

**EXPORT POTENTIAL OF THE REGIONS OF THE SOUTH OF RUSSIA:
PATTERNS AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS**

**POTENCIAL DE EXPORTAÇÃO DAS REGIÕES DO SUL DA RÚSSIA: PADRÕES
E PERSPECTIVAS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO**

**POTENCIAL DE EXPORTACIÓN DE LAS REGIONES DEL SUR DE RUSIA:
PATRONES Y PERSPECTIVAS DE DESARROLLO**

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Editor Científico: José Edson Lara
Organização Comitê Científico
Double Blind Review pelo SEER/OJS
Recebido em 19.02.2022
Aprovado em 20.06.2022



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to analyze the elements of the export potential of the region's agricultural business based on the opinions of managers, specialists of agricultural organizations and experts. The research is devoted to the study of the elements of the export potential of the agricultural sector of the regional economy based on the opinions of leaders, specialists of agricultural organizations and experts. The issues of increasing export potential are key in terms of ensuring positive dynamics and sustainable socio-political and socio-economic development of the agricultural sector of the economy and are included in the spectrum of the most important state tasks.

Keywords: agricultural sector, export potential, sustainable development.

RESUMO

O objetivo da pesquisa é analisar os elementos do potencial exportador do agronegócio da região com base nas opiniões de gestores, especialistas de organizações agrícolas e especialistas. A pesquisa se dedica ao estudo dos elementos do potencial exportador do setor agropecuário da economia regional com base nas opiniões de líderes, especialistas de organizações agrícolas e especialistas. As questões do aumento do potencial exportador são fundamentais para assegurar uma dinâmica positiva e um desenvolvimento sociopolítico e socioeconômico sustentável do setor agrícola da economia e estão incluídas no espectro das tarefas estatais mais importantes.

Palavras-chave: setor agropecuário, potencial exportador, desenvolvimento sustentável.

RESUMEN

El propósito de la investigación es analizar los elementos del potencial exportador de la agroindustria de la región a partir de las opiniones de directivos, especialistas de organizaciones agropecuarias y expertos. La investigación está dedicada al estudio de los elementos del potencial exportador del sector agropecuario de la economía regional a partir de las opiniones de dirigentes, especialistas de organizaciones agropecuarias y expertos. Los temas del aumento del potencial de exportación son clave para garantizar una dinámica positiva y un desarrollo sociopolítico y socioeconómico sostenible del sector agrícola de la economía y se incluyen en el espectro de las tareas estatales más importantes.

Palabras clave: sector agropecuario, potencial exportador, desarrollo sostenible.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The problem of researching the export potential of the agricultural business of the economy is relevant for ensuring the sustainable functioning and consistent development of socio-economic systems. At the same time, ensuring high growth rates of export activities in the agricultural sector of the economy requires constant diagnostics of all kinds of barriers and obstacles to foreign trade.

The tasks of the research are largely sociological in nature and require assessments of direct representatives of the agricultural business in the South of Russia, engaged in export activities. In this regard, the research conducted a survey of three focus groups of respondents: “Heads”, “Specialists” and “Experts”.

The export potential of the region's agricultural sector is determined not only by the availability of production, labor, financial and other resources located in the region. This concept also includes the existing potential for the production of agricultural products competitive on the world market. The effect of the development of the export potential of the agro-industrial complex of the region should consist in a steady increase in production, the creation of new jobs, and an improvement in the standard of living of agricultural workers.

A large number of scientific works are devoted to the study of the export potential of the agricultural sector of the economy of both the country as a whole and the regions. Thus, the works of N. Petsukh (2015). In his opinion, the use of information technology in agricultural production will significantly increase the efficiency of production and budgetary costs. A. Pytkin notes as systemic problems in the development of the industry the lack of financial resources for the modernization of production, technological lagging behind developed countries, low wages and a shortage of qualified personnel (Pytkin, Urasova, 2015).

A. Izmalkov notes that the set of strategic directions for the development of the agro-industrial complex, without assessing the possibility of their implementation, are generally declarative in nature (Izmalkov, 2016). At the same time, the author identifies the following priority areas for the development of the regional agri-food complex: growth in production of products with high added value, growth in production of products with a relatively high final cost, growth in production of products with high export potential.

M. Gritsenko notes that the development priorities of the regional agro-industrial complex should provide conditions for the development of agricultural business and demand for agricultural raw materials (Gritsenko, 2017).

