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ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND POTENTIAL OF CHINA-UKRAINE AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION UNDER THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE

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Summary

Introduction. Based on the complementary advantages of agricultural resources and production factors between China and Ukraine, this article analyzes the current situation of agricultural product trade and investment between China and Ukraine through a comparison of macroeconomic, land resources, population, and agricultural production. **Purpose.** Located along the “Belt and Road”, Ukraine is one of the first countries to participate in the “Belt and Road” construction. China and Ukraine should carry out in-depth cooperation in agricultural investment, agricultural product trade, deep processing of agricultural products and agricultural technology. **Results.** Ukraine is a key country for China’s foreign investment along the “Belt and Road”. The Chinese and Ukrainian governments have signed a series of documents and agreements to promote the cooperation and development of China-Ukraine agriculture. Through China’s agricultural investment in Ukraine, it can effectively promote the complementary combination of agricultural technology, capital and production factors between China and Ukraine, promote the rapid development of agricultural production, planting and agricultural product processing. The China-Ukraine Agricultural Technology Park is in its early stages, with a small scale and a lack of investment in the field of deep processing of agricultural products. The two countries have great potential for investment in the agricultural industry chain, and there is ample room for cooperation in areas such as deep processing, warehousing, and logistics of agricultural products. With the development of e-commerce, China and Ukraine can consider expanding the “online consumption” of agricultural products, carry out cross-border cooperation by means of “Internet plus Agriculture” and play the role of the Internet in promoting the trade of agricultural products. **Conclusions.** China and Ukraine can further expand

agricultural trade, strengthen agricultural investment, promote agricultural technology cooperation and talent exchange, and jointly achieve mutually beneficial development. This not only helps promote economic growth in both countries, but also contributes to the stability and sustainability of the global agricultural market.

Key words: “Belt and Road”, agricultural cooperation, China, Ukraine, current situation, potential.

АНАЛІЗ ПОТОЧНОЇ СИТУАЦІЇ І ПОТЕНЦІАЛУ КИТАЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОГО СПІВРОБІТНИЦТВА В ГАЛУЗІ СІЛЬСЬКОГО ГОСПОДАРСТВА В РАМКАХ ІНІЦІАТИВИ «ОДИН ПОЯС, ОДИН ШЛЯХ»

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Анотація

Вступ. Грунтуючись на взаємних перевагах сільськогосподарських ресурсів і факторів виробництва в Китаї та Україні, у статті автори аналізують поточну ситуацію у сфері торгівлі сільськогосподарською продукцією, а також інвестицій між Китаєм та Україною шляхом порівняння макроекономічних, земельних ресурсів, населення та сільськогосподарського виробництва. **Мета.** Розташована вздовж «Поясу та шляху», Україна є однією з перших країн, які взяли участь у цій ініціативі. Китай і Україна мають перспективи співробітництва, інвестування в сільське господарство, торгівлю сільськогосподарською продукцією, поглиблену переробку сільськогосподарської продукції, сільськогосподарські технології. **Результати.** Україна є ключовою країною для іноземних інвестицій Китаю в рамках «Поясу та шляху». Між Китаєм та Україною підписана низка міжурядових документів та угод, спрямованих на сприяння співробітництву та розвитку китайсько-українського сільського господарства. Інвестиції Китаю в сільське господарство України можуть ефективно сприяти додатковому поєднанню сільськогосподарських технологій, капіталу та виробничих факторів, швидкому розвитку сільськогосподарського виробництва, вироцування та переробки сільськогосподарської продукції. Китайсько-український агротехнологічний парк знаходиться на ранніх стадіях, має невеликі масштаби, у ньому відсутні інвестиції у сферу глибокої переробки сільськогосподарської продукції. Однак дві країни мають великий потенціал для інвестицій у ланцюжок сільськогосподарської промисловості, а також можливості для співпраці у таких сферах, як глибока переробка, складування та логістика сільськогосподарської продукції. З розвитком електронної комерції Китай та Україна можуть розглянути можливість розширення «онлайн-споживання» сільськогосподарської продукції, здійснювати транскордонне співробітництво через «Інтернет плюс сільське господарство», а також використовувати роль Інтернету у сприянні торгівлі сільськогосподар-

ською продукцією між двома країнами. **Висновки.** Китай і Україна можуть і далі розширювати торгівлю сільськогосподарською продукцією, зміцнювати інвестиції в сільське господарство, просувати співробітництво у сфері сільськогосподарських технологій та обміну талантами, а також сумісно добиватися взаємовигідного розвитку. Це не тільки сприяє економічному розвитку в обох країнах, а також є складовою, що забезпечує стабільність і сталий розвиток світового сільськогосподарського ринку.

