarian reforms, shaping public opinion and promoting innovative technologies. The article highlights the main stages of reforms in agriculture, including the formation of farms, the introduction of market principles, the processes of abandoning the cluster system and the public procurement system. It also considers the special programs of national TV channels devoted to agricultural reforms, and their impact on the dissemination of information among the population. The article is aimed at highlighting the relevance of effective reporting of agricultural news to the population and the strategic role of television in this regard.

Keywords

Uzbekistan, agrarian reforms, agriculture, television, history of reforms, farms, cluster system, state policy, analytical programs, public opinion.

Introduction

Agriculture is one of the key sectors of Uzbekistan's economy, providing nearly one third of the gross domestic product. In 2017, 3.7 million people were employed in this sector (27.2 percent of the employed population), and almost half of the population lived in rural areas.

Given the large-scale reforms being implemented in the agrarian sector, it is essential to convey their content to such a broad audience in a timely and understandable manner. From this perspective, Uzbek television plays an invaluable role in delivering the essence of agrarian reforms to the general public, explaining them, and mobilizing society to support these reforms. Indeed, almost every decision and program adopted in the country, including agrarian reforms, is usually first announced and interpreted through official television channels. For example, the content of newly adopted Presidential decrees is covered in evening news programs, and analyses of their significance are promptly delivered to millions of viewers.

Television serves not only as a means of transmitting information, but also as a tool for engaging the wider public in reforms. In recent years, changes in Uzbekistan's information sector have led to the emergence of new television channels, the renewal of program formats, and the strengthening of journalistic analysis. In particular, the television and radio channel "Uzbekistan 24," established in 2017, has become an important step toward the *оператив* and comprehensive coverage of reforms through its 24-hour news and analytical programs. As a result, various segments of the population, especially citizens living in remote areas, are quickly becoming informed about developments in state policy through television.

Agrarian reforms are no exception in this regard—national television channels in Uzbekistan explain changes in agriculture in clear, accessible language, supported by vivid, real-life examples. The following sections examine the role of television in delivering information about agrarian reforms to the wider public; the stages and substance of agrarian reforms in Uzbekistan; the coverage of agricultural topics in specialized programs across various television channels; and practical, real-life examples demonstrating the effectiveness of these reforms. In addition, approaches to shaping public opinion through television, promoting innovative technologies, and explaining state programs are analyzed, including the impact of interactive programs and documentary films.

Television remains one of the most widespread mass media outlets in Uzbekistan, with a particularly large audience in rural areas. Despite the rapid development of the internet and social networks, television continues to be the primary source of information for many households. In communicating complex processes such as agrarian reforms to the public, television has several advantages: timeliness, a simple and clear explanatory style, and broad audience reach. For example, information about newly adopted decisions or programs is often broadcast on the same day through news programs such as Akhborot or Yangiliklar 24. The details of specific issues are explained in plain language through special reports and interviews. Through television, even viewers in remote villages can grasp the essence of reforms.

During the 2020 pandemic, for instance, daily briefings by regional leaders were organized through the Mahalla television channel, ensuring that residents of remote rural areas received regular updates on the situation and response measures. This example demonstrates the direct and interactive capacity of television as a means of information dissemination. Information obtained through television is generally perceived by the public as reliable, as national channels work closely with official sources. Therefore, for viewers who first learn about innovations and reforms in the agrarian sector through television, such information carries an official status.

Television conveys the reform process not only as news but also through visual representation: changes in the fields, developments in farmers' lives, and technical and technological innovations are shown live on screen. As a result, the practical outcomes of reforms become visible to the public, which strengthens trust in these changes.

Another indicator confirming the role of television in widely promoting information about agrarian reforms is public demand. In 2019, a proposal to establish a specialized Agro TV channel was submitted on the "Mening Fikrim" public petitions portal. The proposal stated: "Today, the changes being implemented in the agricultural sector are pleasing people. However, many remain unaware of their substance. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a specialized Agro TV channel that teaches the 'secrets' of agriculture."

