

The Obstacles Faced by Afghan Traders in Exporting Agricultural Products

Safiullah Jauhar¹, Sayed Attaul Haq Banuree², Ayaz Khan Naseri³

¹Department of Food Technology, Faculty of Agriculture, Kabul University, Kabul, Afghanistan

² Department of Pre-clinic, Faculty of Veterinary Science, Nangarhar University, Nangarhar Afghanistan

³Department of Agriculture Economics and Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Kabul University, Kabul, AF

✉ Email: safijauhar@gmail.com (corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

International trade, including the export of agricultural products, plays a significant role in a country's economy. However, exports can be exposed to several barriers and should be investigated to inform policy and decision-making. Thus, the study aimed to investigate Afghan traders' obstacles in exporting their agricultural products to foreign countries. Fifty-one Afghan international traders were identified through purposive and snowballing sampling techniques and asked through a pre-tested questionnaire. The results showed that all barriers were near to medium extent, except financial obstacles, with a score of more than medium extent. Financial barriers (3.28 ± 0.71) were the most common, followed by logistic and transportation (2.87 ± 0.92), market access and competition (2.85 ± 0.72), individual (2.78 ± 0.57), and organizational (2.76 ± 0.67) barriers. These barriers were consistent across all traders based on their socio-demographics ($P \geq 0.05$). The study suggests that Afghan traders face various obstacles to exporting agricultural products, requiring prompt and relevant actions from governmental organizations, policymakers, donor agencies, and other relevant bodies.

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Introduction

International trade is critical to the manifestations of economic globalization (Henson and Loader, 2001). It supports economic growth and development because it allows countries to access a broader range of goods and services, promotes specialization, and increases efficiency. Countries that engage in international trade tend to have better economic growth rates. Increased trade openness is linked to higher incomes and lower poverty in emerging nations (Dollar et al., 2004). Moreover, agricultural products, being one of the most important industrial groups, can play an efficient role in developing countries' economic development. The reasons for this are the inexpensiveness of the raw materials of agricultural products, the

existence of inexpensiveness of labor, and the low investment and valuation required for these products. Establishing these industries can have a particular effect on increasing the added value of agricultural products and this sector's export value (Turkamani & Zoghipour, 2008). Likewise, it increases the income for domestic agricultural enterprises and traders improves quality at agricultural production's cultivation, storage, and transportation stages, increases foreign exchange, and accelerates economic growth (Xu et al., 2023). A large body of studies spotlights agricultural trade due to its enormous slap on the global food supply, often using agriculture as a proxy for food availability and access (Wang and Dai., 2021; Dupas et al., 2019; Raj et al., 2022). Agricultural trade radically slams food security with global trade connectedness (Aguiar et al., 2020; Hertel et al., 2021). The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit highlighted the vigorous portrayal of agricultural trade in promoting food diversity (Hendriks et al., 2021). Afghanistan's agricultural sector is diverse, with subsistence farming the norm in rural areas. Wheat, rice, maize/millet, and numerous fruits and vegetables are the main crops farmed in the country (FAO, 2021). Agriculture generates 23% of Afghanistan's GDP and employs roughly 61.6% of the labor force (Muradi, 2018). Approximately 70% of Afghans live and work in rural regions, primarily on farms, and agriculture provides income for 61% of all households. The crop agricultural subsector is under-diversified and excessively focused on wheat, leaving farm households vulnerable to stagnant or declining wheat prices (World Bank, 2018).

Afghanistan has immense agricultural potential but faces infrastructure, finance, and legislative obstacles. With greater access to capital and infrastructure, it has the potential to become a leading agricultural exporter. However, greater food safety controls are required to meet export regulations. Food safety measures are outdated, and businesses are subject to frequent inspections. Harmonizing laws, enhancing cooperation, educating inspectors, putting risk-based controls in place, and bolstering disease surveillance are important concerns that must be addressed (Khalid, 2016). According to Rahimi and Artukoglu (2021), exporters of Afghan agricultural products face various basic obstacles. These obstacles include inadequate marketing services, a lack of government support, problems paying taxes and clearing customs, challenges with transit transportation, challenges adjusting to the global marketing system, ongoing security and civil war concerns, challenges with conducting business with nearby nations, issues with communication and education, and a lack of effective quality control systems.

