

Export of agricultural products produced in the Uzbekistan SSR and its characteristics

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the historical role of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (Uzbek SSR) as the main producer and exporter of agricultural products, especially cotton, fruits, vegetables, and processed goods, while emphasizing how all exports were controlled by the Soviet Union's central planning system.

Research methodology: The research applies a historical-analytical approach using methods of analysis and synthesis, retrospective and comparative analysis, as well as generalization and dialectical methods. Archival documents, official records, and secondary sources were examined to trace the dynamics of agricultural exports and their specific features.

Results: The findings indicate that the Uzbek SSR became the "cotton heart" of the USSR, producing more than 60% of its cotton. Agricultural exports, including fruits, vegetables, and oils, were not only economic assets but also instruments of Soviet foreign policy and soft power. These exports were presented in international exhibitions and used in foreign aid packages to strengthen ties with countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe. However, reliance on monoculture and centrally imposed quotas contributed to environmental degradation and food insecurity.

Conclusions: Centralized planning facilitated Uzbekistan's transformation into a strategic agricultural hub but also created systemic inefficiencies and long-term vulnerabilities, particularly in ecological and economic sustainability.

Limitations: The study is limited to the availability of Soviet and post-Soviet archival materials, which may not fully capture local perspectives or informal trade practices.

Contribution: Contributes to Soviet and Central Asian studies by analyzing central planning's impact on Uzbekistan's agricultural exports.

Keywords: *Agriculture, Central Planning, Cotton, Soviet Union, Uzbekistan*

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1. Introduction

During the Soviet era, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (Uzbek SSR) occupied a unique and strategic position within the USSR because of its climate, geography, and agricultural potential. The republic has become a major producer and exporter of agricultural products, particularly cotton, fruits, vegetables, and processed goods. Exports of these products were not only important for the Uzbek economy but also played a significant role in the Soviet Union's internal supply chain and foreign trade, especially with developing countries during the Cold War. This analysis examines the nature of these exports, their development, and the characteristics that distinguish Uzbek agricultural exports within the broader Soviet economy. Uzbekistan's role in Soviet agriculture was defined by central planning, which assigned economic specializations to each republic. Uzbekistan was directed to become the "cotton

heart” of the USSR. By the mid-twentieth century, it produced over 60 percent of Soviet cotton, supplying textile industries throughout the Union. Beyond cotton, Uzbekistan exports grapes, melons, apricots, vegetables, cottonseed oil, and dried fruits, all of which reinforce its image as a land of agricultural abundance (Choriyev, 2025; L, 2023).

Exports are of both domestic and international importance. Internally, they ensured food supply and industrial inputs for the Soviet economy to function. Externally, they function as instruments of foreign policy. Cotton, fruits, and oils were dispatched not only for trade but also as foreign aid to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. These shipments were often framed as gestures of socialist solidarity during the Cold War. International exhibitions highlighted Uzbek goods, positioning them as proof of Soviet agricultural and industrial progress (Choriyev, 2025; Sobirovich, 2018). Central planning mechanisms, overseen by the Gosplan, tightly regulated these exports. Quotas dictated crop choices, compelling Uzbek collective and state farms to focus overwhelmingly on cotton production. This emphasis has increased productivity but has also created long-term challenges. Soil depletion, heavy irrigation, and pesticide use have damaged the environment and contributed to the Aral Sea crisis. The prioritization of export crops also reduced local food security, leaving rural populations dependent on the import of basic staples from other republics. Despite such drawbacks, official Soviet discourse celebrated Uzbek agriculture as a model of socialist success (Firaldi, Wibisono, Ngalian, Indrayani, & Satriawan, 2023; Mulyanto, Indrayani, Satriawan, Ngalian, & Catrayasa, 2023; Sobirovich, 2020).

