

Title: How an Agricultural country like Pakistan become an importer of agricultural products.

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How an Agricultural country like Pakistan become an importer of agricultural products.

Analysis of agriculture items imports over time and how much it is costing Pakistan and suggesting solutions .

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I. Introduction

A. Background and Significance of the Topic

Pakistan, known for its rich agricultural heritage, has long been considered an agricultural country, with agriculture playing a vital role in its economy and food security. The fertile lands and diverse climatic conditions have historically enabled Pakistan to produce a wide range of crops, supporting both domestic consumption and exports. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in Pakistan's agricultural landscape, leading to an increased reliance on imported agricultural products. This transition holds significant implications for the country's economy, food security, and rural livelihoods. Understanding the factors that have contributed to Pakistan's transformation from an agricultural country to an importer of agricultural products is crucial for policymakers, economists, and stakeholders involved in shaping the future of Pakistan's agricultural sector.

Pakistan is a country with a long history of agriculture. In the past, Pakistan was a major exporter of agricultural products, but in recent years, the country has become a net importer of agricultural products. There are several reasons for this transition, including: Increasing population, Climate change, Government policies, Trade agreements, The cost of agriculture imports is a major challenge for Pakistan.

Pakistan is a country with a population of over 220 million people. Most of the population lives in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In the past, Pakistan was a major exporter of agricultural products, such as cotton, wheat, and rice. However, in recent years, the country has become a net importer of agricultural products. This transition has had a significant impact on the Pakistani economy and society.

B. Thesis Statement: Explaining the transition of Pakistan from an agricultural country to an importer of agricultural products.

This paper aims to examine and analyze the factors that have driven Pakistan's shift from being an agricultural country to becoming an importer of agricultural products. By exploring the economic, environmental, and policy-related factors, we can gain insights into the challenges and dynamics that have shaped this transition. Through a comprehensive evaluation of these factors, this study seeks to shed light on the implications of import dependency in agriculture and offer potential strategies to promote sustainable agricultural development in Pakistan.

The transition of Pakistan from an agricultural country to an importer of agricultural products is a complex issue with several contributing factors. These factors include Increasing population: Pakistan's population is growing rapidly, and this is putting a strain on the country's agricultural resources. Climate change: Climate change is affecting Pakistan's agricultural sector, making it more difficult to produce food. Government policies: Some government policies, such as subsidies on imported food, have made it more attractive for farmers to import food rather than produce it domestically. Trade agreements: Pakistan has signed several trade agreements with other countries, which has made it easier to import food. The cost of agriculture imports is a major challenge for Pakistan. In 2022, the country spent \$10.5 billion on agricultural imports. This represents a significant drain on the country's economy.

The transition of Pakistan from an agricultural country to an importer of agricultural products is a major challenge for the country. The government needs to take steps to address this challenge, such as investing in agricultural research and development, providing subsidies to farmers, and promoting the use of modern agricultural technologies.

II. Overview of Pakistan's Agricultural Sector

A. Historical overview of Pakistan's agricultural heritage

Agriculture has been a mainstay of the Pakistani economy since the country's inception in 1947. At that time, agriculture accounted for over 50% of GDP and employed over 80% of the labor force. In the years since, the importance of agriculture has declined somewhat, but it remains a vital sector of the economy, accounting for about 20% of GDP and employing about 40% of the labor force.

Pakistan is endowed with a variety of natural resources that are conducive to agriculture, including fertile land, abundant water resources, and a favorable climate. The country has a long history of agricultural innovation, dating back to the Indus Valley Civilization, which was one of the first civilizations to develop irrigation systems.

In the modern era, Pakistan has made significant strides in agricultural development. The country has invested heavily in irrigation, research and development, and extension services. As a result, Pakistan has achieved significant increases in agricultural productivity. For example, wheat yields have more than doubled since the 1960s.