A country's export is majorly driven by the country's economic policies and direct interactions with foreign countries. Moreover, exports may be influenced by traders' experience and familiarity with export skills, support from their home country, financial drivers, and other relevant factors. Therefore, to ensure the smooth export progress in a country, the barriers that hinder export should be investigated continuously to inform decision-making and policy development. On the other hand, the last changes in the country significantly affected the export of agricultural products to international markets for several reasons. Therefore, the present study was designed to investigate the obstacles Afghan

traders face in exporting agricultural products to foreign countries and compare the barriers for traders based on their sociodemographics.

Review of Literature

This research addresses the lack of studies on Afghanistan's agricultural export barriers, incorporating previous domestic studies on trade-related topics, particularly export barriers. Rahimi and Artukoglu (2023) analyzed Afghanistan's socioeconomic structure and potential agricultural product exporters. They surveyed 62 out of 600 exporters, focusing on fresh vegetables, fruit, dried fruit, and medicinal plants. The analysis revealed that most exporters are limited liability companies with an average of 17.1 years of experience, facing challenges such as energy, market, funding, bureaucracy, transportation, and warehouse space. Potential risks and security issues directly or indirectly affect the business world. Habibyar (2014) claims that Afghanistan's export and investment challenges include security concerns, corruption, funding, land restrictions, and threats. Recommendations include cold storage, long-term loan access, and market education for exporters. Bakhshi (2016) highlights that Afghan exports face significant barriers due to internal security concerns, inadequate processing and packaging facilities, transportation issues, and a lack of domestic storage facilities. Rocha (2017) appoints Afghanistan's trade obstacle as insufficient production capacity. Enhancing competitiveness in high-potential industries like agriculture could meet domestic demand, replace imports, and promote exports. Jamali's (2018) study identified Afghanistan's main export barriers as lack of cold storage, insufficient packaging, lack of quality control, widespread drug cultivation, and excessively open borders with Pakistan. Ahmadyar (2020) highlights Afghanistan's export challenges as limited variety and value, a lack of appropriate structures, designated zones, port obstacles, undiversified export destinations, and unusual import tariffs imposed by importing countries. Muhammad Ayaz and Naseer's (2021) study reveals significant trade barriers between Pakistan and Afghanistan, including irregular payments, corruption, and ongoing conflict. They suggest implementing measures like expediting customs clearance, obtaining insurance, and selecting safe containers.

Additionally, they highlight roadblocks, financial issues, and communication issues. The study emphasized the need for improved trade relations between the two nations. Ali et al. (2022) identified factors affecting transit trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan, including border closures, regional wars, rivalry, the digital divide, ICT use, government support deficiencies, U-turn trade delays, border skirmishes, and political unrest. In 2021, the National Statistics and Information Authority reported that Afghanistan's agricultural products, despite improved packaging conditions, are not competitive with international standards and neighboring countries. Most exports are exported abroad as raw materials, with prices increasing due to simple packaging processes.

Additionally, Afghan goods are exported under other countries' names and brands. Correct sorting, packaging, and marketing could increase the country's export volume by \$4.5 billion. The study also considers international literature alongside country studies.

Bharatkumar et al. (2023) delved into the role of agriculture processing in the export growth of agricultural products in India. The study revealed that India's low ranking among global agriculture exporters is due to five critical challenges: low productivity, high logistics costs, limited value addition, export promotion challenges, non-tariff barriers, and quality issues. Abnar et al. (2021) identified several challenges in Iran's agriculture product exports, including exchange rate fluctuations, strict visa issuance for Iranian business people, high bank interest rates, delayed payment periods for subsidies and export incentives, absence of brand names, insufficient specialized terminals, and communication difficulties between banks regarding currency transfers. Yakovenko and Ivanenko (2020) emphasized the importance of diversification in agricultural food exports for sustainable economic growth, arguing that high-value-added product development significantly contributes to this industry. Sulaiman et al.'s (2020) study highlights the importance of strengthening trade balance transactions in promoting agricultural development by increasing productivity through innovation, expanding agricultural product exports, and widening market opportunities.

