

Study proposes a two-step plan to combat China's waning agricultural exports

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Research suggests that tea is one of the agriculture export products that China should focus on if it wants to regain its competitive edge. Credit: Ascyrafft Adnan

For the past 17 years, China has imported more agricultural products than it has exported. Finding ways to improve the export competitiveness

of its agricultural products has been a pressing challenge for China since it joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. To date, research into the issue has largely focused on the macro perspective; little research has been conducted from a micro point of view.

In a [study](#) published in the KeAi journal *Regional Sustainability*, Yulin Long, a Master's student at Ukraine's National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute", measured and analyzed the [international competitiveness](#) of six of China's representative agricultural products.

According to Long, agriculture is the foundation of China's [national economy](#), and the development level of its agricultural sector is closely related to people's living standards and the development of other industries. However, "joining the WTO put great pressure on China's export of agricultural products. At the same time, new trade protection measures adopted by many countries intensified the challenges that China faces.

"Finding ways to improve the international [competitiveness](#) of its agricultural products while maintaining the sustainability of its agricultural sector in an increasingly open environment is a practical, and very urgent problem confronting China."

In Long's study, two evaluation indices—the trade competitiveness (TC) index and revealed [comparative advantage](#) (RCA) index—were used to measure and analyze changes in the competitiveness of six of China's common agricultural export products between 1994 and 2013: live pigs, live chickens, live cattle, apples, tea and beer.

Long explains that "these products are very popular in daily life; for example, apples, tea and beer are consumed around the world. The study results show that the export competitiveness of China's agricultural products is weak and likely to deteriorate further. However, some

traditional agricultural products with distinctive regional characteristics; for example, tea and live pigs, are relatively strong internationally."

She concludes that "in order to improve the export competitiveness of agricultural products and promote sustainable agricultural development, we recommend that China focuses on producing and trading in traditional agricultural products with distinctive regional characteristics. It should also focus on taking comprehensive measures to enhance the international competitiveness of disadvantaged agricultural products; for example, by cutting the export costs of [agricultural products](#), accelerating agricultural technological innovation, and implementing agricultural policy support."

More information: Yulin Long, Export competitiveness of agricultural products and agricultural sustainability in China, *Regional Sustainability* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.regsus.2021.09.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsus.2021.09.001)

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