According to Yu. Zubareva and S.S. Perezhogin (2017), comprehensive support can allow the entrepreneurial structures of the agro-industrial complex to develop successfully and bring their products to world markets. At the same time, China, the countries of Southeast Asia and the Middle East were named as promising markets for Russian products. Products with a high level of export potential are meat, grain, products of the flour and cereals industry, as well as finished food products.

E. Morozov believes that the creation of conditions for the sustainable functioning of domestic agriculture is possible through the implementation of state tools for regulating the economy (Morozov, 2018). At the same time, it is noted that new instruments are required to support domestic production, since there are no prospects for increasing funding. In addition, a hypothesis is put forward about the existence of a direct relationship between the growth of agricultural production and an increase in food exports. This hypothesis is also confirmed by the fact that the demand on the domestic market for agricultural products is limited.

Yu. Binatov (2018) notes that the current stage of development of industrial relations is reflected in the agricultural sector of the economy, where the dominant direction should be innovation.

V. Savkin (2019) highlights the limiting factors that do not allow to increase the rate of promotion of Russian agricultural products to foreign markets. These include a lack of analytical information about potential markets, as well as various kinds of external barriers; insufficient competitiveness of domestic products with high added value, as well as weak integration ties of domestic producers.

The main elements of the economic mechanism, from the point of view of V. Maslova (2019), are prices. At the same time, market volatility and uneven growth in prices between the agro-industrial sectors reduce profitability and reduce investment activity in the industry. The problem of improving price relations between agriculture, food industry and trade remains extremely urgent. In the future, an increase in the share of agricultural producers in

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the final price of food will be possible with the development of agricultural consumer cooperation, the introduction of electronic agriculture, digitalization, starting with the widespread use of information and communication processes, electronic trading, online platforms and ending with the Internet of Things market.

According to M. Azzheurova (2020), the further development of exports should be aimed at reorientation from the export of agricultural raw materials to the export of processed products, that is, with a greater added value, while world prices for the finished product are much higher than for raw materials. The Russian agro-industrial complex has significant potential not only for the self-sufficiency of the country, but also the ability to provide significant export of products.

Thus, the export potential of the agrarian sector of the regional economy can be considered a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a qualitative characteristic from the point of view of direct participants in the production process. According to the authors, for such a qualitative characteristic of the elements of the export potential of the agro-industrial complex of the region, it is necessary to use the methodology of expert assessment (survey) with the subsequent interpretation of the survey results.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey of agricultural producers in the region on the development of export-oriented production of agricultural products was carried out in the municipal districts of the region using a selective method.

The survey was based on direct questioning (interviewing) of respondents. One of the main principles of the survey is the principle of voluntary participation.

The system of statistical indicators should provide comprehensive information from agricultural producers of the region on the development of the export potential of agricultural products.

At the same time, the information obtained from this system of indicators should give a broad and comprehensive description of the state and development of the export potential of agricultural products and contribute to the solution of the task.

The research was carried out in accordance with the developed algorithm (Fig. 1) by the method of an expert survey. For this, highly qualified specialists in the field of foreign economic activity, specializing in the sale of agricultural products, were selected, who formed three focus groups.

The selection of respondents for the survey was carried out on the basis of a typical sample method. This selection method is suitable for cases where the general population of respondents can be divided into three typical groups: heads of agricultural organizations, specialists and experts. To obtain reliable survey results, it is necessary to determine the size of the sample population for each of the focus groups presented. For the task we have set, we will assume that the degree of agreement of experts' opinions for the dissemination of the survey results to the general population should not exceed 5%. In accordance with this requirement, the following groups of respondents were selected for the survey.

1. "Heads of agricultural organizations" - this focus group was made up of persons who head agricultural organizations, representatives of all agro-climatic zones of the, a total of 420 respondents (20% of the total number of heads).
2. "Specialists and workers of agricultural organizations" - this focus group included persons whose permanent place of work is an agricultural organization. The focus group was formed without taking into account the qualifications of specific employees, the position held, work experience and age. The main task of assessing the opinion of the respondents of this group was to study the issues of the personnel potential of enterprises in the assessment from the standpoint of employees. In total, this group included 3200 respondents (16% of the total number of agricultural specialists and workers)
3. "Experts" - this focus group included scientific and pedagogical workers of higher education institutions with a scientific degree of Doctor of Economics and engaged in assessing the state and developing prospects for the development of the agricultural sector of the economy. This group included 120 respondents (20% of the total).