This proposal also demonstrates that the public itself recognizes the importance of television in popularizing and disseminating innovations in the agrarian sector. In conclusion, television is the most important medium for delivering timely and reliable information on agrarian reforms in Uzbekistan.

After gaining independence, Uzbekistan implemented consistent agrarian reforms in several stages. Changes in agriculture took different forms over time; however, their main objectives were the introduction of market principles, the formation of a class of owners, and the improvement of living standards in rural areas.

Below are the main historical and practical stages of agrarian reforms:

1991–1995 – Period of establishing the legal framework.

In the first years of independence, initial steps were taken to transition agriculture toward market relations. The privatization of state property began, and former state farms and livestock enterprises were transformed and privatized. During this period, the legal foundations of agrarian reforms were established, and property relations in rural areas were reconsidered. As a result, collective (cooperative) farms emerged, and the groundwork was laid for the development of private farms. However, due to the economic difficulties of the transition period, agricultural production declined by 11 percent during 1991–1995, indicating a temporary downturn in output in the early years of reform.

1996–2007 – Transition to farming and the period of growth.

At this stage, the main goals were to achieve macroeconomic stability in the agrarian sector and restore production growth. From 1996 onward, agricultural output began to increase again. Initially, shirkats (cooperative enterprises) were established on the basis of collective farms; however, as they failed to deliver the expected results, comprehensive development of private farming was promoted instead. During these years, farmers began to emerge as genuine land users, with land allocated to them on a long-term lease basis. The state also reformed financial

relations in the agrarian sector: the system of financing cotton and grain production under state procurement was improved, and procurement prices were revised. Overall, the period from 1996 to 2007 marked a transition to private farming and economic growth in agriculture, during which agrarian reforms were implemented consistently.

2008–2016 – Period of modernization and social development of the sector. These years coincided with the impact of the global financial crisis; however, Uzbekistan undertook decisive measures to support the agrarian sector. The optimization (consolidation) of land allocated to farms was initiated—small farm plots were merged or specialized in certain areas. Greater attention was paid to improving the meliorative condition of irrigated lands, including measures such as drainage of waterlogged areas and the repair of collector-drainage systems. In addition, state programs aimed at developing rural infrastructure were adopted, and the construction of modern rural housing based on standardized designs began. For example, starting in 2009, new residential settlements consisting of model houses were built in rural areas. This not only improved living conditions for the rural population but also brought construction and service industries into the countryside. This stage was characterized by the parallel implementation of agrarian and social reforms.

From 2017 to the present – Period of fundamental transformation and liberalization. In recent years, unprecedented innovations have been introduced in Uzbekistan's agricultural sector. Under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a number of radical reforms were implemented to fully transition the agrarian sector to market principles and increase efficiency. Most notably, the system of state orders for cotton and grain production was abolished, and state intervention in price formation was eliminated. In other words, the government-established plans (quotas) and fixed procurement prices for cotton and grain were effectively canceled, marking a shift to market-based mechanisms. As a result, farmers gained greater freedom over their land and the outcomes of their labor, becoming more independent in selling their products and concluding contracts with clusters. At the same time, a cluster system was introduced in agriculture: vertically integrated cluster enterprises were established in cotton growing, grain production, and fruit and vegetable cultivation. Today, more than 120 cotton–textile clusters are operating, achieving high productivity. As a consequence of these reforms, significant investments were attracted to the agrarian sector in 2019, and thousands of projects began to be implemented through foreign loans and grants. The activities of farms were diversified—many farmers no longer limit themselves to cotton or grain but are transforming into multi-sectoral enterprises engaged in horticulture, vegetable production, and livestock farming. To support the private sector, preferential lending to household (dehqan) farms was expanded. Thus, in recent years, a new agrarian policy of ‘New Uzbekistan’ has taken shape, in which market economy principles, innovative approaches, and farmers' interests occupy a central position.

The analysis of the stages outlined above shows that agrarian reforms have deepened over time and have begun to yield tangible results in recent years. The agricultural sector is now transitioning fully to market principles, and decisions aimed at protecting the interests of farmers and household producers are being put into practice. As emphasized by the President of Uzbekistan: “We have abolished state intervention in price formation in agriculture and eliminated state orders for cotton and grain production. The activities of 122 cotton–textile clusters have been launched, achieving high yields.”

