

THE EFFECT OF TRADE LIBERALISATION ON SYRIAN AGRICULTURE

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Abstract

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Syrian agricultural policy should be characterized by a high level of government intervention, including fixed prices, government monopoly in strategic crop marketing, government distribution of industrial fertilizers, significant barriers on food and agricultural commodities import and so on. Although there were certain changes and liberalization in this area during several last years, the Syrian agriculture remains as the most regulated sector of national economy in Near east and northern Africa.

On the other hand, we may state the fact that Syrian governmental agriculture policy was successful considering so called strategic crops most of all in achieving self-sufficiency in wheat production, also an essential increase of cotton production volume which represents most important export crop of this near east country, took a part. Besides this progress there was restriction of disparity development in countryside and municipal household's incomes, which is partial reason for slowing down of Syrian countryside poverty. These positive outcomes were reached at the expense of increasing governmental expenses and worsening of resources efficiency usage both in agriculture production and energy sectors. Considering forecasted spend of oil sources, the Syrian government will be necessarily forced to search for alternative resources of economic growth and government budget incomes in near future.

The last five year country plan presumes consequential delimitation of grants and implication of value added tax. There is to be a quite large liberalisation in agriculture sector, which should lead to consequential down of wheat production, sugar beet and cotton and increase of barley, lentil and chickpea production.

Syria, agriculture, international trade, trade liberalisation, pricing policy

The Syrian Arab Republic has approximately 17 million inhabitants, of which about one half live in urban areas. The per capita GDP is US\$ 831. The agricultural sector is relatively extensive and accounts for 23% of total GDP.

The Syrian government adopted "socialism" in the late 1950s and kept control of major industries, though private services and the retail trade were allowed. The economy has been adversely affected by various conflicts in the region, including the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 and the Syrian intervention in Lebanon from 1976 till 2005. In the early 1990s, limited economic reforms and expansion in oil exports stimulated the economic growth; since then, however, this growth was interrupted and the Syrian economy was stagnating. Although in-

ternational trade and the exchange rate have been partially liberalized, the Syrian government still imposes interventions and a significant control on the national economy, including price control, state monopolies in certain strategic sectors, subsidisation of agriculture and many different state-owned enterprises.

In general, the per capita GDP grew in average at a rate of 2.2% per year during the 1990s. Like Jordan, also Syria was adversely affected by the end of the United Nations Oil for Food programme in Iraq and by the subsequent war in Iraq, which disrupted nearly all former trade flows. More recently, Syria has relatively benefited from the conflict in Iraq and from the resulting high oil prices.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In particular, this study examines the current situation in the Syrian agricultural sector, tries to evaluate the degree of agricultural liberalisation, which occurs within the framework of international trade as a part of various trade agreements and explores policy measures and options enabling to mitigate the negative effects of recent liberalisation of agricultural trade.

The current situation in the Syrian agricultural sector

Wheat is the most important food crop in Syria and the country is self-sufficient in production of wheat. This self-sufficiency in wheat production is the result of a trade policy that imposes high barriers on imports. Barley and maize are also grown, but domestic production is not sufficient to satisfy the demand. Cereal production is subjected to climatic fluctuations since the rainfalls are very varying and unreliable. Syria also produces grapes, apples and olives in the highlands and citrus fruit in the coastal region. Horticultural production is often under irrigation. About one quarter (23%) of Syrian cropland is irrigated and much of this is supplied from the Euphrates Dam, which was built in the 1970s.

In Syrian agriculture, the most important production units are small and medium-size farms, as the agrarian reform resulted in a practical disappearance of traditional large-scale manors. Between two available agricultural censuses (carried out in 1981 and 1994), there was a 26% increase in the total number of small private farms, viz. from 486,000 in 1981 to 614,000 in 1994 (Tab. I).

In 1981 and 1994, the percentage of farmers, who had agricultural production as the main occupation and also owned the land, was 64% and 71% of the total farm households, respectively. In these years (i.e. in 1981 and 1994), 15% and 57% of tenants (i.e. farmers without land), respectively, stated that their main occupation was farming. This increase was a direct result of the agricultural reform and segmentation of land and also of a slow increase in demand for labour in the non-agricultural sectors.

Characterisation of trade with agricultural commodities

In 2002, the total exports of Syria were US\$ 7.6 billion; of this, oil and fuel accounted for more than a half of the total value. Syrian agricultural exports made about US\$ 1 billion and the main exported commodities were cotton, sheep, tomatoes and anise/fennel. In general, exports of fruit and vegetables represented more than US\$ 300 million per year. Syrian wheat exports averaged US\$ 48 million per year over the period 2000–2002.