Materials and Methods

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Kabul province, where Afghan traders export agricultural products to foreign countries. A purposive and snowballing sampling technique was used to identify and select research respondents. Thus, due to the limited number of Afghan traders enrolled in exporting agricultural products, 51 traders were identified and enrolled in the present study.

Data Collection Tools

The data was collected through a pre-tested and well-structured questionnaire with close-ended questions from Afghan traders. The questionnaire started with a preamble with informed consent and screening questions followed by five primary constructs, namely individual barriers, organizational barriers, logistic and transportation barriers, financial barriers, market access, and competition barriers. Each construct included relevant questions with five-point Likert scale responses where 5 indicated very high and 0 did not.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The research data collection questionnaire was validated based on face and content validity by three experts from the agribusiness sector. Moreover, to ensure that the questionnaire is equally understandable, the questionnaire has been translated by a professional translator into local languages (Pashto and Dari). Then, the translated questionnaire was back-translated by a research assistant to check for any inconsistency and absence of bias. The questionnaire's reliability was assessed by calculating Cronbach's α . The data was collected from 15 respondents for the pilot study. The test results showed that socio-demographics, individual and organizational barriers, logistic and transportation barriers, financial barriers, market access, and competition barriers had Chronbach's α values of 0.828, 0.785, 0.913,

0.714, and 0.688, respectively. It shows that the questionnaire constructs had acceptable internal consistency values.

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS v.23. All the categorical variables were reported as frequency and percentage. Independent samples T-test and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to compare two and more than two means, respectively. The significance level of $p < 0.05$ was set for all the applied statistical tests. GraphPad Prism 9.0 software was used to visualize the data.

Results and Discussion

Socio-demographics of the Respondents

The socio-demographic patterns of the respondents are presented in Table 1. A total of 51 international Afghan traders participated in the present study, of whom 88.2% were 18–50. Moreover, the majority (66.9%) of the respondents were married. The marital status of food handlers shows that more than half (84.3%) of them are married. Based on the results, 43.1% were bachelors, followed by 12th-graders, illiterate, and master degree holders. Furthermore, most (35.3%) traders owned limited liability companies. It is also documented that 58.8% and 54.9% had business and agriculture business experience of >10 years, respectively. These results substantially confirm the findings from Rahimi and Artukoglu's (2023) investigation, which are covered in the scientific literature. Regarding export destinations, most (82.4%) of them exported to Asia, followed by Europe and the USA. This result aligns with the World Bank's report on Afghanistan, which states that over 90% of Afghan products have been exported to the top five Asian countries (World Bank, 2023). The major export products of Afghan traders were agriculture products (92.2%), followed by food commodities (7.8%). No one reported that they had exported animal products to overseas countries. These findings are supported by past analyses and publications, demonstrating that 79% of Afghanistan's total exports come from the country's agricultural sector (ITC Trademap, 2018; NSIA, 2019; WTO OMCDATA, 2019).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the international Afghan traders. (N = 51)

Independent Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	<18	0	0
	18-50	45	88.2
	>50	6	11.8
Marital status	Single	8	15.7
	Married	43	84.3
	Illiterate	6	11.8
Education level	12th-grader	20	39.2
	Bachelor	22	43.1
	Master or above	3	5.9
Type of Business	Sole Proprietorships	14	27.5
	Partnership	16	31.4
	Limited Liability Companies	18	35.3

	Corporation	3	5.9
	≤5	6	11.8
Business experience (years)	5-10	15	29.4
	>10	30	58.8
Agriculture Business Experience	≤5	15	29.4
	5-10	8	15.7
	>10	28	54.9
Trade to Continents	Asia	42	82.4
	Europe	6	11.8
	USA	3	5.9
Type of Export Products	Agriculture products	47	92.2
	Food products	4	7.8
	Animal products	0	0

