

# RESEARCH ON FOREIGN TRADE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN CHINA UNDER THE BACKGROUND OF BELT AND ROAD

Gang Chen, Yao Chen, Yide Sun, Qianqi Jin, Bofan He\*

*School of International business, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, 312000, Zhejiang Province, China.*

*Corresponding author: Bofan He, Email: 20171017@zyufl.edu.cn*

**Abstract:** With the rapid development of the global economy, strengthening international cooperation has become the trend of The Times, our country put forward the "Belt and Road" initiative in 2013, which not only conforms to the practical needs of the current and future global social and economic development, but also has extensive theoretical basis. It also plays an important role in our country's agricultural development, which can further expand the scale of cross-border trade in agricultural products, deepen the adjustment of the agricultural industrial structure, and comprehensively enhance the closeness of the world's production capacity cooperation. The "Belt and Road" initiative covers more than 70 countries or regions with a total population of more than 4.5 billion and a total GDP of nearly 20 trillion US dollars. It should be noted that agriculture occupies an important fundamental position in the development of the national economy. In order to accelerate its development, we should explore and innovate the cross-border trade model of agricultural products to adapt to the development trend of globalization. Based on the current situation of agricultural product trade, this paper proposes further optimization measures based on the background of the "Belt and Road", aiming to provide a reference for further promoting the development of China's agricultural trade.

**Keywords:** One belt one road; Agricultural products; Trade

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In our country, the development of agriculture has a position that cannot be ignored not only for the development of the western region, but also for the development of the whole country. As a big country in demand and supply of grain, the trade in agriculture products is the lifeblood of China's economy. Without the support of agriculture products trade, the livelihood of farmers and the foundation of the national economy in our country will be hit hard. Especially for the export of agriculture products in China, the establishment of the "Belt and Road" has brought great convenience to China's agricultural trade and export, provided an export bridge for China's agricultural foreign trade, and promoted the development of China's agriculture products export trade[1-3]. China's "Belt and Road" policy is in the midst of a wave of changing times, and in the post-epidemic era, research on how to achieve the overall upgrading of export trade in agriculture products cannot be delayed. Through in-depth research of the "Belt and Road" policy, analysis of the opportunities and challenges it provides in the trade of agriculture products, combined with the current situation of China's agriculture products trade, choose a development strategy conducive to its own long-term development, in order to explore the current development status and development prospects of agricultural foreign trade under the "Belt and Road" policy, so as to enhance the market competitiveness of agriculture, and can put forward innovative development ideas in the current agricultural international trade, at the same time, can also allow the country to effectively allocate limited agricultural resources, In turn, it will promote the continued benign development of China's economy and society. In the end, it will provide some enlightenment for the benign development of China's industrial economy, so that China's agriculture products trade will endure internationally.

## 2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Research Background

The Belt and Road initiative covers more than 70 countries or regions with a combined population of more than 4.5 billion and a combined GDP of nearly 20 trillion dollars. It should be noted that agriculture plays a pivotal role in China's economic development. To accelerate its development, it is necessary to carry out continuous innovation internationally to adapt to the trend of globalization[4]. It should also be noted that although China has achieved remarkable achievements in agricultural development, it lacks strong international competitiveness on the whole, and there are few competitive export products, mainly concentrated in a few categories such as fruits and vegetables and aquatic products. In the overall pattern of foreign trade, the proportion of agricultural trade shows an obvious downward trend, and there is a serious trade deficit, which is obviously not conducive to the development of China's national economy.

### 2.2 Research Significance

It is of great practical significance to explore the current situation of China's agricultural trade under the background of the "Belt and Road" and put forward effective and reasonable optimization suggestions for the further development of

China's agricultural trade. First of all, combing and analyzing the current situation of agricultural trade can make the actual situation more clear. Based on this, we can rationally find suitable development direction and further guide the practice of expanding the scale of agricultural export. In China's overall agricultural development, it is often closely related to the foreign trade of agricultural products[5]. It is of obvious theoretical and practical significance to deeply discuss the characteristics and problems of agricultural trade structure through comprehensive investigation and analysis of agricultural product market structure and other aspects. This can accelerate the growth of agricultural trade volume, further expand the export scale and reverse the trade deficit, and finally realize the sustainable and healthy development of agricultural trade.