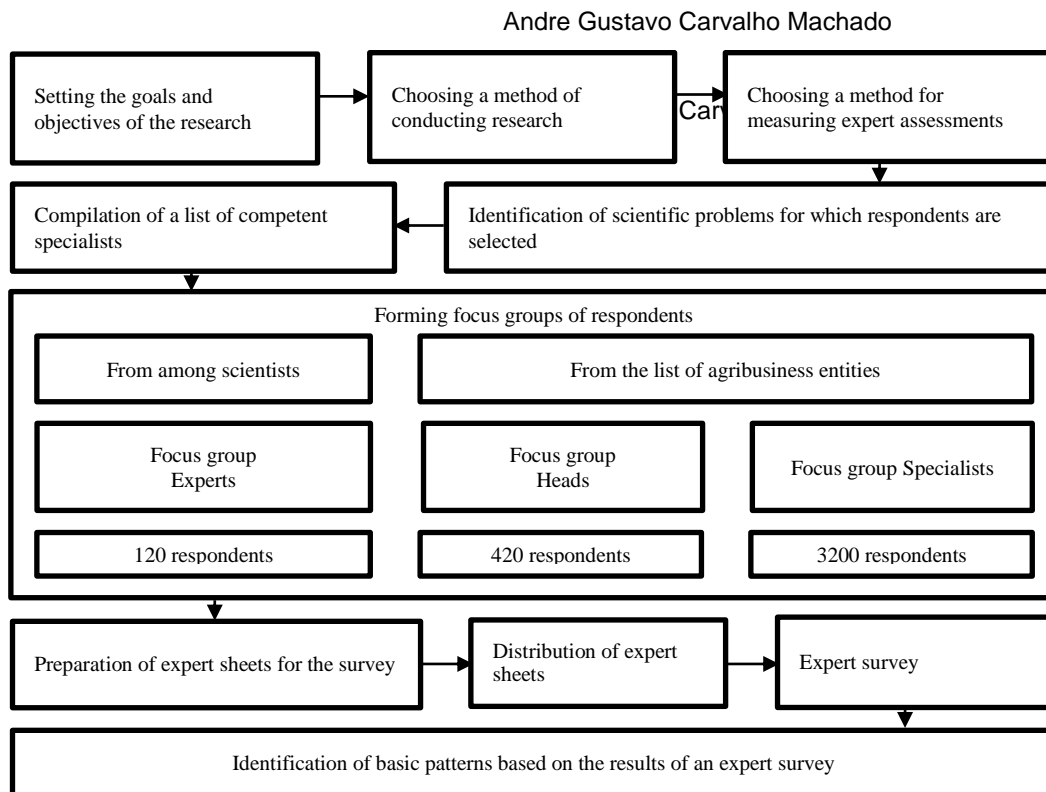


Figure 1 - Organizational model for assessing regional export potential

In order to obtain the most relevant information based on the results of the expert survey, as well as taking into account the diversity and multidimensionality of the research being conducted, the questionnaire was drawn up on the basis of the following positions:

1. Evaluation of the research results should be based on a comparative analysis of the data obtained between different focus groups of experts and in aggregate for all respondents;
2. When conducting the research, the task was set not only to establish barriers to foreign economic activity, it was important to assess the directions of the policy pursued in the region to increase the export potential of agricultural organizations. Separate questions, when forming the questionnaire, were given in such a way that the respondent could assess the influence of this or that factor in the historical retrospective, as well as assess the hypothetical influence of this factor in the future;
3. Another feature in the formation of the questionnaire was the fact that open-ended questions prevailed in it, since the experts are highly qualified and have sufficient experience

in the field under study, that is, the respondent could offer his own answer. This circumstance, among other things, also contributed to the leveling of subjectivity and limitations of the estimated parameters;

4. Separate parameters of the questionnaire provided for the need to rank factors depending on the degree of their significance, which later made it possible to conduct internal comparisons regarding the incentives for the development of foreign economic activity, the prospects and limitations of their use.