The Extent of Barriers that Afghan Traders Face in Export

The results of the present study in terms of the extent of barriers that Afghan international traders face are illustrated in Figure 1. As the results depict, all types of barriers are near to the medium extent except financial obstacles, which score more than the medium extent. The traders face financial barriers (3.28 ± 0.71) more, followed by logistic and transportation (2.87 ± 0.92), market access and competition (2.85 ± 0.72), individual (2.78 ± 0.57), and organizational (2.76 ± 0.67) barriers. The detailed results of each category of barriers are explained in subsequent sub-sections:

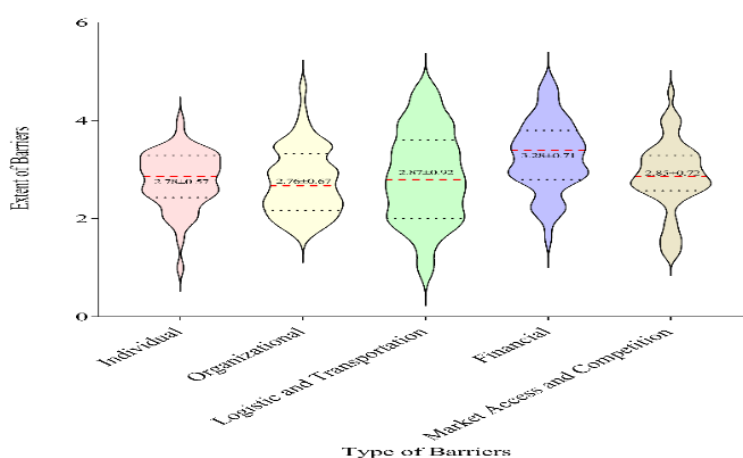


Figure 1. It shows the extent of barriers that Afghan traders face when exporting agricultural products to foreign countries. Dish lines with red color show each barrier's median score, while black colors show the relevant quartile ranges. Moreover, values within the violin depict the mean \pm standard deviation of the barrier.

Individual Barriers

The extent of individual barriers that the traders face in their export of agricultural products is shown in Table 2. Based on the results, the higher score was given to accepting minimum risk in exporting agricultural products (3.08 ± 0.87), followed by lack of financial resources to start or expand exports (3.04 ± 1.08), and other individual barriers. The consequences of this study are synchronized with prior research stating that potential risks and financial resource issues directly or indirectly affect the business world (Habibyar, 2014; Muhammad Ayaz and

Naseer, 2021; Rahimi and Artukoglu, 2023). The business theory suggests that financial profit is the primary goal of trade. A daily trading goal should be achievable, realistic, and based on risk tolerance. Trade finance solutions are essential for global marketplace success, reducing risk, improving business working capital, and enhancing control over import and export processes. These solutions include documentary collections, credits, letters of guarantee, supply chain finance, and trade loans, providing flexibility and seamless global trade transactions. The results of the current study also depict that Afghan traders face the barrier of unfamiliarity with export related skills and modern technology (2.47±0.99) to a minimum extent compared to other individual obstacles. The National Statistics and Information Authority's 2021 report indicates that Afghanistan's export value could reach \$900 million by 2021 if exporters can effectively sell, package, and classify their goods. The importance of enforcing export laws, enhancing cooperation, training inspectors, implementing risk-based controls, and enhancing disease surveillance are critical concerns recorded (Habibya, 2014; Khalid, 2016).

Table 2. The extent of Individual barriers that Afghan traders face in the export of agricultural products. (N=51)

Barrier	Extent of barrier (%)					Mean Score ± Standard deviation
	Not at all	Low	Medium	Very	Very High	
Lack of experience in exporting agricultural products	17.6	19.6	37.3	17.6	7.8	2.78±1.17
Illiteracy and overall lack of knowledge and skills related to the export of agricultural products	19.6	11.8	52.9	11.8	3.9	2.69±1.05
Unfamiliarity with export-related skills and modern technology	21.6	23.5	41.2	13.7	0.0	2.47±0.99
Accepting minimum risk in exporting agricultural products	3.9	19.6	43.1	31.4	2.0	3.08±0.87
Lack of self-confidence	25.5	19.6	21.6	25.5	7.8	2.71±1.32
Lack of financial resources to start or expand exports	9.8	21.6	27.5	37.3	3.9	3.04±1.08
Unfamiliarity with national and international standards related to agricultural products export	11.8	27.5	39.2	21.6	0.0	2.71±0.94

