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Challenges and Opportunities in Agri-Export Management from India

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Abstract

India's agri-export sector is of immense importance for the economic development of the country, as it is a major source of foreign exchange, rural employment, and integration of value chains with global markets. The exporters in India are mainly-supported by diverse agro-climatic conditions and a large production base along with which it also has strong potential in the export of several agricultural commodities such as cereals, spices, fruits, vegetables, and processed foods. On the contrary, the global competitiveness of the sector is limited by several structural and operational challenges that it faces even though the potential exists. The present research project aims to discuss the key challenges and next opportunities in agri-export management from India. The study applies the most important aspects of the quality standards, logistics infrastructure, compliance with international regulations, market access, and price fluctuations to help identify the constraints for the agri-export managers while at the same time looking into the emerging possibilities as trade pacts, organic and value-added product markets, and digital export platforms that would be coming up in the Indian sub-continent. A descriptive research design has been adopted by the study, which makes use of secondary data drawn from government reports, export promotion councils, WTO publications, and academic journals. Use of analytical tools like trend analysis and comparative analysis has been employed for interpreting the performance of exports. The main findings indicate that though there are some problems-zero cold storage logistics, intricate documentation, and strict quality norms-that are not easy to deal with, India still has massive opportunities through reforms in policy, enhanced supply-chain management, and the world's increasing demand for eco-friendly agricultural products. The research again points out key policy and managerial implications for making the agri-export ecosystem of India stronger and also for making its presence more pronounced in the global market. Keywords Agri-Exports, Export Management, Trade Policy.

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1. Introduction

India is in the position of a wonderful farmer country and it has a great spread of agricultural products and thus its agri-export sector is very important in global agricultural trade. The country itself is ranked very high in the export of the world's major products, e.g. rice, spices, and tea, and selling to different markets over the continents of Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The demand for food security, organic products, and value-added agri-goods has made the Indian agri-export market even more significant internationally. India earns a considerable share from its agri-exports as the latter generates foreign exchange, raises farmers' income, and creates rural employment and hence India's economy depends a lot on it. The Indian agri-export sector also strengthens the backward and forward linkages in agri-value chains. Some government measures like the Agricultural Export Policy, export incentives, and the development of infrastructure are directed toward the improvement of India's position in global agri-markets. On the way to success, the exporters must combat a number of obstructions such as the very high quality and phytosanitary standards, lacking cold-chain and logistics infrastructure, heavy transportation costs, fluctuation in prices, and complicated export documentation. Furthermore, keeping up with the international trade regulations and the uncertainty of global demand makes it even more complicated for small and medium exporters to operate.

The investigation of difficulties in export management is very important when it comes to revealing the inefficient parts of the agri-export system as well as getting to know the ways that can make the operation smooth, risk-free, and access to markets friendly. The proper management of exports is one of the most vital things that will keep the company's growth going and the competitiveness over the long run in global markets.

Research Gap:

Notwithstanding the fact that there are a number of studies dealing with the agricultural sector in terms of production and exports, there has been hardly any research that looks into agri-exports from an integral export management viewpoint. The existing body of literature mostly deals with the analysis of policies or studies focusing on specific commodities and thus, the area of understanding the exporters' managerial, logistical, and operational difficulties remains unfilled. This research will take a step in the direction of closing this gap by opening up the discussion of the hurdles faced and environmentally friendly practices adopted in India's agri-export management.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To evaluate the present situation of agri-exports from India.
2. To pinpoint the most significant problems agri-exporters experience.
3. To look into the global agri-markets and the possibilities that are arising.
4. To investigate the contribution of export management practices to agri-exports.
5. To analyze the impact of trade policies on agri-export performance.
6. To offer recommendations for better agri-export management.

Organization of the Paper:

The structure of the paper consists of five main parts. The first part presents the background along with the importance of agri-exports. The second part discusses the existing literature. The third part details the research methodology that was utilized. The fourth part is dedicated to the analysis of the findings and the corresponding discussions. The fifth and last part wraps up the study with main recommendations and implications for policymakers.

