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### THE CONCEPT OF EXPORT POTENTIAL OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTS AND ITS ECONOMIC CONTENT

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**Abstract:** This article examines the theoretical content of the concept of export potential of fruit and vegetable products, its economic nature and structural components. Internal and external factors shaping export potential are distinguished, and the specific characteristics of perishable horticultural products as objects of foreign trade are discussed. It is concluded that export potential should be interpreted not merely through production volume, but through the combination of competitive advantages, quality standards, and market access opportunities.

**Keywords:** export potential, fruit and vegetable products, competitiveness, comparative advantage, horticulture, foreign trade.

Under conditions of economic transformation, the agricultural sector of Uzbekistan is increasingly assessed not through gross output alone but through its capacity to compete on external markets. Horticultural produce occupies a particular place in this reassessment: international organizations have repeatedly noted that fruit and vegetable trade is among the fastest-growing segments of global food trade, and that success in this segment depends as much on marketing and logistics systems as on primary production. This shift in emphasis makes it necessary to clarify what is actually meant by the export potential of fruit and vegetable products, since the term is used loosely in both policy documents and academic literature.

A review of the specialized literature shows that the export potential of the agri-food complex is most often defined as an aggregate of competitive advantages that determine a producer's or a country's ability to sell products profitably abroad, rather than as a simple physical surplus available for. This distinction matters: a region may possess a large harvestable surplus of fruit and vegetables and still have a weak export potential if that surplus cannot meet importing countries' phytosanitary, packaging, or continuity-of-supply requirements. Export potential, in other words, is a relational category — it exists only in relation to the demands of a specific external market.

Structurally, the export potential of an economic entity is commonly divided into an internal and an external component. The internal component covers production capacity, the resource and technological base, product quality, and the entity's own organizational readiness for foreign trade activity, while the external component reflects the state of foreign demand, tariff and non-tariff regimes, transport accessibility, and the intensity of competition on target markets. For horticultural exporters this division is especially useful because it separates problems that a farm or district can solve on its own — irrigation, variety selection, storage — from problems that require coordinated regional or national action, such as certification infrastructure or trade-corridor development.

Classical trade theory supplies the deeper economic logic behind these definitions. The principle of comparative advantage explains why regions with favorable soil, climate, and labor conditions for horticulture gain from specializing in and exporting fruit and vegetables rather than attempting self-sufficiency in all goods, while the factor-endowment approach associated with Heckscher and Ohlin links export specialization to the relative abundance of land, water, and labor. Balassa's index of revealed comparative advantage remains the most widely used empirical tool for testing whether a country's actual export structure confirms these theoretical expectations. The methodology developed by the International Trade Centre extends this logic further by combining revealed trade performance

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with an assessment of natural endowments and market-diversification opportunities, which allows analysts to identify not only existing but also latent export potential.

Fruit and vegetable products nevertheless possess characteristics that set them apart from most other traded commodities and that any definition of export potential must accommodate. Their perishability compresses the time available for logistics decisions, their output is markedly seasonal, and their trade is unusually sensitive to phytosanitary standards and to the availability of cold-chain infrastructure. Empirical work on gravity models of agricultural trade confirms that tariff structures, government efficiency, and the quality of trade-supporting institutions exert a measurable influence on realized export volumes even when natural production conditions are favorable. Financial-mechanism studies add that targeted instruments — export credit, insurance against price and climatic risk, and subsidized modernization loans — can convert a latent horticultural surplus into an actually realized export flow.

Bringing these strands together, the export potential of fruit and vegetable products may be defined, for the purposes of the present study, as the dynamic combination of a region's production-resource capacity, its institutional and quality-related readiness to meet the requirements of foreign markets, and the practical opportunities for market access that arise from trade policy, logistics infrastructure, and international demand. This definition deliberately treats export potential as something that must be actively realized through management action rather than as a fixed endowment, which is precisely the gap that the marketing mechanism examined in the following section is designed to close.

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