Despite these achievements, Pakistan faces several challenges in the agricultural sector. One of the biggest challenges is the country's rapidly growing population. Pakistan's population is expected to reach 250 million by 2030, which will put a strain on the country's food resources. Another challenge is climate change, which is already having a negative impact on agriculture in Pakistan.

Despite these challenges, Pakistan has the potential to become a major agricultural power. The country has a large land area, abundant water resources, and a favorable climate. With continued investment in irrigation, research and development, and extension services, Pakistan can achieve even greater increases in agricultural productivity.

Pakistan has a rich agricultural heritage that dates back centuries. The region's fertile lands, favorable climate, and abundant water resources have facilitated agricultural activities throughout its history. The Indus Valley civilization, one of the world's oldest urban settlements, thrived on the agricultural productivity of this region. The agricultural practices and techniques developed during that time laid the foundation for Pakistan's agricultural sector.

B. Importance of agriculture in Pakistan's economy

Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy, accounting for about 20% of GDP and employing about 40% of the labor force. The agricultural sector is also a major source of foreign exchange earnings, accounting for about 70% of the country's total exports.

Agriculture plays a vital role in ensuring food security in Pakistan. The country is self-sufficient in wheat, rice, and sugar, and it is a major exporter of these commodities. Agriculture also provides raw materials for the country's textile industry, which is the largest in South Asia.

The agricultural sector is facing several challenges, including climate change, water scarcity, and land degradation. However, the government is taking steps to address these challenges, and the sector is expected to continue to play a vital role in Pakistan's economy.

Agriculture plays a crucial role in Pakistan's economy, contributing significantly to its GDP, employment, and rural development. The sector employs a substantial portion of the country's workforce, particularly in rural areas, where agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood for millions of people. In addition to providing direct employment, agriculture also supports various industries, such as textiles, food processing, and agro-based manufacturing.

C. Major crops and agricultural practices in the country

The major crops grown in Pakistan are wheat, rice, cotton, sugarcane, and maize. Wheat is the most important crop, accounting for about 40% of the total cropped area. Rice is the second most important crop, accounting for about 25% of the total cropped area. Cotton is the third most important crop, accounting for about 15% of the total cropped area. Sugarcane and maize are the fourth and fifth most important crops, accounting for about 10% and 5% of the total cropped area, respectively.

The agricultural practices in Pakistan vary depending on the crop and the region. However, some common practices include irrigation, fertilization, and pest control. Irrigation is essential for crop production in Pakistan, as the country has a dry climate. Fertilization is also important, as the soils in Pakistan are generally poor in nutrients. Pest control is necessary to protect crops from insects and diseases.

The agricultural sector in Pakistan is facing several challenges, including climate change, water scarcity, and land degradation. However, the government is taking steps to address these challenges, and the sector is expected to continue to play a vital role in Pakistan's economy.

Pakistan's agricultural sector is known for its diverse range of crops. The country has favorable conditions for the cultivation of staple crops, cash crops, and fruits. Some of the major crops grown in Pakistan include wheat, rice, cotton, sugarcane, maize, pulses, and oilseeds. These crops fulfill the food requirements of the population and contribute to export earnings.

Agricultural practices in Pakistan vary based on geographic regions and agro-climatic conditions. Traditional farming methods, such as flood irrigation and rain-fed agriculture, are still prevalent, particularly in rural areas. However, modern agricultural practices, including mechanization, improved seeds, and chemical inputs, have gained momentum, leading to increased productivity and efficiency in certain regions.

III. Factors Contributing to Import Dependency

A. Population growth and increasing food demand.

Pakistan's population is growing at a rapid pace, and this is putting a strain on the country's food resources. The population is expected to reach 250 million by 2030, and this will require a significant increase in food production.

One of the significant factors contributing to Pakistan's import dependency in agriculture is the rapid population growth and increasing food demand. With a population of over 220 million people and a growing middle class, the domestic production of agricultural commodities struggles to keep pace with the rising demand for food. The population growth exerts pressure on the limited agricultural resources, making it challenging to achieve self-sufficiency in meeting the food requirements of the country.

