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РАЗВИТИЕ РОССИЙСКО-МОНГОЛЬСКИХ ВНЕШНЕТОРГОВЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ В ПИЩЕВОЙ ПРОМЫШЛЕННОСТИ¹

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В условиях смещения акцентов торговли на Восток Россия придает большое значение развитию сотрудничества со странами Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона, где Монголия является ключевым партнером. В статье выявлены мировые тенденции в торговле и определенные ключевые направления развития российско-монгольских внешнеторговых отношений в отрасли пищевой промышленности. На основе комплексного анализа экономических и политических факторов, формирующих двустороннюю торговлю, дается представление о проблемах и возможностях расширения сотрудничества в продовольственном секторе. Главной тенденцией на продовольственном рынке является лидерство Китая, на долю которого приходится 35% в российском товарообороте. Отмечается, что торговые связи Монголии с Россией с каждым годом становятся все теснее. Это продемонстрировал официальный визит Президента России В. В. Путина в Монголию в сентябре 2024 г. Монголия тесно сотрудничает с таким регионом России, как Бурятия. Благодаря детальному изучению торговых моделей, нормативно-правовой базы и рыночных тенденций в исследовании выявлены области неиспользованного потенциала и определены барьеры, препятствующие оптимальному торговому потоку. Предложен ряд практических рекомендаций для заинтересованных сторон, охватывающих развитие инфраструктуры, содействие культурному обмену, гармонизацию нормативно-правовой базы, освоение и использование технологий для создания надежной и устойчивой торговой экосистемы.

Ключевые слова: двусторонняя торговля, пищевая промышленность.

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DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIAN-MONGOLIAN FOREIGN TRADE RELATIONS IN FOOD INDUSTRY¹

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In the context of shifting trade emphasis to the East, Russia attaches great importance to the development of cooperation with the Asia-Pacific countries, where Mongolia is a key partner. The purpose of the article is to reveal global trade trends and identify key areas for the development of Russian-Mongolian foreign trade relations in the food industry. Having conducted a comprehensive analysis of the economic and political factors shaping bilateral trade, the article provides insights into the challenges and opportunities for expanding cooperation in the food sector. Global trend in the food market is that China a leader. China accounts for the largest share (35%) in Russia turnover also. Mongolian trade ties with Russia are becoming closer year by year. This was demonstrated by the official visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Mongolia in September 2024. We can observe that Mongolia closely cooperates with such a region of Russia as Buryatia. Through a detailed examination of trade patterns, regulatory frameworks, and market trends, the study uncovers areas of untapped potential and identifies barriers to optimal trade flow. Drawing on industry best practices and case studies from other global food trade partnerships, the paper offers a series of practical recommendations for stakeholders. These recommendations cover infrastructure development, promotion of cultural exchange, harmonization of legal and regulatory frameworks, absorption and use of technology to create a more robust and sustainable trade ecosystem.

Keywords: bilateral trade, food industry.

Introduction

Russia attaches particular importance to developing cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries. Mongolia, one of these countries, is a key partner for Russia in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in the context of shifting trade emphasis to the East. The long history of friendly relations between Russia and Mongolia, as well as Mongolia's geopolitical position, emphasize its strategic importance for Russia in the region. In September 2024, negotiations were held between the presidents of Russia and Mongolia, during which Vladimir Putin stated that Russia is one of Mongolia's main foreign economic partners and the trade between two countries increased by more than 21% from January to August 2024 [10]. The countries actively interact not only on a bilateral basis, but also within the framework of international

¹ The article was prepared on the results of the research carried out within the framework of the project № 060509-0-000 (RUDN University Scientific Projects Grant System).

structures, such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Greater Eurasian Partnership and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), including the issue of concluding a free trade agreement between EAEU and Mongolia.

Also, given the growing debate on relations between China, Mongolia and Russia, it can be noted that the share of trade between Mongolia and China is 65%, while the volume of trade between Mongolia and Russia is only 13%. It is important for Russia to dominate this trilateral union, since it is not so important for Mongolia to increase foreign trade turnover with anyone, since increasing this turnover is its main goal. The purpose of the article is to reveal global trade trends and identify key areas for the development of Russian-Mongolian foreign trade relations in the food industry.