### 2.3 Research Methods

Through the collection and research of relevant literature on agricultural trade issues, and through the understanding of current academic research status including relevant monographs and journal papers to understand the relevant research in the field of this research topic, to provide necessary theoretical support for this research and clarify the innovation and significance of this research[6]. Through the preliminary preparation of the paper, collecting data, sorting and analysis, master the first-hand information of the paper writing; through sorting out and analyzing the data collected in the interview, finally write.

## 3. THEORETICAL BASIS

### 3.1 "The Belt and Road"

In 2014, China formulated the Vision and proposed actions outlined on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Through strategic synergy and cooperation, China has carried out mutually beneficial economic and trade cooperation with Asian, African and European countries along the Routes, which has provided a favorable economic environment for international projects.

In the development of the "Belt and Road" initiative, foreign trade cooperation has always been a top priority. China is a major agricultural and consumer country in the world, and agricultural exports account for a considerable proportion of China's foreign trade[7, 8]. At present, China has carried out strategic cooperation with more than 30 "Belt and Road" countries and signed cooperation agreements with ASEAN, as well as some countries of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Organization. China will have more in-depth cooperation with these countries in the future. There will be extensive cooperation in infrastructure connectivity, resource connectivity, economic, trade and financial cooperation, as well as cultural and people-to-people exchanges and cooperation projects on ecological protection. The Belt and Road initiative has made the world economy more open.

The Belt and Road Initiative has increased the openness of China's economy and enabled China to play an increasingly important role in the world economic landscape. The policy calls for countries along the route to jointly build and share the Belt and Road Initiative to promote open, inclusive and sustainable development of the world economy. In the new era, the Belt and Road Initiative provides a strong environment for international projects, as well as opportunities and challenges for international project management.

At present, it is still not enough to open up the economy of all countries in the world. Many countries have serious economic barriers, and their resources, technology and other factors cannot be fully allocated. Some countries' economic development level is still stagnant, the employment rate is low, and even there is no living security[9]. In the Central and West Asian countries along the Belt and Road, there is room for continuous progress in transportation, electricity, communication, logistics and other aspects, which provides opportunities for the expansion of international projects and the expansion and development of China's agricultural trade.

### 3.2 Agriculture Trade

Agricultural trade, as the name implies, is the trade activities launched around agricultural products. Agricultural products are generally divided into 6 categories: grain and oil, fruits and vegetables and flowers, forest products, livestock and poultry products, aquatic products and other agricultural and sideline products[10]. Agricultural trade is an important part of China's foreign trade, China has a trillion - level agricultural market scale. The circulation of agricultural trade needs to go through a number of business links, from production, procurement, transportation, storage, distribution and other links, the whole process has formed a complex circulation network, in which there are a large number of middlemen[11]. Through commercial procurement, storage, sales and other activities, agricultural trade can not only effectively promote the development of agricultural production to specialization and socialization, but also improve the commodity nature of agricultural production. Agricultural trade is the link between industry and agriculture. Agricultural production is scattered in a vast area, and it is difficult for farmers to grasp market information and market demand, which is unstable. If the industry signs an appointment contract with agriculture and pays the deposit, the stable income of farmers can be guaranteed, and the industrial sector also has a stable and low-cost source of raw materials for agricultural products[12].

## 4. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF CHINA'S AGRICULTURAL TRADE UNDER THE BACKGROUND OF THE "BELT AND ROAD" INITIATIVE

### 4.1 Rapid Growth, Close Cooperation

Under the background of the "Belt and Road", China's agricultural trade shows rapid growth and close cooperation. For example, China's agricultural trade with ASEAN is an epitome of China's active foreign agricultural trade. After the launch of the China-Asean regional cooperation project, many products from ASEAN to China will gradually implement "zero import", and agricultural trade between the two countries is becoming more and more lively[13]. At Puzhai Trade Center in Guangxi province, on the Border between China and Vietnam, China's largest fruit importer, a businessman buys dozens of tons of fruits, such as apples, pears and oranges, from Shaanxi, Hebei and Henan provinces of China every day, and sells them to ASEAN countries such as Vietnam.