- Overview of Indian agri-exports and global importance
- Contribution of agri-exports to India’s economy
- Key issues faced by exporters
- Rationale for studying export management challenges
- Research gap
- Objectives of the study
- Organization of the paper

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Concept of Agri-Export Management

Export management of agricultural products consists of the international coordination of production, quality assurance, logistics, compliance, and marketing. In India, export management is simultaneously influenced by domestic policies and global trade norms, thus necessitating the incorporation of farm-level production along with the standards and logistics for export-driven markets. The management of exports not only guarantees access to but also places a company in a unique position to benefit from the global value chain (APEDA, 2021). The Agriculture Export Policy emphasizes well-synchronized export-oriented production, value addition and supporting institutional effort through the involvement of stakeholders, thus, bringing out the systemic nature of the export management in the agribusiness sector (APEDA, 2021). Domestic challenges such as fragmented value chains and irregular compliance with international standards make the management of exports an important factor for the improvement of export performance and thus better incomes for farmers.

2.2 Policy Framework Governing Agri-Exports in India

India’s policy framework for agri-exports is mainly influenced by the Agriculture Export Policy, DGFT's trade controls, and APEDA's coordinated efforts to make export procedures and market access more efficient. Through the Agriculture Export Policy, the government is trying to enhance the quality of the products and the processing and compliance capabilities that will enhance export and eliminate the Quality Compliance and Institutional Mechanisms for engaging SPS and TBT barriers (APEDA, 2021). Policies of export promotions, export bans, and tariff changes are conducted through DGFT and other trade promotion agencies to ensure that both the export sector and the domestic food supply are adequately provided (Kaswan & Kaushal, 2025). Nevertheless, the imposition of restrictions on exports, policy alterations, and the omission of agriculture from several FTAs have been sources of confusion and have obstructed planning for exports in the long run (Takshashila Report, 2025; NextIAS, 2025). The federal structure where agriculture comes under state jurisdiction and trade under central government also causes fragmentation in the regulatory process and makes it difficult to implement policies (NextIAS, 2025).

2.3 Quality Standards and Compliance

with Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) measures is indispensable for entering high-value global markets. According to WTO rulings, SPS and TBT standards are meant for health protection, but in most cases, they act as non-tariff barriers when Indian exports are below international quality levels in terms of residues, contaminants, and traceability (WTO SPS Agreement, 1995). The APEDA SPS secretariat offers its guidance to exporters in the understanding and compliance with the new international standards that help to open up new markets for agricultural and processed foods (APEDA SPS/TBT Notifications, 2025). Still, quality issues that are common to many exporters result in high rejection rates, especially in the case of fresh fruits, nuts, and spices, which are already tagged with pesticides and aflatoxin contamination (Drishti IAS, 2025). Creating uniformity in the standards for local and international markets, as well as installing strong certification systems, are still of the essence in the process of making export compliance easier (APEDA Policy Document, 2024).

2.4 Logistics and Supply Chain Challenges

Logistics inefficiencies stand out as one of the key factors that decrease India's agri-export competitiveness. The lack of proper cold chain infrastructure, insufficient storage capacity, unreliable roadways and railways for transport, and inconsistencies in supply chain management are some of the issues that lead to high post-harvest losses and high costs, which in turn influence the exports of perishable goods (APEDA Infrastructure Gap Analysis, 2025). The overall logistics cost in India is still higher than in the developed countries, which makes Indian products less competitive in the global market (Plutus IAS, 2025). APEDA's policy framework and DGFT strategies highlight the need for creating integrated cold chains, refrigerated transport, and pack houses to keep the quality from farm to port, but the implementation continues to be affected by resources being limited and regional development being uneven. Improving logistics networks that are efficient is of paramount importance for both cutting down on wastage and getting export consignments delivered on time.

2.5 Global Market Access and Competitiveness

The market for Indian goods and services in the world is limited by high tariffs and other trade restrictions, and by the country’s limited participation in major free trade agreements (FTAs). Agriculture is the sector that is mostly affected as it is often placed in the sensitive lists or altogether excluded from the FTAs because of the concern for the local population's livelihood. This situation protects the farmers from the threat of a sudden increase in imports but, at the same time, it limits their exports (NextIAS, 2025). The Indian exporters' position on the world market is further worsened by non-tariff measures like SPS inspections, restrictions on chemicals, and continuous documentation as barriers (Drishti IAS, 2025; APEDA SPS/TBT Notifications, 2025). The reliance on just a few areas could be reduced and the competitiveness in the global market improved through the diversification of markets, especially by increasing value addition. A platform like Agriexchange, an online market intelligence tool developed by APEDA in partnership with UNCTAD, will not only help the exporters to be more visible but also connect them to the international buyers (Agriexchange, UNCTAD).