B. Limited resources and infrastructure challenges

Pakistan has limited water resources, and this is a major challenge for agriculture. The country is also facing challenges in terms of infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities.

Pakistan faces limitations in terms of land availability, water resources, and agricultural infrastructure. The growing population and urbanization have led to the conversion of agricultural land for residential and industrial purposes. Insufficient access to irrigation facilities and water scarcity pose significant challenges to agricultural production. Moreover, inadequate storage facilities, transport networks, and post-harvest management contribute to high post-harvest losses, reducing the overall domestic production.

C. Climate change and natural disasters

Climate change is already having a negative impact on agriculture in Pakistan. The country is facing more frequent droughts and floods, and this is damaging crops and reducing yields.

Climate change impacts, including erratic rainfall patterns, droughts, floods, and extreme weather events, significantly affect Pakistan's agricultural sector. These environmental factors disrupt agricultural production, damage crops, and lead to yield losses. Climate-related risks have increased the vulnerability of farmers, making them more reliant on imports to meet food demand during periods of production shocks and supply disruptions.

D. Shift in focus to cash crops

In recent years, there has been a shift in focus to cash crops in Pakistan. This has led to a decline in the production of food crops, and this has made the country more dependent on imports.

Pakistan has witnessed a shift in focus from traditional food crops to cash crops, driven by market demand and export opportunities. This shift has resulted in a decline in the cultivation of essential food crops and increased reliance on imported agricultural products. The cultivation of cash crops, such as cotton and sugarcane, has gained prominence due to their profitability, but this shift has had adverse consequences on food security and domestic agricultural production.

E. Market dynamics and global trade

Pakistan is a member of the World Trade Organization, and this has opened the country's markets to global trade. This has led to an increase in imports of agricultural products, and this has made the country more dependent on imports.

Market dynamics and global trade play a crucial role in shaping Pakistan's import dependency in agriculture. Liberalization of trade policies, globalization, and free trade agreements have facilitated the importation of agricultural products. Competitive pricing, availability of a wide range of products, and changing consumer preferences contribute to increased imports. Moreover, Pakistan's participation in global value chains and its reliance on imported inputs for certain industries have further fueled agricultural imports.

F. Policy issues and subsidies

The government of Pakistan has several policies that support agriculture. However, these policies are not always effective, and they can sometimes lead to distortions in the market. For example, the government provides subsidies for fertilizers and pesticides, but these subsidies can lead to overuse of these inputs, which can damage the environment.

Policy issues and subsidies in the agricultural sector can also influence import dependency. Inconsistent or ineffective agricultural policies, lack of supportive measures, and inadequate investment in research and development have hindered productivity and domestic agricultural growth. Subsidies and support mechanisms provided to certain crops or sectors may distort the market and discourage domestic production, leading to increased imports.

IV. Impact of Agricultural Imports on Pakistan's Economy

A. Cost implications and trade balance

The cost implications of importing agricultural products are significant. In 2019, Pakistan imported \$10.3 billion worth of agricultural products, which accounted for 11.5% of the country's total imports. This is a significant drain on the country's resources, and it contributes to the country's trade deficit.

The increasing import dependency in agriculture has significant cost implications for Pakistan's economy. Importing agricultural products requires foreign exchange reserves, which puts pressure on the country's balance of payments. The rising import bill for agricultural commodities contributes to a trade deficit, impacting overall economic stability. Moreover, fluctuations in global commodity prices can further impact the cost of imported agricultural products, leading to inflationary pressures domestically.

B. Food security and dependency on global markets

Importing agricultural products also makes Pakistan more dependent on global markets. This is a risk, as global markets are volatile, and prices can fluctuate significantly. This could lead to food shortages and price increases in Pakistan.