Ключові слова: «Пояс та шлях», співробітництво, сільськогосподарська продукція, Китай, Україна, поточна ситуація, потенціал.

Introduction. Located along the “Belt and Road”, Ukraine is one of the first countries to participate in the “Belt and Road” construction. Over the past decade, the joint construction of the “Belt and Road” between China and Ukraine has continued to deepen, and the momentum of cooperation in various fields, especially in the agricultural field, has continued to improve. In 2019, China became Ukraine’s largest agricultural trading partner, with a trade volume of 2.1 billion US dollars, surpassing India, which had ranked first for three consecutive years. Its export volume exceeded 1.9 billion US dollars, accounting for 18.9% of Ukraine’s agricultural exports [1]. Meanwhile, China has become Ukraine’s tenth largest importer of agricultural products. Since 2020 the agricultural cooperation between China and Ukraine has been greatly affected. The import and export volume of agricultural products has declined significantly.

Ukraine has abundant agricultural resources, ranking second in Europe in terms of land area. Agricultural land accounts for 68.7% of the country’s land area and is one of the world’s three major black soil zones, accounting for 27% of the world’s black soil area. The added value of agriculture (including crop cultivation and livestock breeding) accounts for about 13% of the gross domestic product (GDP), and the export of agricultural products accounts for 39% of the export trade volume. However, there are problems such as insufficient agricultural investment, outdated warehousing and logistics infrastructure, lack of deep processing capacity, exports mainly based on raw materials, and low added value. The Chinese agricultural product market has great potential and advantages in mechanization level, water-saving irrigation technology, management experience, and funding.

Formulation of the problem. Due to the complementary advantages of geographical conditions and agricultural production factors, it has brought opportunities for agricultural cooperation between China and Ukraine. However, at present, agricultural cooperation between China and Ukraine is limited to primary agricultural product trade, agricultural investment, and other fields. The scale of agricultural product trade and agricultural cooperation projects is relatively small, which does not conform to the current agricultural development strategy of China and Ukraine. Therefore, China-Ukraine agricultural cooperation based on the “Belt and Road” strategy can not only promote the “going global” and “bringing in” of Chinese agriculture, but also is one of the effective ways for Ukraine to get the plight of agricultural development, which has a positive role in promoting the agricultural and economic development of China and Ukraine.

1. Analysis of the Basic Situation of China and Ukraine

1.1. Macroeconomic situation of China and Ukraine

In recent years, with the sustained and stable growth of the Chinese economy, it has promoted the comprehensive development of industrialization, urbanization, and agricultural modernization, creating a favorable environment for the adjustment of agricultural industrial structure and the development of modern agriculture. From 2020 to 2023, China's gross domestic product will increase from 14.69 trillion US dollars to 17.79 trillion US dollars, maintaining stable and high-speed development. The added value of Chinese agriculture has increased, but the competitiveness of Chinese agricultural products in both domestic and international markets has become increasingly prominent, leading to a bottleneck in the modernization of agriculture and the supply and demand of agricultural products. From 2014 to 2023, the gross domestic product of Ukraine increased from 133.5 billion dollars to 178.8 billion dollars. From 2014 to 2015, the economy experienced negative growth, and then entered a rising period. 2022 led to another decline in Ukraine's economy. The added value of agriculture in Ukraine has decreased, and there is still relatively little investment in the agricultural sector. This has posed significant challenges in promoting agricultural development and implementing policies related to agricultural support. The phenomenon of backward agricultural infrastructure and insufficient investment in agricultural research has always existed [2]. The macroeconomic changes in China and Ukraine from 2020 to 2022 is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1

Macroeconomic changes in China and Ukraine from 2020 to 2022

Years	GDP (trillion dollars)		Proportion of agricultural value added (%)	
	China	Ukraine	China	Ukraine
2020	14.69	0.16	16.47	9.31
2021	17.82	0.20	16.05	10.89
2022	17.88	0.16	16.20	8.22