Organizational Barriers

The results of the present study showed that Afghan traders have the lowest extent of organizational barriers compared to other categories when exporting their agricultural products to other countries. Within the organizational barriers, the traders pointed out that they have the barrier of absence of agriculture products export contracts with other countries due to various factors (political conflict, lack of relations with countries, etc.) to a higher extent (3.26±1.15) followed by request of more documents by government in exporting agricultural products, and other organizational barriers (3.02±1.05) (Table 3). These results accorded with previous studies, which stated that identifying business visa strictness, political unrest, border closures, regional wars, challenges with conducting business with

nearby nations, and internal security concerns are critical barriers (Abnar et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2022; Bakhshi, 2016; Mohammad Ayaz and Naseer, 2021; Rahimi and Artukoglu, 2021). In principle, trade agreements aim to benefit signatory countries by increasing economic growth, eliminating tariff barriers, and diversifying markets. However, protectionist policies can hinder trade between poorer and self-sufficient countries. On the other hand, protectionism restricts international trade to support domestic industries, aiming to improve economic activity within a domestic economy. These policies can also be implemented to address safety or quality concerns.

Table 3. The extent of organizational barriers that Afghan traders face in the export of agricultural products. (N=51)

Barrier	Extent of barrier (%)					Mean Score \pm Standard deviation
	Not at all	Low	Medium	Very	Very High	
Absence of appropriate and adequate organizations for the support and coordination of traders	15.7	29.4	25.5	23.5	5.9	2.74 \pm 1.16
Request of more documents by government in exporting agricultural products	7.8	21.6	39.2	23.5	7.8	3.02 \pm 1.05
High number of national and international standards related to agricultural products (ISO, Codex, WTO, and other standards.)	15.7	35.3	37.3	7.8	3.9	2.49 \pm 0.99
Inconsistency between national and international standards (ISO, Codex, WTO, and other standards.) related to agricultural products.	25.5	35.3	27.5	9.8	2.0	2.27 \pm 1.02
Frequent and immense changes in national and international standards related to agricultural products	13.7	25.5	33.3	23.5	3.9	2.78 \pm 1.08
Absence of agriculture products export contracts with other countries due to various factors (political conflict, lack of relations with countries, etc.)	19.6	7.8	23.5	37.3	11.8	3.26 \pm 1.15

Logistic and Transportation Barriers

In terms of logistics and transportation, as the results display in Table 4, Afghan traders suffer from a lack of inexpensive ways to export agricultural products (3.02 \pm 1.09), followed by lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities for the export of agricultural products (2.96 \pm 1.11), unfamiliarity with the standards (lack of export professionalism) related to the export of agricultural products (2.84 \pm 1.12), absence of adequate storage facilities for agricultural products especially those require refrigeration (2.80 \pm 1.34), and absence of appropriate organizations in the country for exporting agricultural products to the international markets (2.71 \pm 1.14). Moreover, the results also found that organizational barriers were somewhat limited. The preceding literature supports the findings of the current investigation, which stated that infrastructure, transportation, bureaucracy, warehouse space, inadequate processing and packaging facilities, lack of domestic storage, cold storage, insufficient

packaging, quality control, the digital divide, delayed subsidy payments, and widening market opportunities are recognized as the biggest obstacles (Abnar et al., 2021; Dollar et al., 2004; Habibyar, 2014; Rahimi and Artukoglu 2023; Sulaiman et al., 2020). In this instance, the economic theory also emphasizes the difficulties experienced by landlocked emerging nations, such as interruptions in the production chain, economic deficits, a lack of access to the sea, isolation from worldwide markets, and high transportation costs that impede socioeconomic growth.