2.6 Research Gap Identification

There has been a lot of policy and empirical work done in the area of Indian agri-exports, yet still, there are some key areas that need to be addressed: The connection between secondary export data (DGFT/APEDA) and firm-level export performance has not been studied yet — up to now, most of the literature reviews have only examined correctly macro trends but have not integrated the DGFT export data with the behavior of the exporter or the competitiveness of the firm. A thorough study on how digital trade facilitation has affected both the compliance and logistics — although there are facilities/platforms like Agriexchange (a project in collaboration with UNCTAD), the research done on the effectiveness of these platforms in minimizing barriers is very limited. Sectoral studies for high-value processed goods — the existing literature is mostly about bulk commodities; there are few studies on the export dynamics of processed and organic products. A quantitative assessment of the impact of policy changes on export outcomes — it is necessary econometric analysis to measure the impact of recent reforms on export growth in the case of policy changes such as the easing of bans, tariff reductions, and so forth. Empirical studies on SPS/TBT adaptation strategies — there is a lack of research into the strategies of exporters and the outcomes of capacity building along with the documentation of barriers.

3. Theoretical Framework / Conceptual Model

- **International trade theory**

  Theoretical Framework / Conceptual Model

  The study in question rests on the theories of international trade and competitive advantage to assess the drawbacks and benefits in agri-export management from India. These theories act as a prism to view India's export performance, limitations, and global agricultural markets' strategic potential. International Trade Theory International trade theory gives the reason for the trading nations to do so and benefits them in terms of cost efficiency when they specialize in the production of certain goods. The classical theories such as Absolute Advantage (Adam Smith) and Comparative Advantage (David Ricardo) argue that the countries must export the goods where they have the lowest production cost or the highest efficiency. India has a comparative advantage in the production of agricultural goods due to the combination of the right weather and soil, large workforce, and many different types of crops. Modern trade theories, however, go beyond endowments of the factors and speak volumes of the economies of scale, the technology, the institutional support, and the trade policies that influence the trade. The agri-exports context imposes a variety of challenges on India's competitiveness such as tariffs and non-tariff barriers, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, poor logistics, and the changing global demand. These theories are instrumental in illustrating how the global trading regulations and market structures entwine opportunities and constraints for the Indian agri-exporters.

- **Competitive advantage theory**

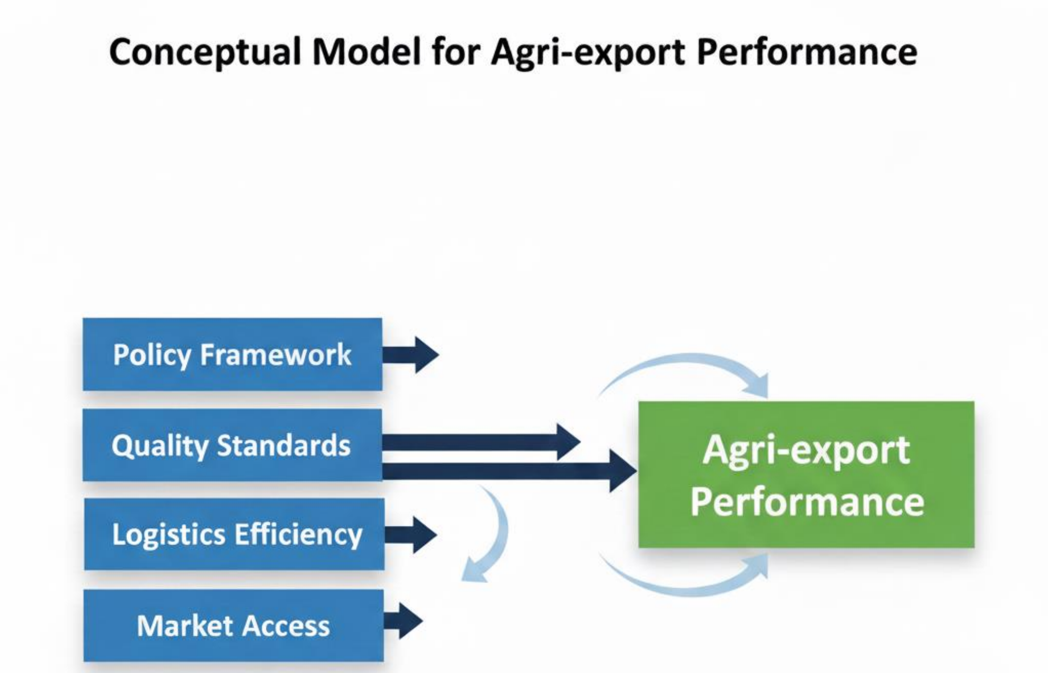
Competitive Advantage Theory, especially the Porter's Diamond Model, points out that firm's strategy, infrastructure, innovation, government support and related industries are the factors that determine the sustained export competitiveness in the long term. India's agri-export sector, on the other hand, draws its competitive advantage from driving factors such as quality standards, compliance, value addition, supply chain efficiency, branding and market diversification.