Source:[3][4]

1.2. Comparison of Land Resources between China and Ukraine

China has abundant land resources, sufficient water resources, and a suitable climate for planting a variety of crops. However, due to the large population and small per capita planting area, the scale production of agriculture is limited. The land area of China is about 960 million hectares, with an agricultural land area of 527.83 million hectares. Among them, the cultivated land area is 119 million hectares, accounting for 12.4% of the land area. The permanent grassland and pasture area is 392.83 million hectares, accounting for 41.1% of the land area. The forest area is 208.32 million hectares, with a forest coverage rate of 21.8%. The total irrigated area is 71.57 million hectares [5]. The construction of small-scale agricultural water conservancy is crucial for the development of agriculture. In recent years, China's agricultural irrigation infrastructure has been continuously improved, and the irrigated area of agriculture has gradually expanded.

Ukraine has a land area of 57.94 million hectares, fertile soil, abundant agricultural and water resources, and is very suitable for crop production and cultivation. The

agricultural land area is 41.31 million hectares, accounting for 71.3% of the national land area, including 32.93 million hectares of arable land, which is 10 times the per capita arable land area of China. The forest area is 10.63 million hectares, accounting for 16.6% of the national land area [6]. The main crops in Ukraine include cereal grains, oil crops, sugar crops, and potatoes.

1.3. Comparison of Population Situation between China and Ukraine

From 2014 to 2023, China's total population increased from 1.38 billion to 1.41 billion, while the rural population decreased from 609 million to 477 million, accounting for 33.83% of the country's total population from 44.25% [5]. Although the overall number of agricultural labor continues to decline, the phenomenon of surplus agricultural labor is still prominent, and there are still abundant agricultural labor resources. From 2014 to 2023, the total population of Ukraine decreased from 43 million to 37 million, with the population remaining relatively stable. The rural population has decreased from 14 million to 11 million, accounting for 29.73% of the total national population from 32.56% [7]. The trend of population decline is not expected to change in the short term. Due to the migration of young rural labor to cities and the intensification of aging, the problem of labor shortage is particularly prominent.

1.4. Investment in agriculture in China and Ukraine

In recent years, in order to promote agricultural development and enhance the competitiveness of agricultural products, China has continuously increased its investment in agricultural infrastructure construction, agricultural research and development, agricultural product processing, logistics, and warehousing. From 2020 to 2023, agricultural capital investment has increased from 1.3 trillion RMB to 2.1 trillion RMB [6]. The significantly lower investment in agriculture in Ukraine compared to China is an important factor contributing to the lack of driving force for agricultural development.

1.5. Production of major agricultural products in China and Ukraine

China has had consecutive bumper harvests in grain production, abundant grain reserves, and ample market supply. In 2023, China's grain production will reach 1390.8 billion catties, remaining stable at over 1.3 trillion catties for nine consecutive years. The per capita grain production is 493 kilograms, which has exceeded the world average level for many consecutive years and is also higher than the internationally recognized food security line of 400 kilograms. The self-sufficiency rate target for Chinese grain products has consistently remained above 95%. Agriculture plays an important role in production and trade in Ukraine. Over the years, the average crop yield in Ukraine has reached 1.5-2 times its domestic demand. In addition to self-sufficiency, Ukraine also exports to the European Union, Asia, and North Africa. Ukraine's grain supply to the international market in 2023 reached 43 million tons, higher than the 37 million tons in the same period of 2022. The total export value of agricultural products was 22.9 billion US dollars, a year-on-year increase of 7% [8].

1.6. Comparison of Major Agricultural Product Trade between China and Ukraine

China's main import and export agricultural products include grains, cotton, sugar, edible oilseeds, edible vegetable oils, vegetables, fruits, livestock products, and aquatic products. Ukraine's main export agricultural products are sunflower seed oil, sunflower meal, grains, rapeseed, walnuts, barley, wheat, corn, soybeans, etc. Sugar products also

have an important share in the European market. These products are the main agricultural products provided by Ukraine to foreign markets, among which corn exports are particularly significant, accounting for 13% of the world's total exports, barley exports account for 12% of the world's total exports, and wheat exports account for 8% of the world's exports. China's imports of corn and barley from Ukraine account for 29% and 26% of China's total imports, respectively, occupying an important position [8].