Table 4. The extent of logistic and transportation barriers that Afghan traders face in the export of agricultural products. (N=51)

Barrier	Extent of barrier (%)					Mean Score ± Standard deviation
	Not at all	Low	Medium	Very	Very High	
Absence of appropriate organizations in the country for exporting agricultural products to the international markets.	13.7	35.3	23.5	21.6	5.9	2.71±1.14
Dearth of adequate storage facilities for agricultural products, especially those that require refrigeration	19.6	27.5	19.6	19.6	13.7	2.80±1.34
Lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities for the export of agricultural products	11.8	23.5	25.5	35.3	3.9	2.96±1.11
Lack of inexpensive ways to export agricultural products	7.8	25.5	31.4	27.5	7.8	3.02±1.09
Unfamiliarity with the standards (lack of export professionalism) related to the export of agricultural products	9.8	35.3	21.6	27.5	5.9	2.84±1.12

Financial Barriers

The highest mean score of barriers that Afghan traders face in exporting their agricultural products to other countries was dedicated to financial barriers. As the results portray, all the financial barriers were higher from the medium extent (Table 5) except for the absence of financial support organizations to export agricultural products (2.69±1.30) barrier. According to the results, the traders reported that they suffer from high tariffs on Afghanistan's agricultural products by other countries (3.57±1.32), restrictions on money transfers to foreign countries due to political problems (3.47±1.07), Instability between national and international currencies (3.41±1.24), and restrictions on money transfers to foreign countries due to inadequate banking services (3.26±1.16). The study's findings align with previous research suggesting that increasing tariff rates can negatively impact exports (Adhikary et al., 2023; Bharatkumar et al., 2023; Workneh and Tsehay, 2024). Furthermore, Abnar et al. (2021) also confirmed the challenges of inadequate banking services and currency instability. Trade between the richest and poorest countries may be hampered by protectionist policies, such as high tariff rates on agricultural commodities imposed by wealthier countries.

Table 5. The extent of financial barriers that Afghan traders face in the export of agricultural products. (N=51)

Barrier	Extent of barrier (%)					Mean Score \pm Standard deviation
	Not at all	Low	Medium	Very	Very High	
Absence of financial support organizations for the export of agricultural products	23.5	25.5	17.6	25.5	7.8	2.69 \pm 1.30
Instability between national and international currencies	7.8	15.7	27.5	25.5	23.5	3.41 \pm 1.24
High tariffs on Afghanistan's agricultural products by other countries	11.8	7.8	21.6	29.4	29.4	3.57 \pm 1.32
Restrictions on money transfers to foreign countries due to political problems	2.0	19.6	25.5	35.3	17.6	3.47 \pm 1.07
Restrictions on money transfers to foreign countries due to inadequate banking services	9.8	15.7	25.5	37.3	11.8	3.26 \pm 1.16

Market Access and Competition Barriers

The extent of market access and competition barriers that the traders face in their export of agricultural products are shown in Table 6. As the results portray, the higher score was given to competition with other international companies in foreign countries (2.98 \pm 1.42), followed by bias with Afghan agriculture products (2.94 \pm 1.10), competition with local companies in foreign countries (2.90 \pm 1.29), strict standard of foreign countries that limit the access of Afghan traders to their markets (2.84 \pm 1.05), lack of knowledge, skills and professionals in terms of international marketing (2.82 \pm 1.07), lack of government support for finding international market in foreign countries (2.72 \pm 1.37), and lack of participation in exhibitions, workshops, and other related programs for marketing in foreign countries (2.71 \pm 1.25) barriers. The study accorded with antecedent literature on agricultural export barriers, including inadequate marketing services, a lack of government support, global marketing system adjustments, communication and education issues, a lack of quality control systems, low productivity, limited value addition, and variety (Ahmadyar, 2020; Bharatkumar et al., 2023; Habibyar, 2014; Rahimi and Artukoglu, 2021).