China's agricultural exports are growing rapidly and it is now the world's largest agricultural producer and consumer. Since 2002, China's agricultural import and export trade has developed rapidly in two aspects, but the import speed is much slower than the export speed[14]. In 2004, China changed from a complete exporter to a complete importer. The pattern of agricultural development in our country is changing. This year, our agricultural imports and exports totaled \$230 billion, an increase of more than 5.6 percent from a year earlier. Exports totaled us \$79.1 billion, down more than 1.6% from the same period last year. Imports totaled nearly \$150.98 billion, up 10% from the same period last year. The trade deficit exceeded \$71.86 billion, up 26.4 percent from the same period last year. As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

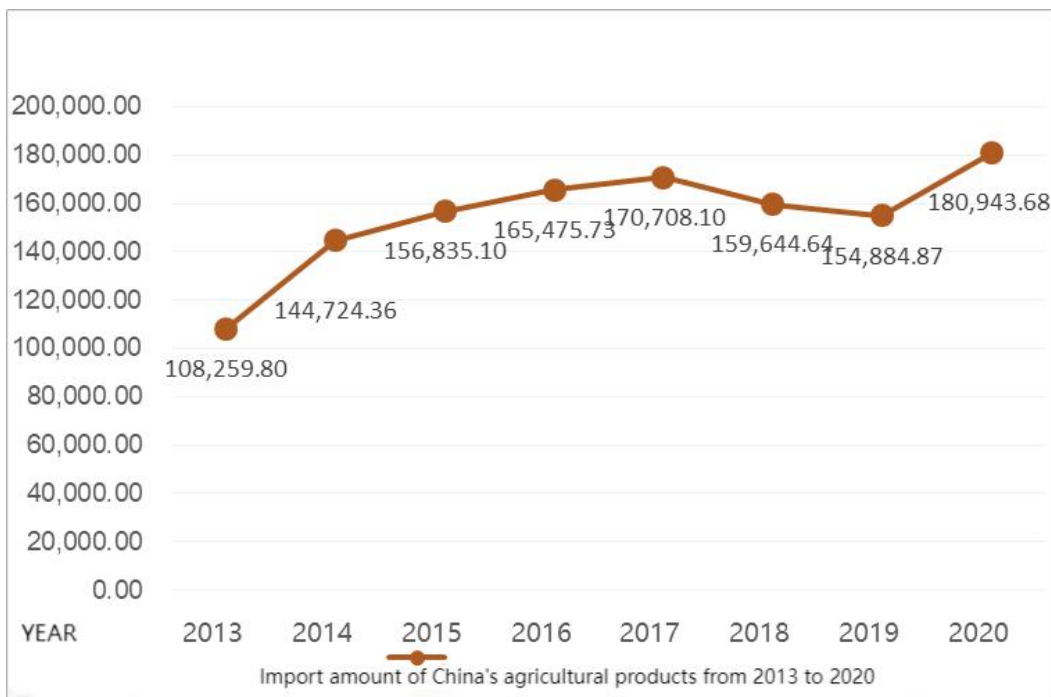


Fig. 1 Import amount of China's agricultural products from 2013 to 2020 (Unit: USD 100 million)



Fig. 2 Export amount of China agricultural products from 2013 to 2020 (Unit: USD 100 million)

### 4.2 Uneven Distribution of the Market

China's agricultural products trade market is widely distributed, different types of agricultural products in different markets occupy different proportions. In recent years, China's agricultural products have been dominated by Asia, Europe and North America, among which Japan and the United States are the largest export markets of China's agriculture, while the markets of Europe and North America show a declining trend.

China's imports of agricultural commodities are growing and it overtook the United States as the world's largest importer in 2011. From 2002 to 2016, China's main agricultural imports are Brazil and the United States. In recent years, China's import of agricultural products from Brazil has increased year by year, and Brazil has gradually become China's largest agricultural importer. The European Union and Australia are gradually withdrawing from major trade partnerships. The top three wheat import sources for China are Australia, the United States and Canada, which import 1.9040 million tons, 1.555,000 tons and 524,400 tons respectively, accounting for 90 percent of the total wheat imports. Brazil and the United States accounted for more than 30 percent of China's agricultural imports last year.

### 4.3 Unbalanced Regional Cooperation

The upgrading of agricultural trade cannot be separated from the improvement of agricultural technology, among which regional cooperation is crucial to the promotion of agricultural technology, and currently the regional cooperation related to agricultural trade is insufficient. In order to expand China's agricultural trade market and enhance international competitiveness, it is necessary to realize the organic integration from traditional agricultural technology to modern agricultural science and technology; and shift from labor intensive to capital and intellectual intensive.

Due to the imbalance in regional cooperation, it is difficult to give full play to comparative advantages and competitiveness in international competition. In view of the fundamental conditions of China's abundant labor resources and lack of land resources, we should focus on low-value-added products that are not advantageous in land resources and consider appropriate imports on the premise of ensuring safe domestic production capacity. From the current domestic production of organic agriculture conditions, we have a significant advantage, which can obtain better development opportunities. At present, we mainly export organic agricultural products, including fruits and vegetables, organic tea, etc. Although we have certain advantages, our overall export share is not large. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance regional cooperation and promote growth areas with export potential[15].