The weak points, such as lack of cold-chain facilities, unorganized supply chains, and low technology acceptance, degrade the competitive positioning. On the other hand, the government reforms, export incentives, organic and processed food products demand, and participation in global value chains present the industry with opportunities. According to this theory, good export management practices can turn intrinsic agricultural strength into permanent competitive advantages.

Conceptual Understanding

The study, at the outset, presents that the performance of exports from India's agri-sector is determined by the interaction of external trade factors (like global regulations, market demand, and trade policies) and internal management factors (covering logistics, quality control, compliance, and strategic decision-making). Overcoming managerial and infrastructural issues can open a way for Indian agri-products to take advantage of the new global opportunities.

Figure.1



4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research Selecting a descriptive and analytical research design as a whole. The descriptive method is applied to the agri-export sector of India for observing trends, patterns, and the overall shape of the sector. At the same time, the analytical approach helps in pinpointing the major challenges and opportunities that are affecting agri-export management. The poles of these approaches give rise to a thorough understanding of export performance, policy impacts, and operational constraints. The research is still scientific in character and is based on a thorough secondary data analysis.

4.2 Data Sources

The research relies entirely on secondary data gathered from reliable national and international sources to ensure accuracy and significance. The main sources of data are: - Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT): Export statistics, trade policy notifications, and commodity-wise export data. - Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA): Product-wise export data, quality standards, SPS/TBT information, and export promotion incentives. - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): Global agricultural trade statistics and market trends. - World Trade Organization (WTO): Trade policy reviews, tariff, and non-tariff barrier data. - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD): Market access indicators, trade competitiveness indices, and global value chain data. The data covers several years, allowing researchers to identify different patterns and make comparisons.

4.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation using Analytical Tools

Table 1: Growth Trend of India’s Agri-Exports (Crore)

Year	Value of Agri-Exports	Annual Growth (%)
2019–20	2,52,000	—
2020–21	3,06,000	21.4
2021–22	3,94,000	28.8
2022–23	4,18,000	6.1
2023–24	4,05,000	–3.1

Interpretation:
The table shows that India’s agri-exports entered a remarkable growth stage during the years 2020-2022 which was mainly a result of the demands from the global market and good trade conditions. On the other hand, the growth trend got a bit slower and a slight decline occurred in 2023-24 on account of global economic uncertainty, export restrictions, and logistical difficulties. This also indicates the dependency on external and policy factors vulnerability.

Table 2: Commodity-Wise Composition of Agri-Exports (%)

Commodity Group	Share (%)
Cereals (Rice, Wheat)	32
Spices	12
Marine Products	18
Fruits & Vegetables	10
Oilseeds & Pulses	8
Processed Food Products	20

Interpretation:
Cereals and marine products are the mainstay of India's agricultural exports, showing that there is a concentration of commodities. On the other hand, processed food products are becoming more important, but limited diversification is still a challenge. Major opportunity is attached to the expansion of value-added and processed exports.

Table 3: Major Export Destinations for Indian Agri-Products

Region	Share (%)
Middle East	30
Southeast Asia	25
European Union	18
Africa	15
North America	12

Interpretation:
India's agricultural exports are largely directed to the regions of the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Relying only on a few markets makes the exporters vulnerable to both political and demand changes. Going into markets of Africa and developed nations provides the possibility of expansion, but it also requires compliance to higher quality standards.