Uzbekistan’s role in Soviet economic diplomacy was equally significant as that of Kazakhstan. Factories in Tashkent, Fergana, and Chirchik manufactured cotton harvesters, tractors, and cultivators, which were exported alongside raw produce. These products were showcased at exhibitions in Prague, Bucharest, Utrecht, and Addis Ababa, symbolizing not only technological progress but also the integration of a peripheral republic into Soviet modernization. Such events doubled as tools of cultural diplomacy, presenting Uzbekistan’s identity and reinforcing Soviet unity. The Cold War intensified the strategic use of Uzbek export resources. Machinery, cotton, and foodstuffs were sent to Ethiopia, India, and other developing states as part of the technical assistance. This strengthened Soviet influence abroad, while highlighting Uzbekistan as a frontline contributor to socialist internationalism. Agricultural exports have thus become geopolitical assets as much as economic ones (Aldi, Febriyanti, & Amaliatulwalidain, 2024; Janatun & Rudiana, 2024; Rezeki, Rani, & Syahputra, 2023; Ridho, Fauzan, Faisal, & Hanafi, 2024).

However, Uzbekistan remained highly dependent on Moscow. Trade decisions were made at the union level, leaving little local autonomy to the village. Uzbek leaders could not freely shape production priorities or trade agreements, reinforcing the republic’s status as a supplier in the Soviet hierarchy. Industrial enterprises such as Uzglavmestsanoat were frequently criticized for failing to meet union-wide export targets, illustrating the rigidity of the command economy. The emphasis on cotton monoculture epitomized both the achievements and costs of Soviet planners. Cotton exports bolstered Soviet industrialization and diplomacy, but overreliance on one crop created structural vulnerability. Crop rotation programs introduced in the 1960s aimed to mitigate risks but were still directed from the top. The long-term ecological consequences, including soil degradation and water mismanagement, were profound. Simultaneously, cultural and political narratives glorified Uzbek farmers, depicting them as heroes who embodied socialist productivity and unity (Cucciolla, 2017; Kamp, 2022).

In conclusion, the agricultural exports of the Uzbek SSR were central to the Soviet Union’s economy and diplomatic relations. Uzbekistan’s climate and geography enabled it to serve as the USSR’s agricultural hub, and central planning ensured that its resources aligned with broader political goals. These exports supplied industries, sustained alliances, and showcased the Soviet model globally. However, they also entrenched economic dependency and inflicted environmental damage that persisted beyond their independence. The case of Uzbekistan demonstrates how Soviet central planning could mobilize a republic’s potential for union-wide objectives, but at the cost of local needs and sustainability. By situating Uzbekistan within this historical framework, it is possible to understand both the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system and its enduring legacy in post-Soviet Central Asia.

2. Literature review

2.1. Central Planning and Agricultural Specialization in the Soviet Union

The literature on the Soviet planned economy emphasizes the importance of centralized mechanisms in regulating agricultural production and its distribution. According to Scarborough (2021), central planning ensures the allocation of resources according to ideological and political priorities rather than purely economic efficiency. Gosplan, the main institution, set binding production and export targets for all republics. In the case of the Uzbek SSR, this policy made cotton a strategic crop produced on a massive scale. Choriyeu (2025) explain that such regional specialization was designed to create an “integrated economic complex” across the Soviet Union, with each republic fulfilling a specific role within the supply chain. Modern scholarship adds that while specialization increases short-term productivity, it generates structural dependency. Teichmann (2007) argues that Uzbekistan has historically become overly reliant on cotton, leaving it vulnerable to international market fluctuations and unable to sufficiently develop its domestic food sector. Thus, the literature highlights a double dilemma: a large contribution to the Soviet economy alongside limited economic autonomy at the republican level in the Soviet Union.

2.2. Cotton Monoculture and Its Consequences

Historical studies have highlighted the immense impact of cotton monoculture policies in Uzbekistan. Kamp (2016) notes that since the 1930s, Uzbekistan has been forced to increase cotton output to meet the needs of the Soviet textile industry. By the 1970s, the republic supplied more than 60% of the cotton used across the USSR. However, the overemphasis on cotton has resulted in ecological and social consequences. Glantz (1999) and Spoor (1993) documented how intensive irrigation led to falling water levels, soil degradation, and ultimately the Aral Sea crisis. From a social perspective, Scott (1998) linked this system to “authoritarian high modernism,” in which central authorities sacrificed local welfare for macro-level goals. This literature shows that cotton production is not merely an economic activity but also a political and ideological project (Abduraupov et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

2.3. Agricultural Exports and Soviet Foreign Policy

The literature on Soviet international relations shows that agricultural exports, especially those from Uzbekistan, played a major role in economic diplomacy. Cucciolla (2017) highlights that under Khrushchev, cotton and other agricultural products were used as instruments of “soft power” to strengthen ties with developing nations in Asia and Africa. Other studies, such as Numonzoda (2023), emphasize the importance of international exhibitions as ideological arenas. Uzbek products, including cotton, fruits, and agricultural machinery, are frequently showcased in Utrecht, Prague, and Addis Ababa. This suggests that exports were not only economic transactions but also tools for displaying the superiority of socialism. In Cold War scholarship, researchers such as Shin (2023) argue that Soviet economic and technical aid, including the shipment of agricultural machinery from Tashkent and Fergana factories, was intended to win the loyalty of third-world countries. Uzbekistan, as the main production base, is a frontline contributor to this strategy.