As part of the work with the “Heads” & “Specialists” focus groups, the following questions were studied:

- how long the company has been operating in foreign markets;
- the commodity structure of the export of the enterprise;
- main trading partners of countries in export operations;
- the effectiveness of measures taken by the Ministry of Agriculture in the development of export-oriented agricultural production;
- the export potential of the products manufactured at the enterprise;
- the main infrastructural and economic barriers hindering the export activities of the enterprise;
- the main tariff barriers hindering the export activities of the enterprise;
- the main non-tariff, technical and sanitary barriers hindering the export activities of the enterprise;
- compliance of the professional skills of employees with the requirements of the enterprise in terms of the development of the export potential of the enterprise;
- shortage of specialists in terms of developing the export potential of the enterprise;
- enterprise income from export operations;
- the most effective measures to support export-oriented entities;
- mechanisms for entering foreign markets;
- prospects for increasing exports of agricultural products;
- search for new foreign markets;
- the main reasons why the organization has not yet entered foreign markets;

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- sources of obtaining commercial information necessary for working in foreign markets;
- awareness of the company about barriers to trade and investment, about the rules for working in foreign markets.

The focus group “Experts” additionally assessed the competitiveness of agricultural producers in foreign markets in general, restrictions on the competitiveness of agricultural producers in foreign markets, the advantages in terms of production of products for export, expert assessment of mechanisms for entering foreign markets, etc.

Kendall's concordance coefficient was used as a criterion for assessing the consistency of expert opinions.

$$W = \frac{12 \sum_{j=1}^m d_j^2}{n^2(m^3 - m) - n \sum_{i=1}^n (t_i^3 - t_i)} \quad (1)$$

where n – number of experts;

m – number of evaluated objects;

d_j – deviation of the sum of ranks in the j -th direction from the average value of the ranks.

t_i – the number of equal ranks in the i -th group.

On the basis of the study, recommendations were proposed on the development of export-oriented agricultural production in the South of Russia.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Describing the qualitative composition of the “Heads” focus group, note that most of them (80.7%) have higher professional education (specialty, master's degree), another 10.5% have postgraduate education (postgraduate studies, postgraduate studies, residency, postgraduate training), 7% - Bachelor's degree and another 7% - Secondary vocational (secondary vocational according to the training program for mid-level specialists). Note that the interviewed “Heads” focus group regularly takes part in professional development activities, so 49.1% of the interviewed heads have completed advanced training courses over the past 3 years, one manager received a Ph.D. degree, two people completed a professional

retraining program, or received a second higher education, 50.9% regularly take part in thematic seminars, master classes. At the same time, 78.9% of respondents assess the experience of participation in the above activities positively, 12.3% - neutral in terms of the result, 1.8% - negative.

The majority of respondents (36.1%) note that income from export activities is between 10% and 30%. Thus, the surveyed enterprises engaged in export operations are focused primarily on the domestic market (Fig. 2).

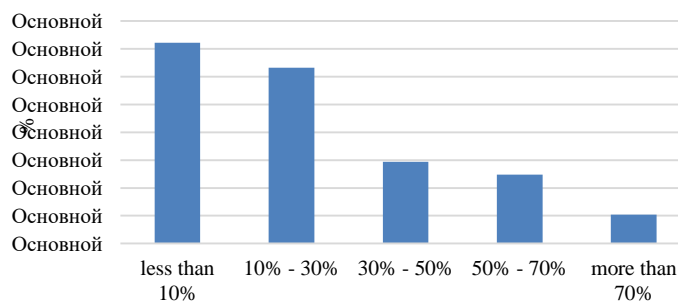


Figure 2 - Enterprise income from export operations

More than a third of respondents (37.6%) carry out only single deliveries of products for export, and only 15.2% of respondents regularly deliver more than 1 type of product.

Next, we will focus on the main mechanisms used for enterprises to enter foreign markets (Table 1). Almost all surveyed enterprises (95.6%) were engaged in independent search for partners in foreign markets. In addition, 52.3% of respondents noted the marketing research of the market as an effective mechanism for entering foreign markets.

Such a mechanism as advertising of their goods and services was noted by 44.2% of the respondents, another 30.5% of the respondents took part in exhibitions and fairs at their own expense. At the same time, the main mechanism used to enter foreign markets, enterprises note the independent search for partners.

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Table 1
Mechanisms for entering foreign markets

Poll results	Share, %
a) Independent search for partners	95.6
b) Market research	52.3
c) Advertising goods and services in foreign markets	44.2
d) Participation in exhibition and fair events at own expense	30.5
e) Participation in exhibitions and fairs through budget funding	14.2

Source: research data

Agricultural organizations in the South of Russia involved in export activities are faced with a number of problems that can be subdivided into problems that are common to all business entities and problems that are characteristic only of participants in foreign economic activity (Table 2).