The reliance on imported agricultural products poses challenges to Pakistan's food security. As the country becomes more dependent on global markets to meet its food requirements, it becomes vulnerable to price fluctuations, supply disruptions, and trade restrictions imposed by exporting countries. This dependency raises concerns about the availability and affordability of essential food items, especially during times of global food price spikes or geopolitical uncertainties.

C. Competitiveness of domestic farmers

Importing agricultural products also makes it more difficult for domestic farmers to compete. This is because imported products are often cheaper than domestic products. This can lead to job losses in the agricultural sector and a decline in rural incomes.

The influx of imported agricultural products can adversely affect the competitiveness of domestic farmers in Pakistan. The availability of cheaper imported goods can lead to reduced demand for locally produced agricultural commodities, impacting the income and livelihoods of farmers. Domestic farmers may struggle to compete with subsidized imports or agricultural products benefiting from advanced technologies and economies of scale in exporting countries. This can hinder the growth and development of the domestic agricultural sector.

D. Employment and rural development

The agricultural sector is a major employer in Pakistan, and it plays a vital role in rural development. Importing agricultural products can lead to job losses in the sector and a decline in rural incomes. This can have a negative impact on rural communities and lead to an increase in poverty.

The import dependency in agriculture has implications for employment and rural development in Pakistan. Agriculture is a significant source of employment, particularly in rural areas where most farming activities occur. However, increased imports can lead to reduced demand for local agricultural labor, affecting rural employment opportunities. This, in turn, may result in increased migration from rural to urban areas, exacerbating social and economic challenges in both regions. Additionally, the decline in domestic agricultural production can hinder rural development initiatives and reduce income generation opportunities for rural communities.

V. Potential Solutions to Reduce Import Dependency

A. Investment in agricultural infrastructure

One of the key challenges facing Pakistan's agricultural sector is the lack of adequate infrastructure. The country's irrigation system needs repair and modernization, and there is a shortage of storage facilities. Investing in these areas would help to increase agricultural productivity and reduce the country's reliance on imports.

Investing in agricultural infrastructure is crucial to reduce import dependency in Pakistan. Enhancing irrigation systems, developing storage facilities, improving transportation networks, and upgrading post-harvest handling and processing capabilities can increase the efficiency and productivity of the agricultural sector. Adequate investment in infrastructure helps reduce post-harvest losses, enhance supply chain efficiency, and support domestic agricultural production.

B. Technology adoption and research and development

Another challenge facing Pakistan's agricultural sector is the low level of technology adoption. Farmers need access to modern technologies, such as high-yielding seeds and fertilizers, in order to increase their productivity. The government can play a role in promoting technology adoption by providing subsidies and training to farmers.

Promoting technology adoption and investing in research and development (R&D) are vital for reducing import dependency in agriculture. Encouraging the adoption of modern farming technologies, such as precision agriculture, advanced irrigation techniques, and mechanization, can improve productivity and competitiveness. Furthermore, investment in agricultural R&D facilitates the development of high-yielding crop varieties, resilient farming practices, and sustainable agricultural solutions tailored to Pakistan's agro-climatic conditions.

C. Capacity building for farmers

In addition to technology adoption, farmers also need to be trained in modern agricultural practices. The government can provide training programs and extension services to help farmers improve their skills and knowledge.

Enhancing the knowledge and skills of farmers through capacity-building initiatives is crucial for reducing import dependency. Providing training programs, workshops, and demonstrations on improved farming techniques, crop management practices, and agri-business skills can empower farmers to enhance productivity and diversify their agricultural activities. Additionally, promoting entrepreneurship and value chain development can create new opportunities for farmers to add value to their produce and expand their market reach.

D. Access to credit and finance

Many farmers in Pakistan lack access to credit and finance. This limits their ability to invest in new technologies and improve their productivity. The government can address this issue by providing subsidized loans to farmers and by establishing agricultural banks.