Thus, as a result of the reforms, a new system has emerged in agriculture, and this system is being widely covered in the mass media, particularly on television. The next section analyzes how agrarian topics are reflected on Uzbek television channels, using specific television programs as examples.

Coverage of Agrarian Topics on Television

Television employs various genres and formats in covering the process of agrarian reforms. Below, the presentation of agrarian topics is examined through the example of major national television channels—“Uzbekistan 24,” “Yoshlar,” and “Madaniyat va ma’rifat.”

“Uzbekistan 24” Television Channel:

This channel broadcasts news and analytical programs around the clock and occupies a leading position in covering agrarian topics. Agricultural news regularly appears in its daily news segments—for example, reports on the introduction of preferential loans for farmers or the delivery of new agricultural machinery. In particular, the Akhborot 24 news program includes special features dedicated to the agrarian sector. For instance, it was reported that Akhborot 24 aired a report this year focusing on gender equality issues in agriculture.

The Studio 24 talk show on the “Uzbekistan 24” channel serves as a platform for analytical discussions on agrarian issues. Officials from relevant ministries, experts in the agrarian sector, as well as representatives of farms and clusters are invited to discuss pressing topics. For example, the April 29, 2022 episode of Studio 24 was entirely devoted to the issue of personnel training in the agrarian sector. During the program, figures were presented indicating the establishment of an international agrarian university, the attraction of USD 2.5 billion in foreign loans to the sector over the past five years, and the implementation of thousands of projects. In this way, “Uzbekistan 24” provides timely and substantive information on agrarian reforms, not only informing viewers but also deepening their understanding of ongoing processes.

“Yoshlar” Television Channel:

Designed primarily for a youth audience, this channel presents agrarian topics in modern and engaging formats. Programs often feature stories of young farmers and rural entrepreneurs, agro-startups, and innovative ideas. For example, motivational videos about the success of young farmers, as well as programs covering agricultural competitions and projects within the framework of the Youth Forum, are regularly broadcast. In recent years, it has been emphasized that the agricultural sector has become a new field of opportunity for young people and that rural labor is increasingly viewed as a modern form of entrepreneurship.

Television plays an important role in instilling these changing perceptions among young people. Many reports and talk shows aired on the “Yoshlar” channel feature representatives of the new generation who are interested in agriculture. For instance, a report broadcast on the “Yoshlar” channel highlighted a group of proactive young farmers implementing their knowledge and ideas in farming enterprises—showcasing the experiences of young people who have built greenhouses and engaged in export activities or returned from abroad to launch modern agribusinesses in rural areas. Such programs help increase young people’s interest in the agrarian sector and encourage them to perceive it not as “hard labor,” but as a promising and innovative field of activity.

In addition, the “Yoshlar” channel covers competitions such as Young Farmers contests and agrotechnology challenges, promoting the most advanced ideas and initiatives.

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“Madaniyat va ma’rifat” Television Channel: Although this channel is best known for its documentary films and cultural-educational programs, it also pays considerable attention to in-depth coverage of agrarian topics. Within the framework of the Bugun news program, special segments are produced on important events and projects in agriculture. For example, a recent episode of Bugun on the “Madaniyat va ma’rifat” channel discussed the issue of sustainable mechanization of the agrarian sector, focusing on the renewal of agricultural machinery and projects aimed at supplying farmers with modern equipment. In particular, interviews were broadcast regarding projects implemented by the joint-stock company Uzagroleasing, in which specialists explained the importance of mechanization in agriculture. Through this program, viewers were able to observe the role of machinery in processes ranging from cotton harvesting

in the fields to post-harvest processing, thereby gaining a clear understanding of the effectiveness of mechanization.

In addition, among the documentary films aired by the “Madaniyat va ma’rifat” channel are works devoted to the analysis of agrarian history and contemporary reforms. For instance, the documentary Rural Development in the Years of Independence depicts the changes that have taken place in rural life since independence and the transformation in the attitudes of farmers and dehqans toward labor. The film vividly narrates the transition from the era of cotton monoculture to a period of diversification through real-life examples. Overall, the “Madaniyat va ma’rifat” channel approaches agrarian topics from an educational perspective, providing viewers with a deep historical and scientific context.