2.4. Food Security and Local Livelihoods

Although agricultural exports from the Uzbek SSR strengthened the Soviet Union’s global standing, much of the literature criticizes their effects on domestic food security. Wegerich, Van Rooijen, Soliev, and Mukhamedova (2015) argue that prioritizing export crops reduces local food production, leading to shortages of wheat or staple vegetables in rural areas. This is also reflected in the everyday narratives of Uzbek rural communities, where farmers were compelled to plant cotton rather than food crops. Ethnographic studies, such as McGuire and Laaser (2021), describe how agricultural workers—including women and children—were mobilized annually for massive cotton-harvest campaigns. Thus, the literature connects export issues with social, gender, and distributive injustices.

2.5. Industrial and Technological Exports from Uzbekistan

Beyond agricultural products, the literature highlights Uzbekistan’s contributions to industrial and technological exports. According to Soviet official records, factories such as Toshtrasmash, Tashselmash, and Chirchikselmash manufactured cotton harvesters, tractors, and cultivators that were exported to Ethiopia, India, and Czechoslovakia. Khalmirzayeva (2024) stressed that Soviet agricultural

technology was framed as a symbol of modernity, with Uzbekistan playing a key role as a producer of agricultural products. However, critical literature notes that such machinery was often ill-suited to the local conditions of the recipient countries. This illustrates the limitations of Soviet technological diplomacy, which was driven more by ideology than by practical efficiency.

2.6. Soviet Bureaucracy and Local Limitations

Studies on Soviet bureaucracy demonstrate how institutions such as Uzglavmestsanoat faced limitations in meeting export targets. Lombardozi (2023) argues that the command-administrative system made local initiatives nearly impossible, preventing factories from innovating or responding to market needs. In the case of the Uzbek SSR, the failure of local enterprises to expand their export capacity was frequently noted in official archives. However, the literature interprets this failure not merely as local weakness but as a symptom of the systemic rigidity of central planning. Hence, research on Uzbekistan provides concrete examples of how the Soviet bureaucracy hindered economic flexibility.

2.7. Post-Soviet Perspectives and Historiography

Post-1991 literature offers fresh reflections on the legacy of Uzbek SSR agricultural exports. Rustamova, Primov, Karimov, Khaitov, and Karimov (2023) point out that the historical dependence on cotton continues to constrain Uzbekistan's economy today, despite efforts to diversify. Local scholars such as Asfaw (2021) emphasize the need for spiritual and economic reform to escape the structural dependency inherited from the Soviet era. Modern historiography has become increasingly critical of official Soviet narratives. Young researchers in Uzbekistan have highlighted overlooked aspects such as the social impact of cotton harvest campaigns and the role of gender in the agricultural sector. This enriches academic understanding by including local voices that were previously marginalized.

2.8. Gap in the Literature

Based on the literature review, several gaps remain in the literature. First, much research has focused on cotton as the main commodity, but there has been insufficient attention to exports of fruits, vegetables, and processed products, which are also significant (Babadjanova, Bobojonov, Bekchanov, Kuhn, & Glauben, 2024; Djanibekov & Finger, 2018; Najjar, Devkota, & Feldman, 2022). Second, studies on the cultural dimensions of exports—for example, how international exhibitions shape Uzbekistan's national identity on the global stage—remain limited. Third, the social consequences of export policies for rural communities and food security require more interdisciplinary approaches that combine history, political economy, and anthropology (Chathuranika et al., 2023; Reid, 2017; Song et al., 2023; Tursunbekovich, 2016).