In 2002, the value of total Syrian imports was US\$ 5.9 million. The main imported agricultural commodities were sugar, maize and tea. Unlike most of the NENA (Near East and North Africa) countries, Syria has now a modest surplus in agricultural trade, although this is partly due to the tight restrictions on food and agricultural imports. According to the US Department of Agriculture, imports of processed foods, frozen foods, snack foods, meat, fruits, and vegetables are, in general, prohibited (USDA, 1999).

The most important trading partners of Syria are other Arab countries and the European Union. The EU represents the main market for Syrian exports, accounting for some 60% of its total volume. The EU is a particularly important market for Syrian oil, but it also accounts for a significant share of other Syrian goods. The Arab countries are the second largest market for Syrian exports, accounting for slightly more than 20% of total exports. Exports to Arab countries involve mainly foodstuffs (cereals, fruit and vegetables).

In Syria, agricultural production is centrally planned by means of land-use plans, which vary for individual regions. The land-use plans are prepared by the state officials with regard partly to strategic goals of the government and partly also to technical possibilities, characteristics and capabilities of Syrian agriculture and Syrian farms. Wheat, cotton, tobacco and sugar beet are being considered to be the strategic commodities. In order to stimulate their production and to control their distribution, the state has a marketing monopoly over all these commodities. Their prices are officially fixed and the production costs are estimated jointly by several ministries, the trade union of farmers, and also some other institutions. As soon as the average costs are estimated, a margin is fixed by the govern-

I: *Characteristics of farm households in Syria*

	1981	1994
(1) The total number of farm households	485 691	613 657
(2) Farm households with land	409 492	573 193
(3) Farm households without land	76 199	40 464
(4) Farm households with land and main occupation is agriculture	261 386	409 142
(5) Farm households without land and main occupation is agriculture	11 224	22 860
Percentage of farm households with land (2/1)	84	93
Percentage of land owners for whom agriculture is the main occupation (4/2)	64	71

Source: Damascus, Central Bureau of Statistics: Census 1981 and Census 1994

ment for each crop with regard to its relative importance for the Syrian national economy. These continually revised prices are published annually before the beginning of the growing season. Unfortunately, this mechanism of price fixation resulted in such an increase in producer's prices that exceeded the rise in consumer prices, which were also fixed by the government. The consequences of this policy were the accumulation of stocks on the one hand and a high financial load of the national budget on the other.

Administered prices

Some other categories of agricultural commodities are available also for officially fixed prices, but without the governmental monopoly in marketing. This concerns barley, lentils, maize and sunflowers. This means that farmers have an option to sell their products to the governmental marketing board for official prices but they can also sell them in private markets to general public. Indeed, like procurement prices, also these prices are fixed on the basis of a study jointly conducted by representatives of the government, farmers and processors. Prices are set on the base of estimated average production costs plus a margin that is lower than that agreed for the strategic products mentioned above. Thus, the proposed prices are considered to be minimum guaranteed prices for farmers so that they are protected from unusually low market prices.

Consumer prices

This category of prices is also fixed by the state administration and concerns such consumer products as vegetables, fruit, milk, meat, eggs, rice and oil. These prices are considered to be a simple indicator that should not be applied in transactions between producers and consumers, except for those products that are purchased by public institutions. These prices are also fixed by a committee consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Trade, as well as other of departments involved in this sector. Recently, this pricing policy has undergone significant reforms (e.g. liberalisation of prices and imports of many products, cancellation of the state monopoly in the importation of certain products, opening of the doors to private importers etc.). However, as compared with other products, the pricing policy has not passed through changes.

Inputs

The input policy was based on the principle that all inputs necessary for agricultural production had to be supplied by the governmental monopolistic organisations. However, nowadays also the private sector participates in marketing activities concerning supply of inputs without the approval of the state administration. There is still a state monopoly in the field of imports and distribution of fertilisers. State-owned trading companies import fertilisers

through a cooperative agricultural bank, which then distributes the fertilisers to farmers. Payments are made either in cash or by means of loans granted by the bank in accordance with conditions fixed in advance by the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture. Besides, there is also a state monopoly in the field of production, importation and distribution of seed materials. The private sector is authorized to market pesticides with the approval of the Ministry of Agriculture and also to import and distribute agricultural machinery.