2. Current situation of agricultural cooperation between China and Ukraine

2.1. Import and export trade of agricultural products

Since the “Belt and Road” initiative was put forward ten years ago, China Ukraine economic and trade cooperation and agricultural trade have been developing continuously. According to Chinese customs statistics, the trade volume between China and Ukraine in 2023 is 6.811 billion US dollars, with China exporting 2.781 billion US dollars to Ukraine and importing 4.03 billion US dollars from Ukraine. The import and export trade volume of agricultural products between China and Ukraine was 3.813 billion US dollars. The total trade volume of agricultural products between China and Ukraine was 3.81 billion US dollars, an increase of 21.8% over the same period last year, accounting for 55.98% of the total trade volume between China and Ukraine and 1.1% of the total trade volume of agricultural products in China. Among them, exports amounted to 143 million US dollars, a decrease of 7.4% compared to the same period last year, accounting for 0.1% of China's total agricultural product exports. Imports amounted to 3.67 billion US dollars, a year-on-year increase of 23.3%, accounting for 1.6% of China's total agricultural product imports. The trade deficit was 3.53 billion US dollars, an increase of 25% compared to the same period last year [8–10]. China's exports of tobacco and related products, feed, nuts and related products, dairy products, and other products to Ukraine have seen a significant decrease in value, while exports of seafood, fruits, and vegetables have increased significantly. The amount of grain, vegetable oil, feed, dairy products and other products imported by China from Ukraine has significantly increased. The trade volume of agricultural products between China and Ukraine from 2019 to 2023 is shown in the Table 2.

Table 2

Trade volume of agricultural products between China and Ukraine from 2019 to 2023 (in millions of US dollars)

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
China exports to Ukraine	206	224	261	155	143
China imports to Ukraine	2441	367	5239	2977	367
Gross value of imports and exports	2647	3894	55	3132	3813

Source: [8][9][10]

2.2. Current situation of agricultural investment cooperation

Ukraine is a key country for China's foreign investment along the “Belt and Road”. The Chinese and Ukrainian governments have signed a series of documents and agreements to promote the cooperation and development of China-Ukraine agriculture. China has invested a lot of funds and technology in Ukraine's agricultural field, making contributions to Ukraine's agricultural development. For example, China has invested in some agricultural projects in Ukraine, such as planting crops such as wheat, corn,

and soybeans, providing important support for Ukraine's agricultural production. Through China's agricultural investment in Ukraine, it can effectively promote the complementary combination of agricultural technology, capital, and production factors between China and Ukraine, and promote the rapid development of agricultural production, planting, and agricultural product processing in Ukraine. However, due to the limited agricultural special support funds from the Chinese government, insufficiently specific guidance documents for overseas agriculture, incomplete information platform construction, and small enterprise scale, as well as the poor investment environment, lack of labor resources, insufficient production capacity of basic industries, low integration of national industry standards with international standards, incomplete financial policy system, policies and legal systems in Ukraine, Chinese investors' investment in Ukraine has been constrained, and Chinese enterprises' "going global" has encountered certain obstacles [11].

3. Analysis of Potential Areas for Agricultural Cooperation between China and Ukraine

3.1. Agricultural product trade

The categories of agricultural products with strong competitiveness in the international market in Ukraine mainly include grains, oilseeds, vegetable oils, corn, wheat, barley, rapeseed, soybeans, sunflower seed oil, sunflower meal, and soybean meal, which have been the categories of agricultural products with high import demand in China in recent years [12]. With the continuous optimization of Ukraine's agricultural policies, its agricultural production potential will continue to be released, and its agricultural product export capacity will become stronger compared to China. At the same time, Ukraine has import demand for Chinese seafood, vegetables, fruits, etc. The prospects for agricultural trade cooperation between China and Ukraine are broad.

3.2. Agricultural Investment Cooperation

China's agricultural investment in Ukraine is relatively small in scale and has a single investment model. The vast majority of Chinese companies that "go global" cultivate agricultural products through land leasing, lacking in-depth cooperation and communication with local government departments and agricultural enterprises in Ukraine. They can innovate investment models, accelerate the construction of agricultural industrial parks, promote the construction of logistics facilities, optimize ports, and shorten the transportation time of agricultural products [13].