Changing the Place of International Trade in International Economic Relations

The most significant, priority, according to most specialists, and frequently used form of international economic relations is international trade, which is the most effectively developed in modern relations and countries are more determinedly exercising their national sovereignty over it [16]. There have been significant changes in theoretical concepts of international trade in recent years, reflecting evolving economic trends and developments. Some key changes and trends in theoretical approaches to international trade are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Key changes and trends in theoretical approaches to international trade*

Theories of trade		
Classical or national theories of trade (includes mercantilism, absolute advantage, comparative advantage, Heckscher-Ohlin model)		Modern or firm theories of trade (include country similarity, product life cycle, global strategic rivalry, Porter's national competitive advantage, gravity model)
New issues and approaches		
Approach	Description	Authors
Trade policy and globalization	Discussion on the effectiveness of free trade agreements, protectionism and the impact of globalization on incomes and labour markets	J. E. Stiglitz, X Bu
Global value chains	Recognizing the increasing separation of production processes in different countries, which complicates trade relations	N. A. Volgina, V. B. Kondrat'ev, R. Baldwin, A. Venables
Environmental considerations	Integrating environmental issues into the concept of trade, emphasizing the impact of trade on sustainability and climate change	I. A. Rodionova, A. Ganhuyag, L. Sao Na

* Compiled by: [8; 10; 11; 12].

Peculiarities of Food Industry Through the Prism of Food Security

The food industry is considered one of the oldest industries and continues to be a key catalyst for economic growth in international trade. This field of activity is considered one of the most important in the industry of countries, as it ensures the production of all the necessary products for human nutrition. The food industry, like other industries of international trade, is not without problems. With the uneven distribution of food commodities across the planet, food security is one of the most pressing and widely discussed issues, a key indicator for any country. FAO defines food security as ensuring that all people always have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences and to promote active and healthy lifestyles. FAO identifies four key dimensions, as reflected in Table 2, that define food security.

Concluding on the important aspects of food security emphasizes the complexity of the problem. The creation of adequate food security depends on the interaction of various factors such as access to food, availability of nutritious and safe food, utilization of food at the household level and the stability of these elements over time. It is essential to adopt a holistic approach that considers the different dimensions of food security to ensure the well-being and dignity of all people and communities.

Table 2

Key peculiarities determining food security*

Aspect	Description
Food availability	Availability of a sufficient range of high-quality food products provided by both domestic and imported producers, including humanitarian aid
Food accessibility	The opportunity for people to obtain the resources necessary to formulate a balanced diet to meet their physiological needs
Rational use of foodstuffs	Providing the body with all the necessary nutrients by eating a balanced diet
Stability	No threats of loss of food availability soon

* Compiled by: Внешнеторговый оборот, 2018. – URL: <https://answr.pro/articles/268-vneshnetorgovyyi-oborot/> (accessed 25.02.2024); Disadvantages of Trade Agreements. – URL: <https://fastercapital.com/topics/disadvantages-of-trade-agreements.html> (accessed 01.04.2024); Food and the Sustainable Development Goals. – URL: <http://socisdg.com/en/blog/food-and-the-sustainable-development-goals/> (accessed 01.04.2024); Food Security. – URL: <https://www.vedantu.com/commerce/food-security> (accessed 25.03.2024); Food Security: Key Considerations. – URL: <https://sema-sy.org/food-security-key-considerations/> (accessed 01.04.2024).

Continued collaboration between governments, international organizations, research and production associations and local communities is critical to addressing these key aspects and achieving sustainable food security for all.

Methodical Aspects of Foreign Trade Relations in the Food Industry

There are few studies analyzing Russian-Mongolian exports, which can be explained by several factors. First, it may be due to the limited access to export data from Mongolia, which makes it difficult to conduct research in this area. In addition, the scale of trade between Russia and Mongolia may be relatively small compared to other countries in the world, which does not encourage authors to investigate this export destination in more detail. Finally, political, economic, and geopolitical factors may also influence the interest and opportunities for research in this area. But despite these limitations, the topic remains important for understanding the economic relations between the two countries.