The partial liberalisation in the field of importation and distribution of pesticides and agricultural equipment helped to improve and increase the performance of Syrian agriculture but the continuing monopoly concerning imports and distribution of fertilisers had some negative effects. Of them, the most important are too long delays in deliveries and the rationing of fertiliser to individual farms. This policy results in extra costs, which are estimated to be as much as 30% of the farmer's prices.

Recent reforms of agricultural policy

In this context it is important to point out that in the 1970s there was an increase in public monopolies in the field of marketing of many agricultural products. This increase concerned purchasing and distribution of agricultural products in both domestic and foreign markets. These marketing monopolies concerned above various cereals, the most important kinds of fruit, and also technical crops used in the processing industry. Disciplinary and penal sanctions were applied against individuals who did not respect the monopoly regulations regardless to the fact that they were producers and/or traders.

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, the marketing system of agricultural products was reformed. This reform consisted of the following changes:

- Elimination of the system of compulsory imports of certain products by public enterprises (wheat, barley, lentils, chickpeas, maize and others) and of the restriction on cereals purchases by the state trading enterprise from farmers who decided to sell;
- Preservation of the state monopoly in exportation of strategic products and granting concessions to the private sector with the aim to involve it into the exportation of cereals on condition of a prior agreement with the Cereals Board;
- Encouragement of the private sector to participate in exports of fruit and vegetables on the base of a greater freedom in use of foreign currency receipts, exemptions from the tax on agricultural products and a reduction of the income tax;
- Authorisation of public enterprises to process agricultural products and to purchase goods directly in the market for market prices, i.e. without an obligation to pay official prices;
- Authorisation of agricultural enterprises to market any of their products, which are not controlled by the state monopoly, in local and/or foreign markets.

- These changes undoubtedly represented a move towards liberalisation not only in the fields of marketing of agricultural products but also in that of exports. However, the results of these reforms were only modest and not fully satisfying because of the following reasons:
- Firstly, the state monopoly in the distribution of “strategic” products remained without changes; this concerned above all those commodities, which were processed in government-owned industries, i.e. cotton, tobacco and sugar beet.
- Secondly, there is an absence of those export mechanisms, which facilitate trading relationships with foreign clients and which foster new outlets. In addition, weaknesses in the marketing infrastructure and the high marketing costs deteriorated the supply response.

The agricultural policy continues to be the subject of discussion. Some experts are advocating the preservation of the former governmental marketing system based on administered prices while others are calling for a more flexible system, which can flexibly responds to changes in supply of and demand for agricultural commodities. Public enterprises that process or export certain agricultural products must obtain their goods directly in the market, either on the base of contracts concluded with individual producers and production cooperatives or processors of agricultural commodities and wholesalers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trade policy

In Syria, foreign trade operations are subjected to significant governmental interventions, particularly through import barriers such as tariffs, quantitative restrictions and technical barriers on trade (non-tariff barriers). These import barriers will be discussed in detail.

Tariffs represent an important tool of governmental policy. Current import tariffs imposed on imported goods range from 6% to 235% (the average being 35%). There are altogether ten categories of tariffs. Statutory tariffs range from 0 to 200%. These are supplemented by a unified duty that ranges from 6% to 35%. The highest tariffs apply to imports of certain types of vehicles. Tariffs of 100% or more apply to imports of certain fruits, vegetables and processed foods, as well as to textiles, ceramics and glass products. Many of these products are also subject to quantitative restrictions on trade. Tariffs on goods originating from GAFTA (Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement) countries are duty free.

The average tariff is currently only 8%; this is relatively low as compared with tariffs applied in other countries in the region. However, this relatively low average tariff rate is misleading as an indicator of openness of Syrian economy at least for two reasons.

- Firstly, it gives less weight to the commodities which have the highest tariffs rates.

- Secondly, it does not take into account the pervasive system of quantitative restrictions.

If the tariff equivalent of quantitative restrictions is taken into account, the overall weighted average rate of protection exceeds 25% and this makes Syria to be one of the least open economies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (World Bank 2004).