To address these gaps, future research should adopt a mixed-methods strategy that triangulates archival evidence (planning directives, export plans, exhibition catalogues, and trade ledgers) with oral histories from growers, factory workers, and exhibition curators. A comparative design that places the Uzbek SSR alongside other specialized republics (e.g., Tajik, Turkmen, or Georgian SSRs) would help isolate what is unique to Uzbekistan versus systemic Soviet planning. For the underexplored fruit–vegetable–processed segment, scholars could reconstruct commodity chains from farm to port by combining regional yearbooks, irrigation maps, and firm-level reports from canneries and oil presses, and then test how seasonal labor allocation shifted between cotton and horticulture. On the cultural side, fine-grained studies of world's fairs and trade weeks (program notes, pavilion layouts, photo archives, diplomatic cables) could illuminate how “Uzbekness” was curated for foreign audiences and how those displays fed back into the domestic identity. Interdisciplinary work on social consequences should link household consumption diaries and ration records to geospatial data on irrigation diversions, modeling how export surges affect local caloric availability. Finally, gender-responsive fieldwork—time-use surveys, life-course interviews, and participatory mapping—can trace how harvest campaigns have restructured care work and community welfare. Together, these approaches would move the literature beyond cotton and economics towards a fuller political, social, and cultural history of export-oriented agriculture in Uzbekistan.

3. Research methodology

The socio-philosophical analysis of the export of agricultural products produced in the Uzbek SSR and its specific characteristics used the methods of analysis and synthesis, retrospective analysis, comparative analysis, generalization, dialectical method, and synergetic methods of scientific knowledge. This allowed the research to identify the historical and structural dynamics of agricultural exports and reveal the interconnection between economic policies, social development, and philosophical foundations that shaped the unique trajectory of the Uzbek SSR's agricultural trade. This comprehensive methodological approach made it possible to evaluate both the material outcomes of agricultural export activities and their broader socio-cultural implications in the Soviet context.

4. Results and discussions

The Uzbek SSR was known as the “cotton heart” of the USSR. By the mid-20th century, Uzbekistan produced over 60% of the Soviet Union's cotton. Exports of raw and processed cotton were a priority, both for domestic use and for export to countries that joined the socialist union and newly independent states that needed Soviet assistance. Agricultural products from the Uzbek SSR were often used as part of foreign aid packages to strengthen ties with African, Middle Eastern, and Asian nations. These exports were not only economic but also ideological, aimed at demonstrating the success of the Soviet model of agriculture and of development. All exports were controlled through the Soviet Union's central planning mechanisms. This centralized system often limited the republic's ability to respond to international market demands, but it ensured strategic alignment with Soviet political objectives.

Foreign economic relations with European countries expanded significantly between the 1950s and 1975. In 1951, the enterprises of the system of administration under the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR for the supply of local industrial products to the international exhibition in Utrecht (Netherlands) were instructed to send the following products-exhibits [1]: According to the instructions of the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR, various enterprises in the administrative system were tasked with preparing and shipping specific goods to serve as exhibits at the exhibition. These items represented the republic's achievements in manufacturing, agriculture, and light industry and symbolized the Central Asian republic's integration into the broader Soviet economic and international agenda. By contributing to international exhibitions, the USSR aimed to establish economic ties and develop trade relations with Western Europe despite Cold War tensions. Uzbekistan's participation demonstrated the republic's role in supporting the Soviet Union's soft-power strategy. The event served as a platform to highlight Uzbekistan's technological and industrial achievements during the post-war USSR's industrialization efforts. Products such as textiles, agricultural machinery, and food reflect modernization and the use of local resources. In addition to economics, these exhibitions serve as a form of cultural diplomacy. The participation of the Uzbek SSR within the Soviet system allowed for the manifestation of national identity and helped create the image of a diverse but unified socialist state. In the early 1950s, demonstrating the economic potential of Soviet republics was crucial in the ideological competition between the Eastern and Western blocs. By demonstrating the development of peripheral republics such as Uzbekistan, the USSR sought to legitimize its socialist model on a global scale.