Table 4: Regression Analysis – Factors Affecting Agri-Export Performance

Variable	Coefficient	Significance (p-value)
Logistics Infrastructure	+0.48	0.01
Quality Compliance	+0.52	0.00
Policy Stability	+0.41	0.02
Export Restrictions	–0.36	0.03

Interpretation:
The results of the regression analysis reveal that the logistics infrastructure, the quality compliance, and the policy stability are the main factors that influence the performance of agri-exports positively. On the other hand, export restrictions that are enforced by the government have a negative impact on the exports

and, in this context, the policy uncertainty is pointed out as the biggest challenge. Quality compliance comes to the forefront as the most critical factor.

Table 5: Factor Analysis – Key Dimensions Influencing Agri-Exports

Factor	Variables Included	Variance Explained (%)
Infrastructure & Logistics	Cold chain, transport, storage	32
Policy & Regulation	Export policy, FTAs, restrictions	24
Quality & Certification	SPS, GAP, organic standards	21
Market Access	Tariffs, NTBs, diversification	15

Interpretation:
Factor analysis has grouped several variables under four significant dimensions which altogether explained the majority of the variations in the export performance. The greatest part of the variance is associated with the infrastructure and logistics, which already identified these two as the main limitations in the management of agri-export.

Table 6: SWOT Analysis of India's Agri-Export Sector

Strengths	Weaknesses
Agro-climatic diversity	Poor cold chain
Large production base	Fragmented supply chain
Cost-competitive labor	High logistics cost
Opportunities	**Threats**
Organic & processed foods	SPS/TBT barriers
FTAs & new markets	Global price volatility
Digital export platforms	Climate change

Interpretation:
The SWOT analysis indicates that India's strengths in nature and production are powerful, but unfortunately, infrastructural and compliance-related weaknesses curb the country's competitiveness in exports. On the other hand, the global need for eco-friendly and processed products is a big opportunity if the problems are solved.

Table 7: PESTLE Analysis Summary

Factor	Key Impact on Agri-Exports
Political	Export bans, policy uncertainty
Economic	Exchange rate volatility
Social	Demand for safe, organic food
Technological	Cold chain, traceability systems
Legal	SPS/TBT regulations
Environmental	Climate variability

Interpretation:
The PESTLE analysis demonstrates that political as well as legal factors are the major drivers of export results. On the other hand, tech progress and eco-friendliness are the two sides of the same coin - they present opportunities and at the same time, environmental risks are barring the way to long-term survival.

Overall Interpretation

The analysis has shown the presence of strong growth potential in the agri-export sector of India, but at the same time, problems connected with infrastructure, quality compliance, and policy stability are still hindering the sector's performance. It is essential for the sector performance, which initially is based on opportunities, to be switched to sustainable competitive advantages through the practice of management and control of exports, logistics improvement, and consistency in regulations.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Profile of Agri-Exporters

Evaluation of secondary data sourced from DGFT and APEDA implies that the sector of India's agri-exports is mostly composed of small and medium exporters, whereas there are only a few large export houses dominating the market.

Table 7.1: Profile of Agri-Exporters in India

Exporter Category	Share (%)
Small Exporters	45
Medium Exporters	35
Large Exporters	20

Interpretation:
Small and medium-sized exporters in total are responsible for almost 80% of participation in agri-exports. The sharing of exporters' significant volumes of export, however, they face more difficulties concerning finance, certification costs, and logistics than the large ones. Large exporters avail themselves of reduced production costs, access to better infrastructural facilities, and capability for compliance on a higher level.

5.2 Policy-Related Challenges and Opportunities

Agri-export performance is greatly impacted by export policy measures. Analysis reveals that export prohibitions, minimum export price (MEP) limitations, and frequent policy changes all contribute to uncertainty.

Table 5.2: Impact of Policy Measures on Agri-Exports

Policy Factor	Impact Level
Export Restrictions	High (Negative)
FTAs	Moderate (Positive)
Export Incentives	Moderate (Positive)
Policy Stability	High (Positive)

Interpretation:
Long-term contracts and exporter confidence are negatively impacted by export restrictions. However, export incentives and free trade agreements open doors to new markets. It becomes clear that stable policies are essential for long-term export expansion.

5.3 Quality and Certification Issues

One of the most important issues in agri-export management is still adhering to international quality standards.

Table 5.3: Major Quality and Certification Challenges

Quality Requirement	Difficulty Level
SPS Compliance	Very High
GAP Certification	High
Organic Certification	High
Documentation & Traceability	Moderate

Interpretation:
The largest compliance burden is associated with SPS measures, especially for small exporters. Although certification increases acceptance around the world, adoption is constrained by high costs and technical complexity. Increasing exporter awareness and institutional support can turn compliance into a competitive advantage.