Quantitative restrictions

A quantitative restriction limits the volume of trade directly, not through import taxes. Examples include quotas, licensing requirements and safeguard levies. In Syria, quantitative restrictions are principally implemented by the regulation of imports through four lists, as follows:

- The first list comprises all products forbidden for importation because of sanitary reasons or due to the care about the environmental security. Official data indicate that this list is similar to those used in OECD countries. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).
- The second list encompasses all products forbidden for importation from non-GAFTA countries because of their negative impact on the Syrian industry. Products mentioned in this list have all an equivalent, which is produced in Syria. The list covers a large number of agricultural and industrial products, e.g. flowers, animal products, vegetable oils, sugar-based products, quarry products, plastic and rubber products, leather and leather products, wood products, paper, silk, textiles and clothing, craft products, glass products, electrical machinery and materials, etc.
- The third list contains products that may be imported only by the public sector. This list includes, notably, oil and oil-related products, alcohol beverages, arms, cotton, some cereal products, tobacco, pharmaceutical products, salt, black cement, fish, fruits, olive oil, veterinary drugs and phosphates.
- The fourth list contains products that were earlier allowed to be imported only by several public entities and that may currently be imported by anyone (provided that a commission is paid to the relevant administrative bodies). This commission ranges from 3% to 5% of the import value before taxes. The most important products mentioned in this list are automobiles, transport vehicles, steel and steel products, wood, white cement, yarn for the textile industry, coffee, tea, rice, canned fish and meat, raw sugar, fertilisers, raw leather and paper.

Estimates of tariff equivalents of quantitative restrictions for selected agricultural commodities are presented in Tab. II. Across all product categories (both agricultural and non-agricultural), tariff rates are positively correlated with tariff equivalents of quantitative restrictions. Chemingui and Dessus (2004) estimated that, across all product categories, the weighted average tariff equivalent of quantitative restrictions was 19% as compared with the weighted

II: *Tariff equivalents of quantitative restrictions and tariffs on agricultural products*

Group of products	Tariff equivalent of quantitative restrictions (%)	Tariffs on agricultural products (%)
Fish products (SITC 03)	3.9	19.5
Fruits and nuts (SITC057)	27.4	54.0
Other food, live animals, oils, fats and waxes (rest of SITC 0-4)	19.9	7.8
Tobacco and beverages (SITC 1)	309.3	110.1

Source: Chemingui and Dessus (2004)

Note: SITC = Standard International Trade Classification

average tariff rate of 8%. This means that quantitative restrictions probably represent the most important tool of trade protection in Syria.

Technical barriers to trade

There are two other technical barriers to trade that tend to complicate and raise the cost of international trade between Syria and the rest of the world:

- Use of a multiple exchange rate system in trade financing and
- Cumbersome customs procedures plus inefficient trade logistic.

The import/export regime is rather complicated and non-transparent because of multiple exchange rates fixed for private enterprises and government-owned organisations. The exchange rate system in Syria is tightly managed with a total of 11 rates concerning different types of transactions. In the 1990s, many of these rates were unified and the most recent changes were performed in 2002 (when three exchange rates used for the valuation of imports were harmonized) and in 2004 (when the unification of the rate used for budget calculations with the rate applied to other public sector operations was carried out).

Until 2002, there were three exchange rates:

- The **official rate**, which was fixed by the Central Bank of Syria, valued at SYP 46.5 per US\$ 1.00 (this rate was used by the public sector for imports).
- A **free market rate**, equal to approximately SYP 53 per US\$ 1.00, which was determined by supply and demand relationships existing above all on the Beirut foreign exchange market (this was used for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), and finally.
- The so-called **export proceeds rate**, valued at SYP 51 per US\$ 1.00, which was used to value foreign exchange that exporters are required to accept.

As a result, in domestic prices imports were generally undervalued while exports were implicitly taxed by an overvalued exchange rate. Estimates carried out by Chemingui and Dessus (2004) suggested that the average implicit subsidy on imports stemming from this system amounted to an equivalent of 2.7% of the value of imports. Similarly, the implicit tax on exports amounted to 8.9% of the total value of exports. Customs procedures and regulations limited the trade through a lack of consistency,

a manual system of customs data processing and an inadequate distribution of information about individual procedures and requirements.

Recent reform of the trade policy

Within the last several years, a number of actions were performed to liberalize the trade regime in Syria. The fact that imports might be performed also by the private sector represented a significant change due to a gradual unification of various exchange rates that concerned of both private and public transactions. The requirement of acceptance of foreign exchange rates was further reduced to 10% in 2004. At present, traders that possess import licenses are allowed to import directly¹⁾. Furthermore, it is no longer necessary to finance imports using foreign exchange rate generated from exports. The number of prohibited imports was also reduced and the explicit export taxes have been eliminated. Syria is gradually more and more integrated into the world economy on both the regional and the multinational levels.