Table 2
The main infrastructural and economic barriers hindering the export activities of the enterprise

Poll results	Distribution according to the severity of problems		
	High	Average	Low
a) Low production potential (insufficient volumes, quality)	5.4	12.1	82.5
b) Lack of reliable counterparties	2.7	21.6	75.7
c) Low economic potential	5.3	14.1	80.6
d) Low qualification of personnel, lack of necessary knowledge and competencies	30.2	30.5	39.3
e) Logistics and transportation problems	14.2	12.4	73.4
f) High competition	40.5	24.1	35.4
g) Restrictions on various operations for companies (logistics, finance, etc.)	45.4	31.8	22.8
h) Taxation (including VAT refund problems)	31.6	60.3	8.1
i) Bureaucratic procedures	36.8	40.5	22.7
j) Low opportunity to defend your case in arbitration	39.7	41.2	19.1
k) Corruption	45.1	18.3	36.6
l) Difficulties with product certification	12.4	31.8	55.8

Source: research data

Of the 12 problems that were proposed for assessment, the surveyed enterprises singled out the following problems as the most acute ones:

- bureaucratic procedures (36.8% of respondents rated this problem as “high”, 40.5% - as “medium”);
- corruption (45.1% - “high”, 18.3% - “low”);

- restrictions on various operations for companies (logistics, finance, etc.) (45.4% of respondents noted this problem as “high”, 31.8 - as “medium”);
- high competition (40.5% - “high”, 35.4% - “low”).
 - Separately, it is necessary to dwell on the problems associated with the passage of customs procedures. The majority of active participants in export transactions face these problems on a weekly basis (62.3%), 15.4% of respondents - several times a year and 22.3% - once a year or never.
 - The rest of the problems of a general nature are less typical for agricultural organizations engaged in foreign economic activity. It should be noted that, among other problems, some respondents noted the problem of “Delays in payments for work”, which significantly affects the operating activities of the enterprise, making it difficult to settle accounts with subcontractors.
 - When assessing the compliance of the professional skills of employees of agricultural organizations with the requirements of the enterprise in the context of foreign economic activity, the focus group “Heads” mainly spoke about the partial or full compliance of workers with the requirements, while such specialization as “Agronomy” received the largest share in favor of full compliance - 59, 6%. An insufficient level of compliance with the requirements was noted in relation to specialists in processing and service industries (Table 3).

Table 3

Compliance of the professional skills of employees with the requirements of the enterprise in terms of the development of the export potential of the enterprise

Specialization of workers	Share, %		
	Doesn't match	Partially match	Fully match
a) Agronomy	1.8	31.6	59.6
b) Veterinary	1.8	24.6	36.8
c) Engineering and technical direction	1.8	36.8	47.4
d) Economic service workers	3.5	28.1	45.6
e) Accounting and analytical direction	5.3	19.3	42.1
f) Processing and service industry specialists	7.0	22.8	31.6
g) Working specialties	1.8	43.9	43.9

Source: research data

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According to the focus group “Specialists”, the level of professional skills represented by the specializations of workers is more consistent with both the requirements imposed by the heads of agricultural organizations and the prevailing conditions in the labor market.

The focus group of Heads, when assessing the composition and structure of the demanded personnel of agricultural organizations, identified the following categories of specialists as the most scarce and in need of replenishment in the context of increasing foreign economic activity (Table 4):

1. Chief agronomist (17.5%);
2. Chief veterinarian, chief power engineer, chief engineer (15.8%);
3. Chief agrochemist (12.3%).

A significant increase in the demand for personnel is observed in relation to such a category of workers as the manager of a department (farm, agricultural plot), the potential need for this category of workers is noted by 12.3% of managers, while the current demand for this category of workers is not high. A significant change in the need for personnel is also noted in relation to chief accountants, as the current need for these specialists is noted by 3.5% of respondents, while the potential is 10.5%.

The greatest potential demand for personnel is noted in relation to such groups of workers as: chief agronomist (19.3%), chief agrochemist (15.8%), chief power engineer (14%), manager of a department (farm, agricultural plot) (12.3 %).