Table 6. The extent of market access and competition barriers that Afghan traders face in the export of agricultural products. (N=51)

Barrier	Extent of barrier (%)					Mean Score \pm Standard deviation
	Not at all	Low	Medium	Very	Very High	
Foreign countries have strict standards that limit the access of Afghan traders to their markets.	15.7	11.8	49.0	19.6	3.9	2.84 \pm 1.05
Lack of knowledge, skills, and professionals in terms of international marketing	13.7	21.6	37.3	23.5	3.9	2.82 \pm 1.07
Competition with local companies in foreign countries	21.6	13.7	25.5	31.4	7.8	2.90 \pm 1.29

Competition with other international companies in foreign countries	27.5	5.9	19.6	35.3	11.8	2.98±1.42
Lack of government support for finding international markets in foreign countries	27.5	19.6	13.7	31.4	7.8	2.72±1.37
Lack of participation in exhibitions, workshops, and other related programs for marketing in foreign countries	19.6	31.4	13.7	29.4	5.9	2.71±1.25
Bias with Afghan agriculture products	13.7	15.7	39.2	25.5	5.9	2.94±1.10

Differences in Barriers Based on the Socio-demographics of the Respondents

The results of the present study concerning the difference of barriers based on the socio-demographics of the respondents are outlined in Table 7. According to the results, all categories of the obstacles were in the same context for different groups of Afghan traders ($P>0.05$) except for the logistic and transportation barriers and organizational barriers in terms of marital status and education level, respectively ($P<0.05$).

Table 7. The difference in the extent of barriers is based on Afghan international traders' socio-demographics. (N=51)

Independent Variable	Category	Type of Barrier				
		Individual	Organizational	Logistic and transportation	Financial	Market Access and Competition
Age (years)	>18	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	18-50	2.76±0.59 ^a	2.79±0.66 ^a	2.92±0.89 ^a	3.27±0.73 ^a	2.80±0.75 ^a
	>50	2.95±0.37 ^a	2.53±0.73 ^a	2.43±1.13 ^a	3.37±0.59 ^a	3.19±0.41 ^a
Marital status	Single	2.68±0.57 ^a	2.96±0.85 ^a	2.12±0.87 ^b	3.05±0.84 ^a	2.88±0.64 ^a
	Married	2.80±0.58 ^a	2.72±0.64 ^a	3.01±0.87 ^a	3.32±0.69 ^a	2.84±0.75 ^a
Education level	Illiterate	3.07±0.31 ^a	2.67±0.70 ^{ab}	2.67±0.73 ^a	3.20±0.67 ^a	2.41±0.56 ^a
	12th grader	2.60±0.54 ^a	2.45±0.55 ^a	2.67±0.92 ^a	3.29±0.67 ^a	2.69±0.53 ^a
	Bachelor	2.92±0.59 ^a	3.09±0.67 ^b	3.01±0.99 ^a	3.29±0.83 ^a	3.05±0.87 ^a
	Master or above	2.38±0.66 ^a	2.61±0.51 ^{ab}	3.53±0.42 ^a	3.27±0.31 ^a	3.29±0.38 ^a
Type of Business	Sole Proprietorships	2.71±0.54 ^a	2.77±0.53 ^a	2.64±0.54 ^a	3.14±0.79 ^a	2.70±0.68 ^a
	Partnership	2.73±0.59 ^a	2.68±0.88 ^a	2.85±1.12 ^a	3.21±0.84 ^a	2.73±0.78 ^a
	LLC	2.92±0.57 ^a	2.80±0.62 ^a	3.13±0.90 ^a	3.48±0.56 ^a	3.10±0.70 ^a
	Corporation	2.52±0.68 ^a	2.94±0.51 ^a	2.40±1.22 ^a	3.07±0.31 ^a	2.57±0.76 ^a
	≤5	2.98±0.38 ^a	2.89±1.03 ^a	2.43±1.13 ^a	3.47±1.06 ^a	3.38±0.58 ^a