The pricing and commercialisation policies applied in Syria, together with the trade policy, protected Syrian farmers from negative effects of volatility in world markets, particularly in the case of cotton, sugar and wheat commodities. Furthermore, the government-administrated pricing system played a significant role in the rural economy because of its impact on allocation of resources and incomes of farmers. According to a recent study carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO, 2003b), if farm incomes were not supported by government purchases at official prices, farmers growing the aforementioned "strategic" crops would suffer losses also in years with normal rainfalls due to their high production costs (in case of irrigated wheat and sugar beet crops, the losses would be even higher). These losses forced farmers to switch to growing of other, more profitable crops and only the producers with the lowest costs would be able to survive and to remain in the market. The generous subsidies paid to producers (and indirectly also to consumers) could occur only at the cost of huge losses of state-owned enterprises that purchased and processed wheat, cotton and sugar beet.

In this context it is also important to mention that seven "strategic" crops, on which the Syrian govern-

ment continues to fix producer prices, account at present for more than a half the total value of national plant production and are grown on about three quarters of the 4.6 million hectares of agricultural land cultivated in Syria. In terms of the farmer's value and creation of jobs, wheat and cotton are by far the most important of these "strategic" crops.

When comparing the equivalent import or export farmer's prices, one can estimate the magnitude of support provided to farmers growing strategic crops in Syria. In the late 1990s, the producer's price of sugar beet was almost three times higher than the import parity, so that sugar beet was much more protected than any other crop grown in the country. Soft wheat and cotton prices were higher by 66% and 31%, respectively, so that they were higher than the import parity prices. As a result of a steady decline in international prices of cotton, which took place within the period of 1995 to 1999, the cotton producer's prices exceeded export parity by 31%. For barley, official prices were roughly equal to the import parity but higher than the export parity. In case of lentils and chickpeas, official prices were lower than the estimated export parity prices. This analysis also showed that the government price intervention artificially stimulated the production of wheat, cotton and sugar beet at the expense of production of barley, lentils and chickpeas; this stimulation was dependent on the extent of the response of farmers to the relative profitability of produc-

tion and their switching from one crop to the other (Tab. III).

Net subsidies for agricultural and food products in 2003 amounted to 6.8% of GDP. If we add energy subsidies (12.1% of GDP), total subsidies amounted to 18.9% of total GDP in 2003. Domestic wheat prices are about 25% higher than the international price. Consumption was 6.7 million t in 2005 and had been increasing at a high rate (17% in 2003).

¹⁾ Note: Previously they were required to use services of local agents.

Trade agreements

At the regional level, Syria signed the agreement leading to GAFTA in February 1997. In 1998 and 1999, bilateral free trade agreements (FTA) were signed with Lebanon and Jordan, and, in 2005, another FTA was signed with Tunisia. In October 1997, Syria formally started negotiations on the association agreement with the EU. This was signed in 2004 but until now it has not been ratified and, thus, has not entered into effect. At the multilateral level, Syria requested for an entry to WTO in October 2001, but these negotiations have not been finished until now.

The FTA concluded between Syria and the EU (which has not yet entered into effect) called for an extension and strengthening of trade relationship between Syria and the EU. This, however, will

III: Comparison of official and parity producer prices

Import products	Official producer price [SYP.t ⁻¹]	Import parity price at the farm gate [SYP.t ⁻¹]	Official price as % of the import parity price
Soft wheat	10.800	6.497	166
Barley	7.500	7.316	103
Sugar beet	2.150	746	288
Export products			
Lentils	16.000	18.799	85
Chickpeas	17.800	28.852	62
Cotton	29.290	22.291	69

Source: Westlake (2003)

IV: Budget cost of food and agriculture subsidies in Syria

	2000	2001	2002	2003
(SYP millions per year)				
Sugar subsidy	3.80	0.00	3.50	3.40
Rice subsidy	0.33	0.00	0.32	0.07
Wheat subsidy	2.24	9.73	8.43	7.97
Wheat products subsidy	26.01	22.09	19.99	20.61
Cotton subsidy	14.01	15.84	13.17	9.64
(%)				
Wheat subsidies as a % of food and agriculture subsidies	61	67	93	69
Wheat subsidies as a % of government expenditures	10	10	8	7
Wheat subsidies as a % of GDP	3	3	3	3

Source: State planning council (2005)

require a significant reform in Syrian trade policy and in protective measures on the Syrian side. The main provisions of the Syria-EU association agreement concern the trade with agricultural products. Their first section relates to EU imports of Syrian agricultural products (Tab. V).

