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THE STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE UZBEK SSR IN 1960–1970

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Abstract. *This article provides a historical and theoretical analysis of the state of agricultural development in the Uzbek SSR during 1960–1970, its structural characteristics, and the impact of Soviet agricultural policy on the republic's agriculture. The study primarily focuses on the dominant position of cotton production in the agricultural sector of the republic, the expansion of irrigation and land-reclamation systems, the development of new lands, and the mechanization and chemical intensification of agriculture. In addition to the quantitative growth of agricultural production during the 1960s, the study also examines such problems as the one-sided specialization of agriculture, the reduction of areas allocated to food crops, excessive exploitation of water resources, and the dependence of agricultural production on the centralized planning system. The findings indicate that although technical and irrigation capacities in Uzbek agriculture expanded during 1960–1970, this growth was primarily directed toward increasing the production of raw cotton.*

Keywords: *Uzbek SSR, agriculture, cotton production, cotton monoculture, collective farm, state farm, irrigation, land reclamation, mechanization, chemicalization, Mirzacho'l, Karshi Steppe, agricultural policy.*

INTRODUCTION. The 1960s and 1970s represent one of the important yet contradictory periods in the history of agriculture in the Uzbek SSR. During this period, the republic's agriculture became increasingly integrated into the unified national economic system of the Soviet Union. The directions of agricultural development were determined not only by the republic's natural and climatic conditions or domestic needs, but also by Union-wide state plans and raw-material



policies.

The geographical and climatic characteristics of Uzbekistan had made irrigated agriculture the principal form of agricultural production. Therefore, during the Soviet period, the development of agriculture was primarily associated with expanding the area of irrigated land, constructing water-management facilities, and improving the reclamation conditions of existing agricultural lands. However, the main objective of irrigation policy was, in many cases, to expand cotton production. Studies also note that during the 1950s and 1970s, irrigation policy in the Fergana Valley was strongly subordinated to the needs of cotton production.

By the 1960s, the Uzbek SSR had become one of the major cotton-producing regions of the Soviet Union. In 1960, the republic produced 2.824 million tons of raw cotton, while by 1970 this figure had increased to 4.495 million tons. During the same period, grain production increased from 704,000 tons to 980,000 tons; however, the growth rate of cotton production was considerably higher.

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the state of agriculture in the Uzbek SSR during 1960–1970, identify the principal directions of its development, and assess the positive and negative trends in agricultural production from a historical perspective.

MAIN PART. The study employed the methods of historicism, objectivity, comparative historical analysis, problem-chronological approach, and systematic analysis. In determining the state of agriculture during 1960–1970, statistical data, Soviet-era publications, historical studies, and the findings of scholarly research conducted in subsequent years were comparatively analyzed. The source base of the study consists of statistical collections on the national economy of the Uzbek SSR, materials devoted to Soviet-era agriculture, and studies on the history of irrigation and land reclamation. In particular, statistical publications such as Narodnoe khozyaystvo Uzbekskoy SSR v 1965 godu (The National Economy of the Uzbek SSR in 1965) and



Narodnoe khozyaystvo Uzbekskoy SSR v 1970 godu (The National Economy of the Uzbek SSR in 1970) constitute important sources for studying the economic indicators of this period.

In the article, statistical indicators were analyzed not merely as evidence of quantitative growth, but also in terms of their structural content. This is because the growth of agricultural production should be assessed in conjunction with its internal balance, food security, environmental sustainability, and labor productivity.

At the beginning of the 1960s, agriculture in the Uzbek SSR operated primarily on the basis of the collective farm (kolkhoz) and state farm (sovkhoz) systems. The main directions of agricultural production were determined by state plans. The crop structure of collective and state farms, the volume of agricultural products delivered to the state, irrigation activities, and other production indicators were managed through the centralized planning system.

During this period, considerable attention was paid to the technical re-equipment of agriculture. The supply of tractors, trucks, cultivators, seeders, and cotton-picking machines was expanded. According to official data, between 1966 and 1970, 106,000 tractors, 31,700 cotton-picking machines, and 42,000 trucks were supplied to agriculture in Uzbekistan. The increase in agricultural machinery intensified the mechanization of agricultural labor. Particular attention was paid to mechanizing plowing, sowing, cultivation, and harvesting operations in cotton production. However, the mechanization process was also largely associated with the requirements of cotton production.

During the 1960s, the principal indicator of agricultural development in Uzbekistan remained the volume of cotton production. According to available data, raw cotton production in the republic increased from 2.824 million tons in 1960 to 4.495 million tons in 1970. Thus, over the course of a decade, production increased by approximately 1.6 times. At the same time, the average annual volume of raw cotton



production in the Uzbek SSR during 1966–1970 amounted to 3.982 million tons. This indicator further strengthened the republic's strategic position as a major supplier of cotton raw materials within the Soviet Union.