Therefore, this study considers and makes a comparative analysis of the dynamics of exports, imports, foreign trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia, total food consumption in these countries, as well as the food price index and food security index, and an enlarged scheme of the methodology is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

The scheme of the analysis method*

Stage 1	Analyze indicators characterizing the state of the market	Purpose – Identification and assess the current state and dynamics of cooperation between countries: determine market size and development trends, to identify the level of dependence on foreign markets and consumption trends, to determine competitiveness and demand for products on the world market, caloric intake of foodstuffs
Stage 2	Analyze indicators characterizing the geographical structure of Russian-Mongolian trade relations	Purpose – Identification of the main trading partners and suppliers for the analyzed countries
Stage 3	Analyze indicators characterizing the product structure of Russian-Mongolian trade relations	Purpose – Allows the author to identify the main types of products that are produced and sold on the world market and assess how competitive these products are
Stage 4	Analyze examples of possible beneficial cooperation between the Russia and Mongolia	Purpose – Identify and analyze existing areas of cooperation and propose the most profitable directions for the development of relations

* Compiled by: [1]; Незападные теории международных отношений : спецпроект РСМД и НИУ ВШЭ. – URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/nonwestern> (дата обращения 02.04.2024); Баранина. – URL: <https://www.gapresurs.ru/products/baranina> (accessed 02.04.2024); Пищевая промышленность. – URL: <https://inoxtrade.ru/info/blog/pishevaya-promyshlennost/> (accessed 05.04.2024).

Data include total food imports and exports, food imports and exports by category and subcategory in Russia and Mongolia in 2022–2023, and foreign trade turnover and total trade in 2012–2020. Total imports and exports of food

products from Mongolia and Russia are taken from the Federal Customs Services of Russia and Mongolia and from FAO data.

Food products in this study refer to products under category 04: Food, beverages, and tobacco and 02: Meat. Based on this table, we can identify that the first trend in the food market is that China is leading the global food market, and the largest segment of this market is confectionery and snacks, accounting for 18% of the total food market.

Global Trends in Food Trade

Analyzing the global food market for the year 2022 to understand who the current leaders in the food market are, Table 4 has been compiled.

Table 4

World food market 2022*

Leader in annual food exports, mln tons	133,2, China
Leader by revenue, trillion dollars	1,259, China
Largest market segment (18%), trillion dollars	Confectionery and snacks, 1,56
Food market revenue, trillion dollars	8,66
Average volume of food per person, kg	327,7
Online purchases as a percentage of total sales, %	7,8

* Compiled by UNCTAD.

Further, the second of the global food market trends is that developed countries import more processed foods than developing economies do (Figure 1).

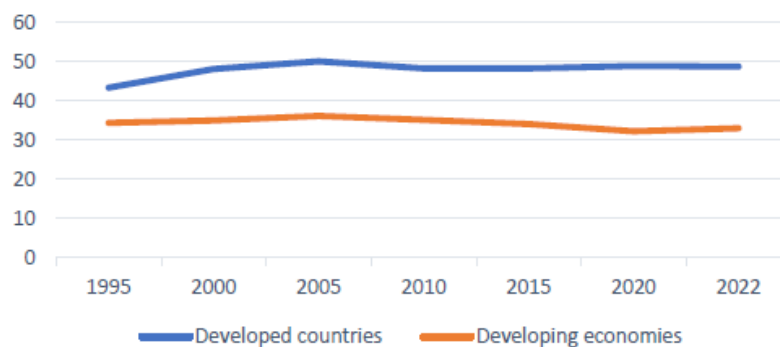


Fig. 1. Dynamics of imported processed foods in developed countries and developing economies (%)¹

Data over the past two decades show that, overall, developed countries have consistently imported more processed food in total food imports,

¹ Calculated by: UNCTAD, the World Health Organization's trade matrix of processed food.

averaging about 48% compared to about 35% in developing economies. This is because developed countries usually have a higher level of specialization and technological development in certain industries, which allows them to produce certain types of products more efficiently and economically. Also, developed countries have more diverse populations and higher levels of consumption, which requires a greater variety of products. Importing processed products allows access to a diverse palette of products that may not be available or efficient to produce locally. One of the important indices is the food security index.