### 4.4 Single Mode of Trade

In the traditional foreign trade of domestic agricultural products, such problems are highlighted. We can find that the cost, price and added value of products are relatively low. In the overall layout of domestic economic development, more attention is paid to industrial production while the support for agricultural production is ignored[16]. In the process of developing industry, the building will inevitably affect the land security, part of the cultivated land became the industrial land, it is difficult to play the advantage of agricultural production, in addition, due to the slow increase of agricultural production technology, part of farmers choose to, a variety of reasons restrict the agricultural production, agricultural production will have to face more practical problems, It will also affect the development of foreign trade in agricultural products.

## 5. EXISTING PROBLEMS IN CHINA'S AGRICULTURAL TRADE UNDER THE BACKGROUND OF "THE BELT AND ROAD" INITIATIVE

### 5.1 Development Issues based on Trade Balance

In recent years, in order to protect their own agricultural development, some countries have begun to increase non-tariff barriers in agricultural trade, which leads to problems in the balanced development of agricultural trade. China's total trade in agricultural goods and services reached more than us \$230 billion in 2019, an increase of more than 5.6% over the same period last year. Exports totaled us \$79.1 billion, down more than 1.6% from the same period last year. Imports totaled nearly \$150.98 billion, up 10% from the same period last year. The trade deficit exceeded \$71.86 billion, up 26.4 percent from the same period last year. Through the above data analysis, it can be seen that the import quantity of domestic agricultural products grows rapidly at the present stage, while the quantity advantage of domestic traditional agricultural products is not obvious. As a result of domestic trade deficit in agricultural products, it is obviously not conducive to the overall development of agricultural trade in the long run[17].

### 5.2 Development Issues based on Market Structure

The market structure of agricultural trade refers to the regional distribution and form of agricultural products in China. China's agricultural product import regions are relatively decentralized. Generally speaking, China's agricultural product import regions are more concentrated in Southeast Asia and The Americas. The main import countries are concentrated in Canada, the United States and Brazil, while the export is more concentrated in North America and Asia. From the above market structure, excessive concentration instead brings a certain negative impact.

In recent years, our country pay more attention to expand agricultural product export trade development, China has successively with Turkey, Brazil and other countries to build good trade relations of cooperation, but the momentum is still not as good as countries such as India, Egypt, which can be found that the agricultural product export trade in our

country still has a long way to go, we need to actively learn from India, Egypt and other countries, We should strive for better and faster development. A comprehensive analysis of the problems in the export trade of agricultural products at the present stage shows that the excessive concentration is prominent, not only in export, but also in import. Excessive concentration exposes great hidden problems and even affects the safety of domestic agricultural products.

### **5.3 Development Issues based on Product Structure**

At present, domestic agricultural imports are concentrated in edible soil seeds and vegetable oils, and the first two are growing faster. The large increase in exports was concentrated in fruits and vegetables, livestock and poultry, and aquatic products and fruits and vegetables accounted for a large proportion. The above structure highlights the resource advantage and comparative advantage that China has. Although the trade scale and trade volume of many agricultural products are growing rapidly, there are great differences in the impact of different products and trade scale on the trade structure. For example, fruits, vegetables and meat play a prominent leading role in the global trade structure of agricultural products, but the overall trade scale is not large. Due to the limitation of production resources and labor capacity, China will still adopt small-scale agricultural production for a long time. The agricultural products import and export mode between China and neighboring countries is simple, the products are single, and the technical content of the products is low. There is still a gap between China and the agricultural products export of developed countries. From the perspective of product structure, at present, origin or primary agricultural products occupy the majority of domestic agricultural production, and their products have high value and added value. The profit of products will directly determine the export volume of foreign trade, although in the case of China's large export volume of agricultural products, there may be trade deficit. This trade deficit puts the quality and price of China's agricultural products at a disadvantage, which is not conducive to the long-term development of China's agricultural foreign trade.