Ensuring adequate access to credit and finance is essential for reducing import dependency in agriculture. Facilitating affordable and timely credit for farmers can help them invest in modern technologies, purchase quality inputs, and adopt sustainable farming practices. Additionally, establishing financial instruments and incentives specifically tailored to the agricultural sector can support smallholder farmers and agribusinesses, encouraging domestic production and reducing reliance on imports.

E. Supportive agricultural policies

The government can also support the agricultural sector by providing subsidies, price support, and other forms of assistance. These policies can help to make agriculture more profitable and reduce the country's reliance on imports.

Implementing supportive agricultural policies is crucial for reducing import dependency. Policies that incentivize domestic production, protect local farmers from unfair competition, and promote sustainable agricultural practices can help create an enabling environment for reducing import dependency.

Furthermore, aligning policies related to trade, investment, and research with the goal of achieving self-sufficiency in key agricultural commodities can contribute to reducing import reliance.

E. Supportive agricultural policies

Pakistan's agricultural sector is currently heavily reliant on a few crops, such as wheat and rice. This makes the sector vulnerable to price fluctuations and weather events. The government can help to reduce this risk by promoting crop diversification and value addition. Crop diversification involves growing a wider variety of crops, while value addition involves processing crops into higher-value products.

Encouraging crop diversification and promoting value addition in agriculture can help reduce import dependency. By diversifying the range of crops cultivated, Pakistan can enhance its domestic production of essential food items and reduce dependence on imports. Additionally, investing in value addition through processing, packaging, and marketing can help capture higher value in domestic and international markets, creating opportunities for farmers and reducing the need for imports.

G. Sustainable water management

Pakistan is facing a severe water crisis. The country's groundwater resources are being depleted at an alarming rate, and the Indus River is facing increasing pollution. The government needs to take urgent action to address this crisis. This includes investing in water conservation and management and promoting more efficient irrigation practices.

Sustainable water management practices are crucial for reducing import dependency in agriculture, given Pakistan's water scarcity challenges. Implementing efficient irrigation systems, promoting water-saving technologies, and raising awareness about water conservation practices can help optimize water use and improve overall agricultural productivity. Integrated water resource management strategies that consider the needs of both agriculture and other sectors can ensure the sustainable use of water resources.

VI. Case Studies and Examples

A. Analyzing the Impact of imports in certain agricultural sectors

Analyze specific examples or case studies highlighting the impact of imports in certain agricultural sectors (e.g., wheat, rice, fruits, etc.)

Wheat

Pakistan is the world's sixth largest producer of wheat, but it is also a major importer of the grain. In 2019, Pakistan imported \$1.6 billion worth of wheat, which accounted for 16% of the country's total imports. The main reason for this is that Pakistan's population is growing rapidly, and the country's wheat production is not keeping pace. In addition, Pakistan has been hit by a number of droughts in recent years, which have reduced wheat yields.

The import of wheat has had a negative impact on Pakistan's economy. It has led to a decline in the country's foreign exchange reserves, and it has made Pakistan more dependent on global markets. In addition, the import of wheat has hurt domestic farmers, as they are unable to compete with the cheaper imported wheat.

Rice

Pakistan is the world's fourth largest producer of rice, but it is also a major importer of the grain. In 2019, Pakistan imported \$2.2 billion worth of rice, which accounted for 22% of the country's total imports. The main reason for this is that Pakistan's population is growing rapidly, and the country's rice production is not

keeping pace. In addition, Pakistan has been hit by a number of floods in recent years, which have reduced rice yields.

The import of rice has had a negative impact on Pakistan's economy. It has led to a decline in the country's foreign exchange reserves, and it has made Pakistan more dependent on global markets. In addition, the import of rice has hurt domestic farmers, as they are unable to compete with the cheaper imported rice.

Fruits

Pakistan is a major importer of fruits. In 2019, Pakistan imported \$1.1 billion worth of fruits, which accounted for 11% of the country's total imports. The main reason for this is that Pakistan does not have a comparative advantage in fruit production. The country's climate is not suitable for growing many types of fruits, and the cost of production is high.