Business experience (years)	5-10	2.47±0.39 ^b	2.62±0.50 ^a	2.88±0.88 ^a	3.23±0.83 _a	2.64±0.93 ^a
	>10	2.90±0.62 ^a	2.81±0.67 ^a	2.95±0.91 ^a	3.27±0.58 _a	2.84±0.59 ^a
Agriculture Business Experience	≤5	2.76±0.38 ^a	2.72±0.73 ^a	2.56±0.98 ^a	3.28±0.97 _a	2.76±0.96 ^a
	5-10	2.46±0.55 ^a	2.54±0.56 ^a	3.05±0.72 ^a	3.40±0.60 _a	3.04±0.68 ^a
Trade to Continents	>10	2.88±0.64 ^a	2.84±0.67 ^a	2.98±0.93 ^a	3.24±0.60 _a	2.84±0.60 ^a
	Asia	2.78±0.51 ^a	2.80±0.70 ^a	2.85±0.93 ^a	3.28±0.78 _a	2.83±0.79 ^a
Type of Export Products	Europe	2.79±1.02 ^a	2.44±0.45 ^a	3.03±0.94 ^a	3.23±0.29 _a	2.86±0.29 ^a
	USA	2.76±0.36 ^a	2.89±0.58 ^a	2.73±1.01 ^a	3.33±0.30 ^a	3.00±0.25 ^a
Type of Export Products	Agriculture products (herbs, vegetables, fruits, coffee, grains, nuts, oils)	2.77±0.59 ^a	2.79±0.69 ^a	2.93±0.92 ^a	3.33±0.70 ^a	2.86±0.75 ^a
	Food products (processed products from plant and animal sources such as sugar, beverages, tobacco, and processed animal foods)	2.89±0.18 ^a	2.42±0.17 ^a	2.10±0.38 ^a	2.70±0.60 _a	2.64±0.08 ^a
Type of Export Products	Animal products (live animals, meat, fish, dairy, eggs, honey, etc.)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Conclusion

The study was conducted in Kabul province, where 51 Afghan traders export agricultural products to foreign countries. The data was collected through a questionnaire with five main constructs: individual, organizational, logistic and transportation, financial, market access, and competition barriers. The study found that all types of barriers faced by Afghan traders were near to medium extent, except financial barriers, with a score of more than medium extent. Regarding financial barriers, they suffered from high tariffs on Afghanistan's

agricultural products by other countries, restrictions on money transfers to foreign countries due to political problems, instability between national and international currencies, and restrictions on money transfers to foreign countries due to inadequate banking services. Moreover, all traders' barriers were the same based on their socio-demographics. The present study, based on five main constructs and sub-factors provides a roadmap for researchers to prioritize the mentioned obstacles and choose the one with the most significant impact on agricultural product export as their research topic.

Recommendations

The study's findings suggest the following policy recommendations for implementation:

- The Afghan government should make prompt interventions to eliminate or reduce barriers to agricultural exports, considering the extent of these obstacles. Financial obstacles must be considered before addressing logistics, transportation, market access, competition, and barriers to individuals and organizations.
- To remove financial barriers, the Afghan government should negotiate with other countries to minimize tariffs on Afghan agriculture products, use different channels for smooth money transfer, and boost banking services.
- Plans and strategies should be devised for all types of Afghan traders who export agricultural products, as the extent of barriers is the same for all categories of traders.
- The government and relevant bodies should give morale and confidence to Afghan traders by ensuring physical and financial security, facilitating trade agreements, simplifying export procedures, providing consulting services, and more.
- Providing capacity-building programs to Afghan traders should cover all essential elements of exporting agriculture products, including national and international standards, financing and banking services, modern technologies used in exporting, export procedures and documentation, negotiation and contracting skills with foreign traders and originations, and other relevant topics. A thorough and professional needs assessment should be the cornerstone of capacity initiatives.
- The government and relevant bodies should utilize their peak struggles to find international markets and contractors for Afghan traders where they can export their agricultural products. They should facilitate export procedures with minimum documentation and administrative procedures and harmonize national and international standards to minimize delays or rejections.
- Finding inexpensive export corridors for Afghan agriculture products and building the necessary infrastructure within the country will ensure lower prices and pave the way for outstanding competition in the international market. Implementing policies that reduce exporter costs, such as input subsidies, drawbacks or exemptions of customs duties paid on inputs, and credit subsidies, is crucial.

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