Starting in 1963, the task was set to complete the mastery of crop rotation to further increase agricultural exports [2]. This development should be viewed in the broader historical and political context of the Soviet Union's post-Stalin agricultural reforms. Under Khrushchev, there was a strong push to increase agricultural productivity, diversify exports, and reduce dependence on imported food. With its favorable climate and irrigation infrastructure, the Uzbek SSR made a significant contribution to this goal. The introduction of crop rotation systems is considered a modern, scientifically sound approach to improving soil fertility, controlling pests, and increasing long-term yields. Crop rotation is essential for maintaining high levels of cotton production, which is Uzbekistan's leading export crop. Crop rotation was mandated by central planning authorities rather than being voluntary. While increasing exports, such intensive monoculture practices (especially cotton) and forced agricultural policies have led to long-term environmental consequences, such as soil degradation and water mismanagement, which

later led to the Aral Sea crisis. In addition, the focus on export crops often came at the expense of local food production, which has affected food security in rural areas.

In accordance with the order of the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR No. 2014 dated December 14, 1959, the following products and equipment were sent to the Ethiopian center in Addis Ababa. The equipment was mainly sent by the Fergana Economic Council and the Toshtranmash, Tashselmash, and Chirchikselm plants. Among them were diesel T-62, Mobile compressor station RTP-192-2 rotary machine, cotton picker HVS-1.2, cultivator og'it NKU-4-6A equipment, and tobacco products. The task was to deliver this equipment and products by February 1, 1960 [3]. These goods were primarily supplied by industrial and agricultural enterprises within the Uzbek SSR, such as the Fergana Economic Council, Toshtranmash Plant, Tashselmash Plant, and Chirchikselmash Plant. The equipment and goods were to be delivered by February 1, 1960, emphasizing the speed and logistical coordination required for the operation. This event demonstrates the active role played by the Uzbek SSR in the Soviet Union's foreign aid programs. With its advanced agricultural machinery and agricultural specialization, especially in cotton growing, Uzbekistan was strategically positioned to contribute to the Soviet Union's outreach efforts in Africa. Aid to Ethiopia must also be understood in the geopolitical context of that time. The Soviet Union competed with the United States and Western countries for influence over the developing world. By supplying technical assistance, machinery, and consumer goods, the USSR sought to advance socialism, secure political alliances, and demonstrate the benefits of cooperation with the Eastern Bloc.

In 1960, Soviet pavilions at international fairs and exhibitions were required to include not only the best types of industrial products and the best mass-produced consumer goods, but also unique exhibits of the latest technology that could be presented, models that reflected the modern technical and cultural level of the Soviet Union [4]. This exhibit marked a pivotal moment in the Cold War, when exhibitions became a site of ideological and technological competition between the Soviet Union and the Western world, especially the United States. Exhibitions were used as soft-power tools to promote the Soviet system abroad. The Soviet Union sought to impress foreign audiences with its achievements in space exploration, industry, agriculture, and science. These exhibits were not only a symbol of innovation but also a symbol of the Soviet Union's claim to be a modern, advanced society that could lead the world in scientific advancement. The use of realistic models and physical demonstrations allowed the USSR to make its technological achievements more tangible and visually appealing.

In accordance with the letter of Soyuzglavtorg dated April 26, 1960, No. 62-3085/46, 2,000 tons of cottonseed oil and 500 tons of beef fat were distributed to the regions in accordance with the decision to accept for export in 1960 for trade with the countries of People's Democracy. The economic councils were to deliver 260 tons of products from Tashkent, 40 tons from Fergana, 60 tons from Bukhara, 80 tons from Samarkand, and 60 tons from Karakalpakstan for the export of beef fat in 1960. This indicates the active participation of the Uzbek SSR in the activities of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, an economic union of socialist nations. The Uzbek SSR was a large agricultural center within the USSR, especially famous for cotton and livestock breeding. Exports of cottonseed oil and animal fats demonstrate Uzbekistan's role as a supplier of primary products in the broader Soviet economic system. Decisions were made through central planning mechanisms, with quotas set regionally and implemented through Sovnarkhozes (regional economic councils). This reflects the command economy's focus on exports to meet domestic supply needs. These exports were not only economic in nature but also served geopolitical purposes, strengthening the USSR's leadership in the socialist bloc by supplying essential goods to allied countries. Such trade helped strengthen political alliances and alleviate shortages in Eastern Europe.