Accordingly, annual tariff quotas have been set for Syrian exports of selected horticultural products. For fresh tomatoes, a reduction of 60% applies for the quota quantities mentioned above. For other products, at entry into force of the agreement, the *ad valorem* duty will be set at zero for unlimited quantities. For a certain number of other products, at entry into force of the agreement, the *ad valorem* duty will be set at zero under a tariff quota covering traditional trade. Finally, for a number of products, at entry into force, the *ad valorem* duty will be reduced to a certain level.

The second section includes regulations on imports by Syria of agricultural products originating in the EU. For these, Syria will dismantle its tariffs to

reach a zero tariff sequentially according to the following scheme: 0 to 5% at the entry into force, 5 to 10% in the year 4, 10 to 40% in the year 7, 40 to 100% reduced to 40% at entry into force and a linear reduction to zero in year 12.

The third section concerns processed agricultural products. For these products, Syria will grant annual tariff preference quotas for the following items: mineral water, soft drinks, spirits, cigarettes and homogenized tobacco. Within these quotas, the applied tariff will be reduced by 40% in the moment when the agreement comes into force.

Finally, as regards fishing, Syrian tariffs will be dismantled over 12 years: 0 to 10% reductions immediately, 10 to 30% within five years, 30 to 80% within seven years, and all above 80% brought down to 80% at entry into force and dismantled over 12 years. On the other hand, all imports into the EU are to be dismantled by the third year after entry into force, with the exception of tuna, on which an annual quota of 100t will apply.

V: Proposed changes in EU quotas for Syrian exports

Commodity	Season	Initial quota (t)	Quota increase
Potatoes	1 Jan.–30 Apr.	25.000	An annual increase of 1,000 for the period of two years
Potatoes	1 June–31 July	5.000	No change
Fresh tomatoes	All year round	15.000	An annual increase of 3 % for the period of two years
Oranges	1 Jan.–31 May	25.000	An annual increase of 3 %for the period of two years
Small citrus fruit	1 Nov.–28 Feb.	13.000	An annual increase of 3 %for the period of two years
Lemons	1 Oct.–30 March	7.000	An annual increase of 3 %for the period of two years
Fresh grapes	1 Nov.–31 July	3.000	An annual increase of 3 %for the period of two years
Fresh apples	All year round	20.000	No change
Olive oil	All year round	10.000	An annual increase of 1,000 for the period of two years

Source: Draft of the EU-Syria EMP agreement

SOUHRN

Vliv liberalizace obchodu na syrské zemědělství

Pro syrské zemědělství je charakteristická vysoká míra vládních intervencí, ke kterým patří zejména fixní ceny, vládní monopol v oblasti marketingu tzv. strategických plodin, vládní monopol distribuce průmyslových hnojiv, výrazné bariéry pro dovoz potravin a zemědělských komodit atd. I když v posledních letech došlo v této oblasti k určitým změnám a liberalizaci, zůstává syrské zemědělství jedním z nejvíce regulovaných odvětví národního hospodářství v zemích Blízkého východu a severní Afriky.

Lze však konstatovat, že syrská vládní zemědělská politika týkající se tzv. strategických plodin byla úspěšná především v tom, že bylo dosaženo jak soběstačnosti ve výrobě pšenice, tak také podstatného zvýšení objemu výroby bavlny, která představuje nevýznamnější exportní komoditu této blízkovýchodní země. Kromě toho došlo také k omezení rozvoje disparity v příjmech venkovských a městských domácností, což do určité míry zmírnilo chudobu syrského venkova. Těchto pozitivních výsledků však bylo dosaženo na úkor rostoucích vládních výdajů, zhoršení efektivity využívání zdrojů v resortu zemědělství. Deficit státního rozpočtu byl navíc zatížen i dotacemi pro odvětví zemědělské výroby a energetiky. S ohledem na předpokládané vyčerpání ropných zdrojů bude již v blízké budoucnosti syrská vláda nucena vyhledávat alternativní zdroje ekonomického růstu a příjmů státního rozpočtu.

Poslední pětiletý plán země předpokládá postupné omezování dotací a zavedení daně z přidané hodnoty. Poměrně rozsáhlá liberalizace, k níž má dojít v oblasti zemědělství, by mohla vést k postupnému omezování výroby pšenice, cukrovky a bavlny a ke zvyšování výroby ječmene, čočky a cizrny.

Sýrie, zemědělství, mezinárodní obchod, liberalizace trhu, cenová politika

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