### **5.4 Development Issues based on Trade Patterns**

The trade pattern of agricultural products in China faces some problems, including loss and consumption experience. Different from other export products, agricultural products are often accompanied by considerable losses in the export process. According to relevant calculation data, losses account for nearly 30% of the cost, far more than other products. Across the rest of the world, the proportion of product loss mentioned above is significantly lower in several developed countries. For example, the proportion is only 5% in the United States, while it can be significantly reduced to 3% in Japan. Through the comparison of the above data, it is not difficult to see that we still need further improvement in the process of reducing energy consumption. In order to promote the development of cross-border trade in agricultural products, great attention should be paid to improving customer experience and winning customer satisfaction. At present, there are still many deficiencies in the selection of domestic agricultural trade mode, such as low logistics efficiency, service level to be improved, and product quality that is difficult to meet customer demand. In choosing the agricultural trade model, the basic work is to solve the problems by specialized suppliers. However, due to the involvement of middlemen at various levels, the costs are directly increased and the economic efficiency and benefits of foreign trade are reduced.

## **6. SUGGESTIONS ON OPTIMIZING CHINA'S AGRICULTURAL TRADE UNDER THE BACKGROUND OF "THE BELT AND ROAD" INITIATIVE**

### **6.1 Suggestions on Optimizing Development based on Trade Balance**

From the overall perspective, the development of international trade in agricultural products is to achieve win-win cooperation between countries. Through building cooperation platforms, agricultural products trade between China and neighboring countries or regions can be realized, and mutual benefit between countries and regions can be achieved to achieve common development of cooperative countries. For foreign trade of agricultural products in our country, we should be more proactive strategy, we should be based on the reality of the present stage of international agricultural production, strengthen the economic ties and neighboring countries or regions, strengthening the cooperation relations, and then set up effective cooperation platform, and stable development of the international trade of agricultural products, expanding domestic product visibility and influence. We will strengthen our market competitiveness and make all-round efforts to play an important role in accelerating China's economic development. At the present stage, some agricultural products have been overproduced in China. For example, the annual output of tea production exceeds the total domestic and foreign sales, resulting in product overstocking. On the one hand, it will affect the income of tea farmers, and on the other hand, it is not conducive to the development of foreign trade. The implementation of "The Belt and Road" strategy is concerned by the countries and regions along the belt and Road, which will further break down the barriers of agricultural production in various countries, thus promoting the development of agriculture and the world economy.

In the foreign trade of agricultural products in our country, the appearance of green trade barrier is due to the requirement of environment protection and food quality, and related policy about food quality and environmental protection in China is not perfect, most of the measures is the overall measures, and not specific enough, so we should combine "The Belt and Road" initiative, perfect the laws and regulations of environmental protection in our country, Make clear China's responsibilities as an exporter. In addition, the industry standard of China's agricultural products

should also be improved, agricultural product development enterprises should carry out trade cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road, through increasing the development and investment of agricultural products, actively carry out technological innovation, improve the quality of China's agricultural products, so as to effectively eliminate green trade barriers. In addition, because different countries have different inspection standards and recognition degrees for products, under the Belt and Road Initiative, regional standardized certification procedures should be jointly established with countries along the Belt and Road, so that the quality and inspection standards of products in all countries can be basically the same. By strengthening mutual recognition between countries to help reduce the export and import process of repeated inspection and repeated testing, at the same time can also reduce the export cost of agricultural products and improve the trade profits of agricultural products, to the maximum, eliminate technical barriers to trade.

## 6.2 Suggestions on Development Optimization based on Market Structure

In order to speed up the scale of international trade of agricultural products, the government leading department also needs to improve the present domestic agricultural market system, farmers marketization also needs an orderly guidance to reduce the blindness and disorder, in order to promote enterprises to expand foreign trade, we can also take a trade fair and other forms to build platform encourages enterprises to do their job, in addition, in view of the global market information, we can establish the corresponding collection and analysis system for timely access to relevant market information to guide enterprise management and farmers' production. We need to increase support for agricultural export enterprises, formulate and implement necessary support policies, open up links between domestic and international markets, and promote the growth of foreign trade in agricultural products. At the present stage, both trade surplus and agricultural export markets are mostly concentrated in Asian countries or regions, such as South Korea. Therefore, we should accelerate the market expansion layout, base on the existing market base, and strengthen the development of international markets such as the Middle East and Africa. We will continue to expand the external market to effectively defuse risks, and adopt different measures according to different market conditions to highlight comparative advantages, save transaction costs and increase operating profits.