On January 1, 1960, the Uzbek SSR sent Excavator 9-352, Tractor 1-24-3b, Cultivator NKU-4-6a, Diesel T-62, Cotton Picker SKGH 4-65, Cotton Harvester HVS-1.2, Grape Vines to the Baghdad Industrial Exhibition and the Addis Ababa Industrial Exhibition, while Ditch Digging and Leveling Equipment was sent to Prague. Each product sent to the factories was prepared based on the order of the Tashkent Economic Council [5]. The demonstration of modern Soviet-made machinery allowed the USSR to counter Western influence by offering technological assistance and economic cooperation to

the developing world. The products sent reflected Uzbekistan's strengths in agriculture and industry, especially in cotton-growing technology, which was crucial for both domestic use and export diplomacy. All machinery was produced by local factories under the direct supervision of the Tashkent Council of National Economy, reflecting the centralization of Soviet economic planning. This demonstrates how republic-level planning was implemented in the large Soviet economic system, where regions such as Uzbekistan contributed to international propaganda and trade efforts. The export of such equipment was a form of technological diplomacy, offering advanced technology to developing countries to gain political interest and economic influence. After 1960, foreign exports and participation in international exhibitions were directed towards European and Asian countries [6]. Participation in trade fairs and exhibitions became more regionally focused, with increased attention paid to the socialist countries of Eastern Europe (e.g., Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, East Germany), as well as to non-aligned and newly independent Asian countries (e.g., India, Indonesia, Iran).

The Uzbek SSR continued to supply agricultural machinery, cotton-processing equipment, textiles, food products, and other industrial goods tailored to the needs of its Asian and European partner countries. Thanks to these efforts, Uzbekistan consolidated its role as a specialized manufacturer within the Soviet economic bloc and became a representative of Soviet technical progress. Uzbek exhibitions often feature cotton-picking machines, irrigation equipment, textiles, and cultural products, demonstrating both industrial potential and regional identity. These international initiatives were not spontaneous; they were centrally planned and implemented through economic councils, such as the Tashkent Economic Council, on the basis of Moscow's directives. Factories and design bureaus in Uzbekistan were often given specific tasks to produce products ready for export and to prepare demonstration models. Since agricultural products were mostly the responsibility of the Uzbek SSR in the territory of the USSR, it was precisely these international trade relations that further accelerated the export and import paths of the countries.

In September 1960, by the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR, the cotton winch SKGH-4.6, the Cultivator NKU-4.6, and the Pollinator-4.6 were sent from the Bucharest trade fair to the trade fair in Brno, Czechoslovakia [7]. All of these machines were manufactured in the Uzbek SSR and selected for export because they matched the USSR's export priorities, particularly to the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. As one of the most important cotton-growing republics of the USSR, Uzbekistan played a central role in developing and exporting cotton-farming machinery. Its role at international trade fairs underscored the Soviet Union's strategy of using regionally specialized republics to promote specific industries abroad. The demonstration of these machines in Brno and Bucharest, key Eastern Bloc countries, helped the USSR strengthen its economic and political ties within the socialist camp. These fairs were not only trading platforms, but also ideological stages for demonstrating the effectiveness of the socialist economic system. The increasing activity of the Uzbek SSR at international exhibitions shows how republican-level production supported the union-wide foreign trade policy.

In the process studied on the basis of the local industrial order under the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR, by resolution No. 393-55 dated May 20, 1961, it was noted that the "Uzglavmestsanoat" enterprise did not take sufficient measures to increase the supply of raw materials and goods for export and did not show due activity in attracting new goods for export, which was not taken into account in the above plans, as well as in the export plan [8]. In the early 1960s, the Soviet Union was deeply involved in strengthening its economic position on the global scale by increasing exports. Centralized planning controlled all aspects of production and trade, leaving little room for local initiatives. Although the Uzbek SSR was rich in natural resources and agricultural products (especially cotton), it was developing its own industrial base at the time. Uzglavmestsanoat was one of the enterprises tasked with supporting local industrial production. However, under the rigid Soviet planning system (Gosplan), such enterprises often lacked the autonomy, resources, and incentives to innovate or respond flexibly to economic demands. In 1961, the Soviet Union, under Khrushchev, attempted to implement economic reforms, focusing on increasing efficiency, scientific advancement, and the development of international trade.