Table 4
Lack of specialists in terms of developing the export potential of the enterprise (focus group “Heads”)

Specialists		Share, %	
		Current demand	Potential demand
1	Chief Financial Officer (Deputy)	1.8	1.8
2	Chief agronomist	17.5	19.3
3	Chief agrochemist	12.3	15.8
4	Chief Veterinarian	15.8	7.0
5	Head of the veterinary department	1.8	5.3
6	Head of the department of irrigation, drainage, irrigation and drainage systems of the service for the operation of melioration systems	3.5	3.5
7	Head of the section (department), channels (groups of channels)	7.0	8.8
8	Chief Accountant	3.5	10.5
9	Chief Engineer	15.8	8.8
10	Chief Power Engineer	15.8	14.0
11	Warehouse Manager	5.3	5.3
12	Head of the household	1.8	1.8
13	Deputy Director for Commercial Affairs	8.8	0.0
14	Manager	1.8	1.8
15	Garage manager	7.0	5.3
16	Head (manager) of the workshop	3.5	3.5
17	Head of HR department	3.5	1.8
18	Head of the Marketing Department	0.0	1.8
19	Head of Procurement Department	3.5	7.0
20	Sales Manager	5.3	1.8
21	Head of the Planning and Economic Department	10.5	0.0
22	Foreman	1.8	1.8
23	Work manager (foreman)	5.3	7.0
24	Branch manager (farm, agricultural plot)	1.8	12.3
25	Other:	7.0	1.8

Source: research data

The greatest potential demand for personnel is noted in relation to such groups of workers as: chief agronomist (19.3%), chief agrochemist (15.8%), chief power engineer (14%), manager of a department (farm, agricultural plot) (12.3 %).

Among the professions of management, the most scarce in the current period, according to the focus group “Specialists”, are: chief agar (10.6%), chief agrochemist (10.31), chief engineer (8.44%), chief power engineer (7 , 81%), department manager (farm, agricultural plot) (8.44%) (table 4.13).

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A steady potential demand, according to workers and specialists, will remain in relation to the following managerial professions: chief veterinarian (10.63%); main agrar (10%); chief engineer (10%); chief power engineer (10.44%).

With regard to the current demand of specialists and employees, the following ranking results were obtained: tractor drivers, machinists (23.75%), workers employed in agricultural production (16.25%), accountant (10%), engineer (8.44%), cattle breeders (8.75), workers of service industries and farms (8.44%), plant protection agronomist (8.13%) (table 5).

Table 5
Lack of managerial professions (focus group “Specialists”)

№	Professions	Share, %	
		Current demand	Potential demand
1	Chief Financial Officer (Deputy)	6.25	3.75
2	Chief agrar	10.63	10.00
3	Chief agrochemist	10.31	4.69
4	Chief Veterinarian	5.00	10.63
5	Head of the veterinary department	3.13	6.56
6	Head of the department of irrigation, drainage, irrigation and drainage systems of the service for the operation of melioration systems	3.75	4.69
7	Head of the section (department), channels (groups of channels)	5.00	8.75
8	Chief Accountant	4.69	7.81
9	Chief Engineer	8.44	10.00
10	Chief Power Engineer	7.81	10.94
11	Warehouse Manager	4.38	6.88
12	Head of the household	3.13	6.88
13	Deputy Director for Commercial Affairs	2.50	3.44
14	Manager	1.88	3.13
15	Garage manager	2.50	4.69
16	Head (manager) of the workshop	3.44	4.69
17	Head of HR department	1.56	4.06
18	Head of the Marketing Department	1.25	5.00
19	Head of Procurement Department	1.56	3.13
20	Sales Manager	0.63	3.75
21	Head of the Planning and Economic Department	3.44	4.69
22	Foreman	0.94	3.75
23	Work manager (foreman)	3.75	5.94
24	Branch manager (farm, agricultural plot)	8.44	8.75

Source: research data

A stable potential demand, according to workers and specialists, will remain in relation to the following professions of specialists and employees: tractor drivers-machinists (20.3%),

workers employed in agriculture. production (15%), labor protection engineer (11.88%), legal adviser (9.06%), agronomist (9.38%), livestock technician (9.06%).

The respondents were asked to assess the fundamental importance of state support measures and, if they used them, to assess their effectiveness. The most important measures of state support were highlighted:

- subsidizing part of the interest rate on attracted loans;
- subsidizing part of the costs associated with participation in exhibition and fair events;
- participation in the fulfillment of state and municipal orders;
- information support. Coverage of the best practices of participants in foreign economic activity in the media.