Due to cross-border e-commerce relies on information technology and electronic platform, so under the "Belt and Road" initiative, countries along the first in our country should strengthen and the surrounding information standardization and integration of the platform technology, it can make agricultural products import and export trade information is integrated into a platform, and then through the platform can carry out the logistics, distribution and after-sale services, products related to processing, This can greatly improve the efficiency of foreign trade in agricultural products and save unnecessary costs. In addition, for the distribution of agricultural products, China can guarantee the quality of agricultural products by using cold chain preservation technology of countries along the Belt and Road. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China can also establish overseas agricultural products warehouses in countries along the route, which can not only improve distribution efficiency but also effectively reduce the loss caused by excessive transport of agricultural products.

## 6.3 Development and Optimization Suggestions based on Product Structure

Benefiting from the "Belt and Road" economic construction and development policy guidance, China's agricultural products cross-border trade model has continuously achieved new changes. The application of cross-border agricultural sales platforms also requires a comprehensive understanding of relevant government trade policies to promote the quality improvement of agricultural products and achieve rapid development. As the main body of e-commerce, we should pay special attention to product quality, follow the corresponding quality standards, implement fair and orderly competition, and promote the hierarchical implementation of agricultural product quality control system. Competition in the contemporary market has shifted from competition among enterprises to competition among products and industries. In foreign trade, we should not only pay attention to the price and quantity of products, but also form an integrated organizational model for storage, transportation and supervision. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, export enterprises should actively develop their competitive products and form their own product brands. Through effective quality supervision, product innovation and market promotion, the effect and influence of brands can be improved so as to enhance the added value of products and reduce the trade deficit. In addition, under the Belt and Road Initiative, we can optimize the product structure. The most important agricultural products that should be optimized in China are fruits and vegetables. Because of China's vast territory and large arable land area, the temperature difference between the north and the south is very large, so this difference has created different varieties of fruit and vegetable planting. China's trade with countries along the Belt and Road is mainly concentrated in Russia, Central Asia, central Asia and Southeast Asia. Russia and other countries due to external factors such as temperature, climate and soil, so the national demand for imports of agricultural products of fruit and vegetable is larger, and China belongs to the labor-intensive country, abundant labor resources and the external factors is appropriate, fruit and vegetable agricultural products become the main trade surplus, so the fruit and vegetable agricultural products has great development potential.

## 6.4 Suggestions on Development Optimization based on Trade Patterns

In recent years, China's foreign trade situation of agricultural products has improved, and the total export value has increased, which alleviates the trade deficit to a certain extent. However, the total import and export volume shows a downward trend, so we should accelerate the modernization of the trade model. The most prominent problem in the

current trade model is the complicated procurement process caused by complicated intermediate links. In order to effectively solve the above problems, we should maximize the reduction of intermediate links, simplify the procurement process, so as to save procurement costs and achieve the target profit requirements of export agricultural products enterprises. In the above trade mode transition process need to make full use of the Internet technology and set up cross-border e-commerce platform and further realize the market globalization, with the analysis of big data in this system to timely understand the market demand to provide the required product and to establish a more effective supply and demand, in the premise of effective risk prevention and control of implementation improved the efficiency of cross-border trade of agricultural products.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Based on the above research results, under the "Belt and Road" strategy, agricultural products are important commodities in China's foreign trade, so it is bound to encounter new opportunities and challenges. At present, there are still a lot of problems and areas to be improved in agricultural trade between China and neighboring countries along the route. Therefore, we should actively cooperate with neighboring countries, actively adopt scientific and effective countermeasures to promote the internationalization of agricultural products, and get in the "Belt and Road" strategy actively support, our country and neighboring countries will be more close communication and consultation, by trying we can eliminate trade barriers, improve the product structure, promote the development of the cross-border electricity trade, At the same time, it can also make the agricultural products of China and surrounding countries have greater international competitiveness, and promote the common development of both sides to truly achieve win-win cooperation. The proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative is more in line with the general trend of global economic development and meets the development needs of countries or regions along the routes, which will also affect the innovation of China's future trade development pattern. In the development of China's national economy, the foreign trade of agricultural products plays an important role. In the global market, the lack of competitiveness of China's agricultural products is gradually emerging. The competitive varieties of export products are few and mainly concentrated in a few categories such as fruits and vegetables and aquatic products. In the overall pattern of foreign trade, the proportion of agricultural trade shows an obvious downward trend, and there is a serious trade deficit, which is obviously not conducive to the development of China's national economy. In order to effectively improve the present situation of foreign trade of agricultural products, this paper focuses on the market structure and trade model and puts forward corresponding countermeasures, hoping to further promote the development of China's agricultural trade.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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