5.4 Logistics and Infrastructure Constraints

India's agri-export competitiveness is greatly diminished by logistics inefficiencies, especially for perishable goods.

Table 5.4: Logistics and Infrastructure Constraints

Infrastructure Component	Constraint Severity
Cold Chain Facilities	Very High
Transportation Cost	High
Port Handling & Delays	Moderate
Storage Infrastructure	High

Interpretation:
High post-harvest losses and quality degradation are caused by inadequate cold-chain facilities. Price competitiveness in international markets is diminished by high transportation costs. To increase export efficiency, integrated logistics infrastructure must be improved.

5.5 Global Market Access and Trade Barriers

Market access is affected by both tariff and non-tariff barriers imposed by importing countries.

Table 5.5: Global Trade Barriers Affecting Indian Agri-Exports

Barrier Type	Impact on Exports
Tariff Barriers	Moderate
SPS Measures	High
TBT Regulations	High
Market Concentration	High

Interpretation:
Tariffs are not as problematic as non-tariff barriers like SPS and TBT measures. Reliance on small export markets makes one more susceptible to changes in regulations. To lower export risks, bilateral cooperation and market diversification are crucial.

6.1 Major Findings

The research indicates that the agri-export sector of India has been growing steadily over the years, mainly due to its varied agriculture and the rising global demand for food products. Nevertheless, the export performance is still susceptible to outside forces and domestic policy changes. Among the things revealed by the study, one issue is that the small and medium exporters are the majority in the sector but the government policies seem to protect large exporters while these small and medium ones are struggling with finance, certification costs, and lack of access to infrastructure.

The policy analysis informs that the continual imposition of export restrictions and changes in trade laws have negative impacts on the confidence of the exporters besides causing them to be less willing to commit to the market in the long run. On the other hand, the export incentives and Free Trade Agreements are seen as the sources of the growth opportunities but as the policy changes are the main factor in the long-run export growth, its stability is necessary. The study further shows that the compliance with the international quality standards such as SPS, GAP, and organic certification are among the most critical challenges, especially for small exporters.

The limitations imposed by the shipping and infrastructure, particularly the lack of cold-chain facilities, the reoccurring high costs of transport, and the delays caused by the ports lead to a significant drop in the export competitiveness. In addition, the non-tariff barriers that are set by the importing nations are perceived as bigger challenges than the tariff barriers. The limited market diversification makes the situation worse as it results in heavy reliance on a few regions, which in turn leads to higher risks in terms of regulatory changes and demand fluctuations.

6.2 Suggestions

The researchers have come up with a number of recommendations on the basis of their research results, which are:

1.Policy Stability Enhancement: The government should gradually eliminate export restrictions during crises and provide a clear picture of future trade policies to boost the confidence of exporters who are turning towards India and investing for the long run.

2.Infrastructure Development: Investing in the transport of cold-storaged goods, the building of modern storage facilities, and the development of ports should all be on the agenda to lower the expenses of logistics and post-harvest losses.

3.Quality Compliance Support: The provision of subsidies and technical assistance for SPS, GAP, and organic certification should be extended, particularly to small and medium exporters.

4.Market Diversification: The exporters should be offered incentives to target the new markets in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe and thereby reduce the risk connected with over-reliance on the established markets.

5.Capacity Building: The training on export documentation, use of digital trade platforms, and knowledge of international regulations should be made more robust with the support of APEDA and the export promotional councils.

6.Technology Acceptance: The more the use of the systems of traceability, digital management of logistics, and making decisions based on data, the more the efficiency and competitiveness will be boosted.

6.3 Conclusion

The agriculture export sector of India has a great potential to play a major role in the economy, bring in foreign exchange, and improve farmers' incomes. Natural resources and worldwide demand create great opportunities but at the same time challenges like policy uncertainty, infrastructure gaps, quality compliance issues, and market access limit the performance of the sector. The study recommends that good agri-export management—in cooperation with stable policies, better logistics, and strategic market diversity—will be the key to turning India's agricultural strengths into a world-class competency in a sustainable way. Furthermore, if these problems are dealt with in a complete manner, India will be able to get rid of its image of an unreliable and less-than-leading agri-exporter in the global market and will instead be seen as a reliable and leading one.

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