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Table 6
The most effective support measures for export-oriented entities (potential and real)

	Poll results	Share, %
a)	full funding from budgetary funds for participation in collective stands held as part of exhibition and fair events	14.2
b)	subsidizing part of the costs associated with participation in exhibitions and fairs	62.7
c)	subsidies to reimburse part of the costs of certification according to international standards and payment for services to comply with the mandatory requirements of the legislation of the Russian Federation and the legislation of the importing country	34.8
d)	consulting support. Organization and holding of special seminars for participants in foreign economic activity, with coverage of the most problematic issues (clearance of customs procedures, export operations, VAT refunds, etc.)	27.6
e)	organization of business meetings of industry groups of entrepreneurs with foreign partners	21.3
f)	Information support. Coverage of the best practices of participants in foreign economic activity in the media.	70.5
g)	subsidizing part of the interest rate on attracted loans	72.9
h)	participation in the implementation of state and municipal orders	65.4

Source: research data

Subsidizing part of the interest rate on attracted loans was used by six surveyed enterprises, four of which rated the effectiveness of this support measure as “above average”, and two as “below average”. Only one respondent enjoyed subsidizing part of the costs associated with participation in exhibitions and fairs and rated the effectiveness of this measure as “above average”.

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The efficiency of participation in the fulfillment of state and municipal orders was assessed by the five enterprises that used it as “above average” and “very effective”. Information and consulting support was used by two respondents who rated the effectiveness of this support measure as “above average”. It should be noted that despite the fact that the need for almost all measures of state support for agricultural enterprises engaged in export activities was highly assessed by the respondents, only some of them received such support in practice.

It should be noted that 52.7% of the respondents in the “Heads” focus group assess the prospects for increasing exports of agricultural products as average. Most experts also noted medium prospects, while experts generally give a negative forecast (Table 7).

According to the focus group “Experts”, the main direction of increasing exports by agricultural producers of the South of Russia should be the development of the brand of the region. This measure is rated as the most effective.

Table 7
Prospects for increasing exports of agricultural products

Poll results	Share, %
Focus group “Heads”	
a) High	18.4
b) Medium	52.7
c) Low	28.9
Focus group “Specialists”	
a) High	32.4
b) Medium	41.7
c) Low	25.9
Focus group “Experts”	
a) High	21.4
b) Medium	22.5
c) Low	56.1

Source: research data

When assessing the prospects for entering foreign markets, most respondents refer to market conditions, depending on which a decision will be made to increase export activities, which generally indicates the absence of a sustainable strategy for expanding markets outside the country (Table 8).

Table 8
Access to new foreign markets

	Poll results	Share, %
a)	Yes	27.4
b)	No	32.1
c)	Depending on the market environment	40.5

Source: research data

Among the reasons why the surveyed agricultural producers of the region have not yet entered foreign markets, the following were noted:

- lack of a well-developed business plan (34.6%),
- ignorance of the market (61.2%),
- difficulties in finding partners (74.5%);
- difficulties with registration as a participant in foreign economic activity (18.5%).
-

It is obvious that mainly agricultural organizations need specialized measures of state support. At the initial stage, the most effective measure is the provision of consulting support, since access to foreign markets is a significant problem due to the lack of a business plan, ignorance of customs procedures, lack of international certificates and others.

In the future, such measures as subsidizing part of the costs associated with participation in exhibition and fair events, organizing business meetings of industry groups of entrepreneurs with foreign partners aimed at helping in finding partners and studying the market should come to the fore.

The main source of commercial information for working in foreign markets for agricultural producers of the region is the company's own research and databases, as well as partners, personal connections in countries (table 9).

Table 9
Sources of commercial information for working in foreign markets

	Poll results	Share, %
a)	Official websites of Russian authorities	40.5
b)	Databases on the Internet for business in foreign languages	12.1
c)	Mass media, including on the Internet	48.6
d)	Partners, personal connections in countries	58.1
e)	Own research and company databases	62.1

Source: research data

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But at the same time, the majority of respondents note that the organization has insufficient information about foreign markets and this is one of the most serious obstacles to work (Table 10).