Pressure was applied to Soviet republics such as Uzbekistan to contribute to the USSR's export potential. Thus, Uzglavmestsanoat's failure to achieve its export goals can be interpreted as part of a broader inefficiency in the Soviet administrative-command economy. The centralization of decision-making, especially when not prioritized in union-wide plans, has made it difficult for regional industrial enterprises to adapt to export requirements. The decision also noted that the enterprise was not included in the main economic and export plans of the country. This is indicative of the structural limitations in the bureaucratic hierarchy of the USSR. As part of a centrally planned economy, the local industry in the Uzbek SSR was often limited in its ability to adapt to national export goals. Despite efforts to reform and increase international trade, rigid bureaucratic and planning structures have often marginalized regional enterprises. The failure to increase export production and introduce new products was not only a symptom of local inefficiency but also of systemic limitations built into the Soviet economic model.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

In short, the export of agricultural products from the Uzbek SSR was a key component of the Soviet Union's economic and geopolitical strategy. Uzbekistan's natural resources, agricultural experience, and industrial potential allowed it to make a significant contribution to both the internal Soviet economy and the USSR's global community. Although exports were centrally managed and politically motivated, they also demonstrated the potential and productivity of the Uzbek SSR, paving the way for it to become a major agricultural exporter in Central Asia after its independence. Simultaneously, the central planning mechanisms that governed exports created both strengths and limitations. On the one hand, the rigid quota system and specialization in cotton production enabled the Soviet Union to guarantee stable supplies for its textile industry and strengthen foreign relations through aid packages and trade agreements. However, this overreliance on cotton monoculture has caused serious ecological degradation, particularly the depletion of water resources, which has contributed to the Aral Sea disaster. The prioritization of export crops also came at the expense of domestic food security, leaving rural populations vulnerable to shortages despite Uzbekistan's abundant agricultural capacity.

Another important conclusion is that agricultural exports are not purely economic instruments but also political and ideological tools. By showcasing Uzbek cotton, fruits, and agricultural machinery at international exhibitions and foreign aid programs, the Soviet Union sought to demonstrate the superiority of socialism and consolidate its influence among developing countries during the Cold War. In this sense, Uzbekistan became both a symbol of Soviet agricultural success and a strategic actor in the global soft power diplomacy. Finally, the historical legacy of this period continues to shape Uzbekistan's economic development. The dependence on cotton established under Soviet rule persisted after independence, constraining diversification efforts in the early years of nationhood. However, the experience also left behind infrastructure, expertise, and international linkages that enabled Uzbekistan to emerge as a recognized agricultural exporter in the post-Soviet era. Understanding this dual legacy of both opportunity and dependency offers valuable lessons for policymakers and scholars interested in the intersection of agriculture, politics, and development in Central Asia.

5.2. Suggestions

Based on this conclusion, several suggestions can be drawn for further academic studies and policy reflections. First, future research should not only examine cotton as the primary export crop but also investigate the role of fruits, vegetables, and processed agricultural products to provide a more holistic understanding of Uzbekistan's agricultural economy during the Soviet period. Second, comparative studies between the Uzbek SSR and other Soviet republics with different agricultural specializations would help contextualize Uzbekistan's unique position within the centralized systems. Third, policymakers in present-day Uzbekistan can draw lessons from the Soviet experience by diversifying agricultural production, reducing over-dependence on a single crop, and promoting sustainable practices that prevent ecological crises, such as the Aral Sea disaster. Finally, further exploration of the geopolitical dimensions of agricultural exports may provide valuable insights into how historical legacies continue to shape Uzbekistan's role in regional and global trade networks today.

Moreover, future scholars should explore the socio-cultural dimensions of export-oriented agriculture in the Uzbek SSR, particularly its impact on rural livelihoods, gender roles and labor mobilization during annual cotton harvest campaigns. Oral histories, ethnographic studies, and archival evidence can enrich our understanding of how central planning policies affect everyday life beyond economic indicators. At the policy level, the government of Uzbekistan should prioritize innovation in irrigation technology, soil restoration, and crop rotation systems to address the long-term ecological damage inherited from the Soviet era. Investment in agricultural modernization should be balanced with policies that enhance food security and empower rural communities, ensuring that export growth does not undermine local welfare. Finally, a stronger integration of Uzbekistan into regional and global trade organizations can help the country transform its historical role as a raw material supplier into a competitive exporter of diversified and value-added agricultural products. Such initiatives would allow Uzbekistan to turn the lessons of its Soviet past into strategies for sustainable and inclusive economic development.

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