The examples above demonstrate that each television channel covers agrarian reforms in its own distinctive manner. News-oriented channels provide timely information and analysis; youth-oriented channels adopt a motivational and innovative perspective; and cultural-educational channels offer in-depth analysis and a historical-comparative approach. As a result of this synergy, all segments of society are informed about agrarian reforms through television, each receiving information and inspiration aligned with their worldview.

The true value of any reform can be assessed by its real-life outcomes. In recent years, Uzbekistan’s agrarian reforms have produced a number of tangible results, which are reflected in television coverage and other mass media materials. First and foremost, it is evident that key economic indicators have improved as a result of these reforms.

For example, between 2016 and 2020, Uzbekistan’s export volume increased by 25 percent, reaching USD 15.1 billion, with fruit, vegetable, and other agricultural exports playing a significant role in this growth. This figure reflects the positive effects of liberalization and diversification policies in the agrarian sector. Similarly, following the introduction of cotton-textile clusters, the share of processed raw materials increased, and the production of finished goods with higher value added was launched—an outcome that the mass media has described as a transition “from exporting raw materials to exporting finished products.”

Most importantly, the reforms are directly transforming the lives of dehqans and farmers. Television frequently highlights such changes through human-centered stories and practical examples. For instance, national television channels recently covered a positive transformation in the activities of a farmer in the Kashkadarya region. A farmer in Nishon district, who previously had been required to work exclusively with a single cluster, gained the right under the new policy to choose any cluster. As a result, he signed a contract with a large cotton-textile cluster in the city of Karshi and, within a short period, acquired a new tractor. Most importantly, he received full payment for the cotton he produced before the end of the season, significantly increasing his income. “Regardless of where a farmer operates, being allowed to cooperate with any cotton-growing cluster brought me genuine satisfaction. As soon as I started working with a new cluster, I acquired a new tractor, and I received my full payment before the end of the year. This situation gave me an entirely different sense of motivation,” the farmer said while describing his success.

This simple yet powerful example shows how reforms have helped farmers “gain recognition”—that is, when farmers are paid fully and on time for their labor and are provided with modern equipment, they begin to feel valued within society. By presenting this story in the form of a television report, television clearly conveyed the true meaning of the reforms to ordinary viewers.

In addition, the effectiveness of agrarian reforms is substantiated on television through numerous figures and statistical data. For example, news programs have reported increases in grain yields and improvements in levels of self-sufficiency in agricultural products in recent years. Ahead of Independence Day in 2021, the President, in his address, listed the achievements attained in agriculture over the previous five years: the abolition of state quotas for cotton and grain, the allocation of more than 200,000 hectares of land to farmers, the establishment of

cooperatives in fruit and vegetable production, the saturation of the domestic market, and the growth of export volumes.

These facts were communicated to the public through television, introducing viewers to the “first fruits” of the reforms. Moreover, within the framework of the Obod Qishloq (“Prosperous Village”) program, television reports highlighted how the appearance of hundreds of villages had been transformed through the construction of new roads, drinking water supply systems, schools, and clinics. All of these developments were presented as broader outcomes of agrarian reforms—namely, the improvement of rural living standards.

Television places particular emphasis on showcasing real-life scenes from farmers’ daily lives. For instance, one television program illustrated the transformation of a dehqan farm in the Fergana Valley: previously engaged only in raw material production, the farm, following the reforms, established a fruit and vegetable processing unit, began exporting packaged finished products, and consequently doubled the number of jobs. During the program, interviews with the farmer and workers conveyed their satisfaction and the increase in employment opportunities, demonstrating to viewers—through the example of a single farm—the tangible benefits of the reforms.

In conclusion, television presents the effectiveness of agrarian reforms through a combination of statistical data, official statements, and real-life stories. This integrated approach strengthens public confidence in the reforms and fosters a positive perception of the changes taking place.

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