Table 10

Awareness of the company about barriers to trade and investment, about the rules of work in foreign markets

	Poll results	Share, %
a)	The organization has sufficient information about foreign markets	12.4
b)	The organization has insufficient information about foreign markets, but this is not a serious obstacle to work	39.1
c)	The organization has insufficient information about foreign markets, and this is one of the most serious obstacles to work	48.5

Source: research data

Based on the results of the study, it can be noted that at present, agricultural producers of the South of Russia are not yet sufficiently involved in export activities. This fact is also confirmed by the difficulties encountered in finding respondents to conduct a survey and interviews with representatives of agricultural organizations. Many agricultural producers of the South of Russia prefer to sell their products on the domestic market to specialized trade enterprises engaged in professional foreign economic activity, thereby losing a significant share of profits. A proper infrastructure is not created for full-fledged export activities, and export transactions are mostly one-time.

At the final stage of the study, an expert assessment of the likelihood of the implementation of factors in the development of the region's agrarian sector, potentially capable of increasing the export potential of agricultural production, was carried out.

For the assessment, a survey of the “Experts” focus group was conducted. In the course of the survey, the respondents assessed the likelihood of the occurrence of the listed factors (Table 11).

The respondents assessed the probability of an event occurring on a scale of standard significance: from “1” to “5”, where “5” means the maximum probability of the event, “1” - the minimum probability.

According to the results obtained, the likelihood of increasing the professional competencies of workers in the agricultural sector and expanding external integration relations of agribusiness entities is maximum. The least likely, according to experts, is an increase in the level of wages for agricultural workers. The likelihood of other events occurring can be considered average.

Table 11

Results of the survey of the focus group “Experts” on the assessment of factors to increase the export potential

Factors of increasing the export potential of the agro-industrial complex of the region	Experts					Points total	Probability
	№1	№2	№3	...	№12		
1. The agricultural sector of the economy will develop faster than the economy as a whole	3	3	4	...	3	41	medium
2. Business activity of agricultural producers will increase significantly	5	3	3	...	4	39	medium
3. The professional competence of workers in the agricultural sector will increase	5	4	4	...	4	45	high
4. Investment in modernization of production will increase	4	4	5	...	3	40	medium
5. Subjects of the agro-industrial complex will introduce information technologies into production	5	3	4	...	3	39	medium
6. Elements of smart agriculture will be widely used in the production of agricultural products	4	3	3	...	3	38	medium
7. The share of highly processed agricultural products will grow	3	4	3	...	4	37	medium
8. External integration ties of agribusiness entities will expand	3	4	4	...	4	44	high
9. The level of remuneration of workers will increase	2	2	2	...	2	27	low
10. Demand for agribusiness products in foreign markets will grow	4	4	3	...	3	43	medium

Source: research data

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According to the obtained value $W = 0.849$, the agreement of experts' opinions can be considered as high.

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The income of the surveyed agricultural producers of the South of Russia from export operations does not yet account for a significant share of the turnover. Only a few organizations are ready to consider the export of agricultural products as the main source of income, while for other agricultural producers, the risks of export activities are still significant, therefore, foreign countries are regarded by them at best as a supplemented sales market, and not as the main one.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In the commodity structure of exports of agricultural commodity producers in the South of Russia, only cereals and fertilizers prevail. Agricultural products are mainly exported to the CIS countries and the countries of the Middle East. However, the plans of enterprises for the coming years are to significantly expand the geography of foreign trade.

For the most part, agricultural producers in the South of Russia entered foreign markets independently by searching for trade partners, marketing research and participation in exhibitions and fairs. At the same time, the focus group of experts noted that the initial stage of entering foreign markets is the most difficult, which requires the adoption of special measures on the part of regional authorities related to the participation of agricultural organizations in exhibition and fair events.

Among the problems typical for agricultural producers in the South of Russia, the interviewed experts noted as the most acute for them problems with staffing, taxation, problems with bureaucratic procedures and defending their rights in arbitration. In terms of export activities, the focus group "Heads" singles out the key problem with VAT refunds, difficulties in certification of agricultural products, difficulties in processing export operations and the problem of finding partners in foreign countries.

Recognizing the importance of state support measures, only a small number of surveyed agricultural producers in the South of Russia received it, and their assessment of the effectiveness of these measures is not at the highest level. Among the fundamentally

important measures of state support for agricultural producers in the South of Russia engaged in foreign economic activity, key attention should be paid to subsidizing part of the costs associated with participation in exhibition and fair events, subsidizing the interest rate on attracted credits and loans and consulting support.

Experts note that for the development of foreign trade activities of agricultural organizations, it is necessary to improve the quality of the state support provided, to improve the mechanisms for its provision, while the implementation of these measures should be linked to measures to support all agriculture in the South of Russia.

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