The top countries, presented in Figure 2, which have the highest trend, were compiled. If a country has a total score of more than 80, it means that the country has a very good level of food security. Consequently, we can observe another trend that Mongolia and Russia are not among the leading countries with a high level of food security. In this top, Finland has the highest economic accessibility of products for the population, physical accessibility, i.e., availability of products in stores, quality and safety, and diversity and sustainability of natural resources.



Fig. 2. Comparative analysis of countries with the highest Food Security Index¹

A key indicator in assessing food supply and security is the average calorie availability for everyone. This indicator, although it does not cover the full range of nutritional needs, serves as a critical benchmark in assessing food security. For decades since 1961, there has been a consistent global trend of increasing calories per capita, reflecting changes and advances in food production, distribution, and consumption patterns worldwide [18]. However, as we can see from Figure 3 below, over the past ten years between 2011 and

¹ Calculated by: Global Food Security Index 2022 report.

2021, the overall increase in average daily caloric intake (measured in kilocalories per person per day) has varied across different regions of the world.



Fig. 3. Provision of all foodstuffs in kilocalories per capita per day, 2011–2021¹

Next, it is worth considering the following trend, namely the real and nominal food price index in real and nominal terms over the 2014–2024 period presented in Figure 4.

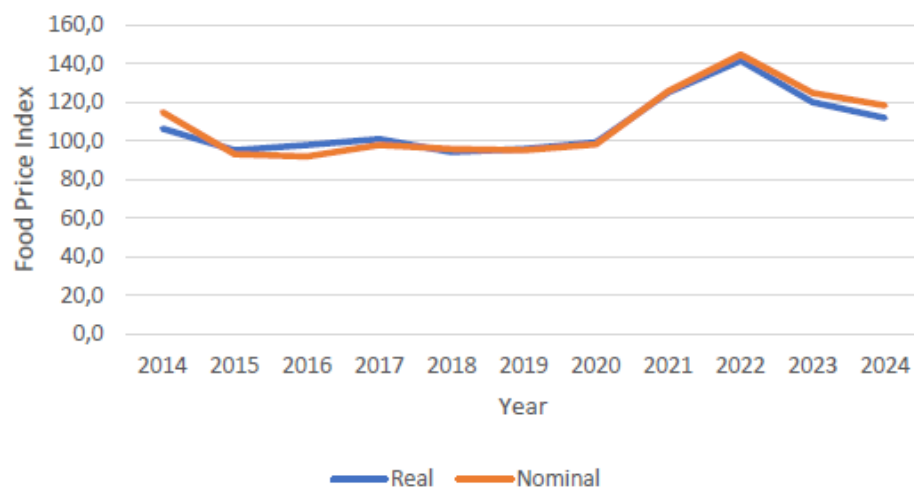


Fig. 4. Food Price Index in nominal and real terms

In the graph we see that there is a sharp decline in real prices from 2022 compared to nominal prices, from which we can conclude that by 2024 there has been a decrease in purchasing power and an increase in the real cost of food products.

¹ Figure 3–6 Calculated by: UN Food, Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In addition, the meat market is considered one of the most sustainable and stable in the food sector of the economy. Below is Figure 5, which also shows the trend of the meat price index in real and nominal terms.