3.3. Agricultural Science and Technology Cooperation

The scope of agricultural technology cooperation between China and Ukraine is limited, and the level of cooperation is not high. Lack of a comprehensive technology cooperation platform, due to poor communication, there are obstacles in information exchange between the two parties, making it difficult to promote industry university research cooperation. The two countries can carry out in-depth and extensive cooperation in agricultural machinery research and development, agricultural technology promotion, agricultural talent exchange.

3.4. Deep Processing of Agricultural Products

The China-Ukraine Agricultural Technology Park is in its early stages, with a small scale and a lack of investment in the field of deep processing of agricultural products. The two countries have great potential for investment in the agricultural industry

chain, and there is ample room for cooperation in areas such as deep processing, warehousing, and logistics of agricultural products. Chinese enterprises can carry out agricultural production in Ukraine and improve supporting facilities for deep processing of agricultural products for local processing and sales. At the same time, it effectively solves the problem of high transportation and storage requirements for fruit and vegetable products, reducing the trade cost of agricultural products [14].

3.5. “Internet plus Agriculture” cross-border cooperation

With the development of e-commerce in Ukraine, China and Ukraine can consider expanding the “online consumption” of agricultural products between China and Ukraine, carry out cross-border cooperation by means of “Internet plus Agriculture”, and play the role of the Internet in promoting the trade of agricultural products between the two countries [15].

4. Recommendations

Promoting China-Ukraine agricultural cooperation under the “Belt and Road” strategy is of great significance to the agricultural development of the two countries. Through the rapid flow and efficient allocation of agricultural resources, technology, capital, labor and other production factors, comparative advantages are exerted to extend the agricultural cooperation industry chain. China and Ukraine should further strengthen communication and exchanges between governments, sign relevant agricultural cooperation agreements and policy documents, optimize investment environment and investment guarantee mechanisms, improve agricultural investment policies and supporting preferential policies, build diversified investment and financing platforms, eliminate bilateral investment and trade barriers, improve financial regulatory systems, and provide convenience to carry out agricultural cooperation. Ukraine should make efforts to improve the domestic investment environment, enhance the integration of product industry standards with international standards. It should encourage Chinese enterprises to invest and cooperate in agriculture locally, strengthen agricultural infrastructure construction, and export China’s advanced water-saving irrigation technology, agricultural machinery, agricultural technology, and management technology to Ukraine’s agricultural production, thereby enhancing Ukraine’s agricultural development potential [16].

China should issue relevant guidance on Ukraine’s agricultural cooperation and development, clearly point out the key areas and fields of overseas agricultural development, strengthen financial and policy support, improve the tax rebate rate of China’s agricultural exports, provide export credit and insurance to agricultural enterprises, encourage Chinese investors to expand in areas such as agricultural development, technical cooperation and the construction of agricultural parks in Ukraine, and remind investors to have a systematic understanding of Ukraine’s economic development trends, business operation laws, labor protection laws, fiscal and tax policies and investment policies, focus on supporting and establishing China Ukraine technology park projects, give play to the demonstration effect, reduce agricultural production costs and agricultural trade barriers, and use the “Internet plus Agriculture” approach to make Chinese agriculture “go global”. Simultaneously introducing Ukrainian agricultural technology and products to promote sustainable development of agricultural cooperation between China and Ukraine.

Conclusion.

In the context of the “the Belt and Road” initiative, China-Ukraine agricultural cooperation has great potential, benefiting from the complementary advantages of the two countries and the changes in the international situation. By improving the level of agricultural technology, enhancing the quality and standards of agricultural products, emphasizing environmental protection and sustainable development, improving agricultural infrastructure construction, developing road transportation networks, promoting the convenience of agricultural product trade, and strengthening policy coordination and planning, we can address the challenges of agricultural product technology and transportation logistics. China and Ukraine can further expand agricultural trade, strengthen agricultural investment, promote agricultural technology cooperation and talent exchange, and jointly achieve mutually beneficial development. This not only helps promote economic growth in both countries, but also contributes to the stability and sustainability of the global agricultural market.

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