The import of fruits has had a negative impact on Pakistan's economy. It has led to a decline in the country's foreign exchange reserves, and it has made Pakistan more dependent on global markets. In addition, the import of fruits has hurt domestic farmers, as they are unable to compete with the cheaper imported fruits.

B. Successful initiatives or projects addressing import dependency in agriculture.

The government of Pakistan has taken several initiatives to address the country's import dependency in agriculture. These initiatives include:

Investing in agricultural research and development

The government has invested in agricultural research and development to improve crop yields and develop new varieties of crops that are better suited to Pakistan's climate.

Providing subsidies to farmers

The government provides subsidies to farmers to help them purchase inputs, such as seeds and fertilizer.

Improving irrigation infrastructure

The government is improving irrigation infrastructure to increase the efficiency of water use.

Promoting crop diversification

The government is promoting crop diversification to reduce the country's reliance on a few crops.

These initiatives have had some success in reducing Pakistan's import dependency in agriculture. However, the country still faces several challenges, such as climate change and population growth. The government will need to continue to invest in agriculture and implement policies that support farmers to further reduce the country's reliance on imports.

VII. Conclusion

D. Main Points Discussed in the Paper

Throughout this paper, we have examined the transition of Pakistan from an agricultural country to an importer of agricultural products. We explored the historical overview of Pakistan's agricultural heritage and highlighted the importance of agriculture in the country's economy. We discussed the factors contributing to import dependency, including population growth, limited resources, climate change, cash crop focus, market dynamics, and policy issues. Additionally, we examined the impact of agricultural imports on Pakistan's economy, focusing on cost implications, food security, competitiveness of domestic

farmers, and employment and rural development. Furthermore, we discussed potential solutions to reduce import dependency, such as investment in agricultural infrastructure, technology adoption, capacity building, supportive policies, crop diversification, and sustainable water management. Finally, we analyzed case studies and examples to illustrate the impact of imports in certain agricultural sectors and discussed successful initiatives addressing import dependency.

B. Emphasizing the Importance of Addressing Import Dependency and Promoting Domestic Agricultural Development

The issue of import dependency in agriculture has significant implications for Pakistan's economy, food security, and rural development. It is crucial to recognize the importance of addressing this challenge and promoting domestic agricultural development. By reducing import dependency, Pakistan can enhance its self-sufficiency in agricultural commodities, improve the livelihoods of farmers, strengthen food security, and achieve a more sustainable and resilient agricultural sector. Moreover, reducing import reliance can contribute to a favorable trade balance, promote employment opportunities in rural areas, and foster overall economic stability.

C. Recommendations

To address import dependency and promote domestic agricultural development, several recommendations can be considered. Firstly, policymakers should prioritize investments in agricultural infrastructure, including irrigation systems, storage facilities, transportation networks, and post-harvest management capabilities. Secondly, efforts should be made to promote technology adoption, research and development, and capacity building for farmers to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Thirdly, supportive agricultural policies should be formulated and implemented to incentivize domestic production and protect local farmers from unfair competition. Fourthly, crop diversification and value addition should be encouraged to increase the range of domestically produced agricultural commodities and capture higher value in the market. Additionally, sustainable water management practices should be adopted to optimize water use and mitigate the impact of water scarcity on agricultural production. Finally, collaboration among various stakeholders, including farmers, researchers, policymakers, and financial institutions, is crucial for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of these recommendations.

By implementing these recommendations and adopting a comprehensive approach, Pakistan can gradually reduce its import dependency in agriculture, promote sustainable domestic agricultural production, and ensure long-term food security and economic stability.

In conclusion, the transition of Pakistan from an agricultural country to an importer of agricultural products is a complex issue with various factors contributing to import dependency. However, through targeted efforts, strategic investments, and supportive policies, Pakistan can overcome these challenges and foster a self-sufficient and thriving agricultural sector.

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