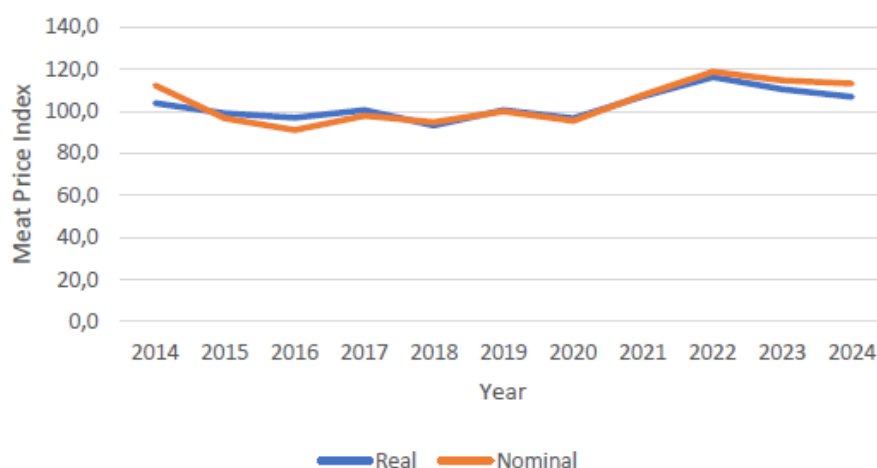


Fig. 5. Meat Price Index in nominal and real terms

The meat price index was calculated based on 35 average export unit/market prices of four meat types (beef, pork, poultry, and sheep) from 10 representative markets. Within each meat species, export unit values/price are weighted by the trade shares of the respective markets, while meat species are weighted by average shares in world export trade. In the Figure 5 we again see that there is a decline in real prices from 2022 onwards compared to nominal prices, which tells us that there is a decline in purchasing power and an increase in the real cost of meat products by 2024. This is due to inflation in various sectors of the economy, including labor shortages in the post-pandemic period and during the onset of geopolitical confrontation. Figure 6 illustrates total meat consumption by country in 2024.

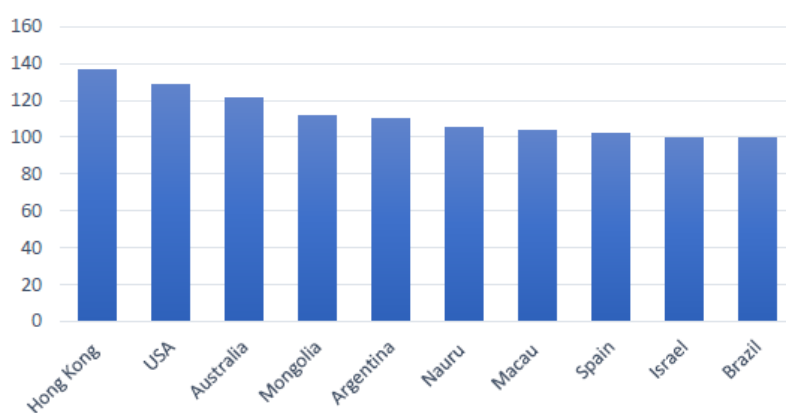


Fig. 6. Total meat consumption by country in 2024

Another trend that emerges from this figure is that Mongolia is among the leading countries in meat consumption, but Russia is absent from this top. Also, among the leaders we can observe China, the United States of America, Australia, and Argentina (Figure 6).

Analyzing General Trade and Food Trade in Russia and Mongolia

To begin with, let us analyze the total trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia for 2008–2022, as shown in Figure 7.



Fig. 7. Trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia: "All goods", USD¹

Exports from Russia to Mongolia account for a significant share in the trade turnover of goods between Russia and Mongolia each year, totaling \$21.3 billion compared to imports (\$1 billion). The difference is 20.3 billion dollars. This tells us that Russia sends more goods than it receives from Mongolia, being an important supplier of food products to Mongolia, promoting international cooperation. We can also observe a decrease in trade turnover in 2014 and 2020 due to sanctions, but the largest decrease was observed in 2009 in the aftermath of the global crisis in 2008.

Based on Figure 8, the main categories of trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia were "Mineral products" – 73%, and "Food, beverages, tobacco products" – 12%.

¹ Fig. 7–13 Calculated by Federal Customs Service of Russia, UNCTAD, Trade Map.

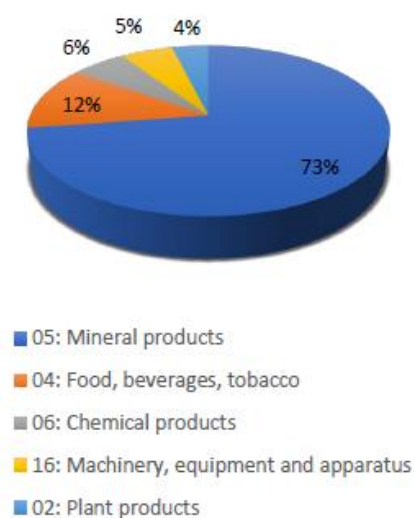


Fig. 8. Structure of trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia in 2008–2022 (%)

Among the countries with which Russia had a turnover, China accounted for the largest share – 35%, followed by Germany with 9%. Mongolia is Russia's partner № 58 with a share of 0.2% (Figure 9).

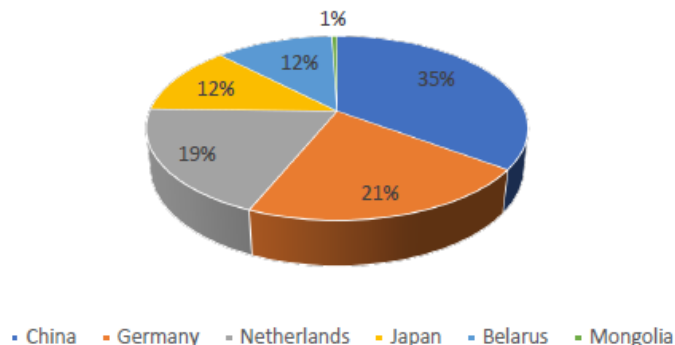


Fig. 9. Trade turnover of Russia for the product "All goods" with other countries in 2008–2022, %

Let us further consider the trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia of goods from the group of "meat and meat products" for 2008–2022 (Figure 10).

Trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia of goods from the group "meat and meat products" for the period 2013–2020 cumulatively amounted to 83,4 million dollars. Figure 10 shows that trade in meat and meat products between the two countries is initially dominated by exports from Mongolia to Russia, which tells us that Russia sent more meat than it received. Then there is a downward trend in exports since 2014, one reason for which may be the sanctions imposed that year. In 2019, imports have decreased significantly,

primarily due to the fact that Mongolian meat does not meet Russian sanitary standards and requirements due to frequent livestock diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease.



Fig. 10. Trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia for the product "meat and meat products" in 2008–2022

After numerous requests, the Russian Veterinary Department issued 8 certificates to Mongolian livestock farming organizations: 3 in Uvs aimag, 1 each in Khubsugul, Bulgan, Arkhangai, Sukhbaatar and Baganuur. The Russian side opened 22 livestock vaccination centers, while Rosselkhoz nadzor continues to cooperate on certification of Mongolian meat processing enterprises. The predominance of exports in 2020 is a positive signal for the meat industry in our country, which shows that Russian meat is competitive and there are incentives for the development of production [22].

Analyzing Figure 11, we can conclude that the main turnover in the category "meat and meat products" was in "horse meat" – 45%, "pork" – 25%.

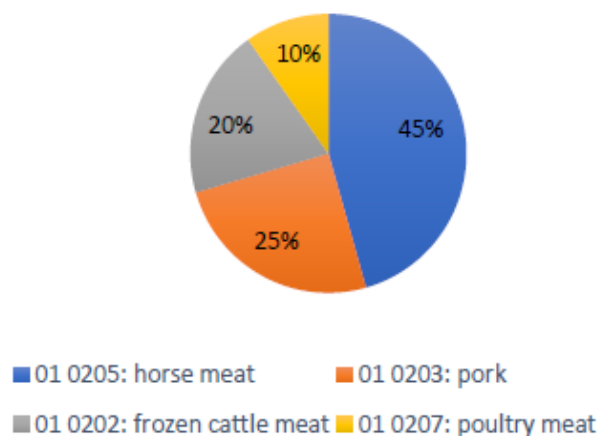


Fig. 11. Structure of trade turnover between Russia and Mongolia "meat and meat products" in 2008–2022 (%)

Meat exports play an important role in Mongolia's economy. Despite all this, new supply chains between food producers, processors and retailers are emerging. Let's take a look at meat supplies by region in Russia, shown in Figure 12–13.

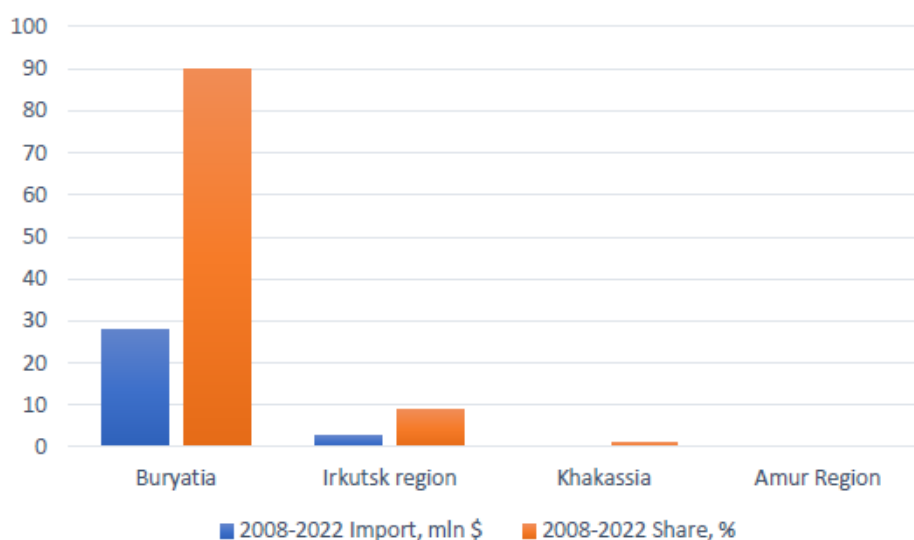


Fig. 12. Mongolia's exports to regions in the category "meat and meat products"

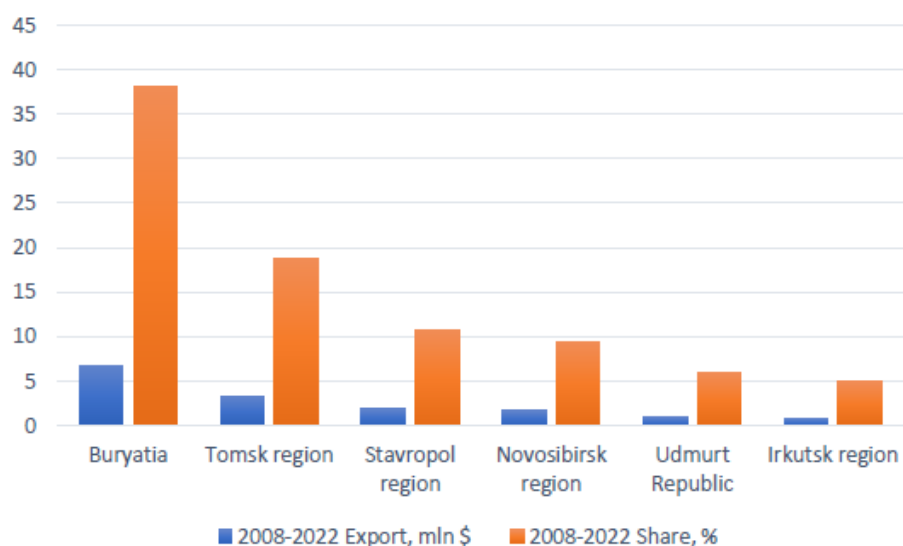


Fig. 13. Russian regions' exports to Mongolia in the category "meat and meat products"

From Figure 12–13 we can observe that Mongolia closely cooperates with such a region of Russia as Buryatia, being good partners, which is quite logically explained below.

Mongolia shares the same historical roots with Buryatia, similar languages and culture, life and traditions. Most of the border line with Russia – 1275 kilometers – is located in Buryatia, while the aimags of Selenge, Bulgan and Khubsugul border directly with the republic.

The main railroad that connects Mongolia with Russia passes through the territory of the Republic of Buryatia. In 1992 the first meeting of the Mongolian-Buryat intergovernmental commission was held, since then bilateral cooperation in trade, agriculture, railroad, construction, mining, energy, tourism sectors has been developing steadily and successfully. In the same year, 375 agreements were concluded and an agreement was reached on the exchange of more than 100 types of products and goods. Mongolia imports from Buryatia electricity, machinery, steel products, light industry products, unprocessed wood. Within the framework of Mongolian-Buryat trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation in 2010–2012, a number of measures were taken, as a result of which multilateral cooperation expanded in the establishment of joint grain economic units, export of meat products and live cattle, health improvement of Mongolian cattle, provision of service and repair services of MI-8 helicopters and railway trains, as well as training of Mongolian professional staff in this area. There are 9 economic units with Mongolian investments in Buryatia, the amount of Mongolian investments reaches 627.5 thousand dollars, solely occupying 52.1% of all foreign investments in Buryatia. Organization of agricultural, industrial and logistic clusters is one of the projects of regional cooperation, according to which a cold storage plant will be built to store 3,600 tons of meat.

Further Recommendations and Future Prospects

The issue of ensuring food independence becomes especially urgent in the unfavorable political environment of recent years. However, its solution faces a number of serious problems (Table 5).

With all these shortcomings, the food industry has a significant potential for development, which is influenced by: vast territories, availability of labor force, a huge market with centuries-old traditions of high consumption of food products. Also the investment attractiveness of this market segment remains quite high. In assessing the recommendations for the development of trade relations between Russia and Mongolia in the food industry, several key aspects stand out (Table 5).

Table 5

**Problems and recommendations of Russian-Mongolian foreign trade relations
in food industry***

Problem	Recommendation
Group 1. Russian Federation – Mongolia	
Customs barriers and difficulties with certification of products for import to Mongolia	Conducting training seminars for Mongolian traders on Russian products and their qualities, institutional support. Activation of the Intergovernmental Mongolian Commission
Differences in quality and product packaging standards between the two countries	The development of clear rules for quality control, packaging, and labeling
Competitive advantage in the China-Mongolia-Russia triangle	Incorporating environmental and social sustainability practices into the food production process. Within the framework of formation of own closed chains of agricultural products – increase of animal feed supplies.
Group 2. Mongolia – Russian Federation	
Risk of damage to perishable products	Investments in infrastructure: adoption and assimilation of the latest technologies in food production, processing, and distribution
Insufficient understanding of demand and consumer preferences in Mongolia by Russian companies	Conducting market research to better understand the Mongolia market and develop of specialized markets: activation of joint production in meat processing (especially in Buryatia). The development and promotion of cultural exchanges to promote Mongolian products on the Russian market like Expo 2015
High customs duties and difficulties in customs clearance of goods	Free Trade Agreement between the EAEU and Mongolia. Partnering with local logistics companies to optimize deliveries and customs procedures

* Compiled by: [2; 3; 4; 6].

Recommendations will help to reflect the potential of cooperation between Russia and Mongolia in the field of livestock breeding and production of high quality products, which will undoubtedly lead to mutual benefits and strengthen the foreign economic relations between the two countries. Thus, implementing the above recommendations and proactively addressing the identified challenges can pave the way for a stronger, more sustainable and mutually beneficial trade partnership in the Russian-Mongolian food trade relationship, navigating the challenges and opportunities. By fostering innovation, cooperation and sustainable practices, both countries will be able to tap into the untapped potential of their food industries, promoting economic growth, cultural exchange and harmony in the region. This will create a favorable business environment for both countries, fostering a sustainable and long-term partnership.

Conclusion

Mongolian trade ties with Russia are becoming closer year by year. Mutual trade is an indicator of actively developing relations. Russia has a historical alliance with Mongolia, the consolidation of which is beneficial to all parties. Russia is increasing exports and imports with Mongolia, doubling its trade turnover in 2023, almost catching up with China as the leading trading partner in imports to Mongolia and taking second place after China. The steps and growth rates are not comparable to those of China-Mongolia. Russian food products are taking an increasingly important place in Mongolian food products. Mongolian food exports to Russia face stiff competition from other exporting countries. But in general, the prospects for the development of Mongolia's trade and economic relations with the EAEU countries, primarily with Russia, currently look quite optimistic. Already today, projects on the development of the Ulaanbaatar railroad, cooperation in the spheres of civil aircraft construction, electric power industry, automation of state administration, construction of highways, etc. are being discussed. If Mongolia establishes a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union, each side will get additional benefits for its development. On the one hand, the EAEU and Russia will expand the network of economic partnership, as well as the level of trust between the parties, including in the political sphere. On the other hand, Ulaanbaatar will gain open access to a market with a population of more than 140 million people and reduce the risks of becoming completely dependent on China.

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