Between 1960 and 1970, the predominance of cotton production in Uzbekistan's agriculture became even more pronounced. This situation cannot be explained solely by economic necessity. Cotton was considered an important strategic raw material for the Soviet Union's light industry, textile industry, and export potential. Consequently, the agricultural system of Uzbekistan was adapted to meet the cotton requirements of the Union center.

The expansion of cotton-growing areas increased the overall volume of agricultural production on the one hand, but on the other hand, it disrupted the balance in the crop structure. The production of grain, vegetables, melons, and other food crops became secondary in comparison with cotton production. Researchers emphasize that as a result of the cotton monopoly, Uzbekistan became increasingly dependent on supplies from other regions to meet its needs for basic food products such as grain, meat, and dairy products.

Statistical data also demonstrate this process. Between 1960 and 1970, grain production increased from 704,000 tons to 980,000 tons. However, raw cotton production increased from 2.824 million tons to 4.495 million tons. Thus, the growth in gross agricultural output was structurally uneven.

Excessive specialization in cotton production also contributed to disruptions in crop rotation systems. The long-term cultivation of cotton on the same land complicated the implementation of agronomic measures necessary for maintaining soil fertility. In order to preserve or increase yields, mineral fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and defoliants began to be used extensively.

One of the most important directions of agricultural development in Uzbekistan during 1960–1970 was the expansion of irrigation and land-reclamation activities.



Since irrigated agriculture constituted the main foundation of agricultural production under Uzbekistan's conditions, substantial financial and material resources were allocated to water management.

In 1966, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted a new program aimed at developing irrigation and land reclamation. Subsequently, efforts to develop new irrigated lands, reconstruct existing irrigation networks, and improve water supply in Uzbekistan were intensified.

The development of the Mirzacho'l region was one of the major projects of this process. The introduction of new lands into agricultural circulation led to the establishment of new state farms, the construction of irrigation networks, and the development of rural settlements. Attempts were made to introduce modern irrigation technologies, drainage systems, and mechanized production methods in Mirzacho'l.

Sources indicate that cotton production in Mirzacho'l increased from 20,000 tons in 1961 to approximately 200,000 tons in 1970. Irrigation and land-reclamation activities also continued in the Fergana Valley. However, because the use of existing irrigated lands and water resources in the valley was increasingly directed toward expanding cotton production, opportunities for the development of other crops gradually became more limited.

In the second half of the 1960s, preparations for the development of the Karshi Steppe also intensified. In 1969, the initial stage of irrigating and reclaiming 200,000 hectares of land in the upper part of the Karshi Steppe was approved. According to the plan, 43 agricultural enterprises were to be established in the area, most of which were expected to specialize in cotton production.

Thus, although irrigation projects made it possible to bring new lands into agricultural circulation and increase production volumes, the close connection between water-management policy and cotton production became one of the factors that subsequently contributed to serious environmental and social problems.

In the 1960s, the mechanization of agriculture became one of the important directions of state agricultural policy. The increase in technical equipment was intended to accelerate production processes, increase labor productivity, and bring agriculture closer to industrial production. Particular importance was attached to the mechanization of cotton cultivation and harvesting.

According to available data, the share of the cotton harvest collected by machine was 17.7 percent in 1960 and 28.3 percent in 1965. This process created opportunities for the technical reorganization of agricultural labor. However, due to the specific agrotechnical requirements of cotton production, manual labor remained widespread for a considerable period.

Alongside mechanization, the chemical intensification of agriculture also increased. The use of mineral fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and defoliants was regarded as one of the principal means of increasing agricultural yields. Studies indicate that between 1963 and 1970, the volume of chemical treatment of agricultural lands and the application of various toxic chemicals increased by 1.5 times.

During the 1960s, a model of agricultural development based on the combination of “irrigation + mechanization + chemicalization” emerged. Although this model made it possible to increase production volumes in the short term, its environmental consequences were not adequately taken into account.

Livestock farming also remained an important sector of agriculture in the Uzbek SSR. Cattle breeding, sheep breeding, poultry farming, and other livestock activities were developed on collective and state farms. However, because agricultural policy focused primarily on cotton production, livestock farming was often regarded as a secondary or auxiliary direction.

A similar situation was observed with food crops. Although grain production increased during 1960–1970, the overall specialization of the republic’s agriculture



remained focused on cotton production. This limited the ability to fully meet the population's everyday needs through local production.

This structural characteristic of agriculture clearly demonstrates Uzbekistan's economic role within the Soviet Union: the republic was primarily developed as a region supplying strategic agricultural raw materials to the Union center.

The development of agriculture in the Uzbek SSR during 1960–1970 cannot be adequately explained by interpreting the period solely in terms of "achievements" or, conversely, as a period of "crisis." Such an approach would fail to fully reveal the complexity of the historical process.

During this period, the technical base of agriculture expanded, irrigation networks developed, new lands were brought into cultivation, certain productivity indicators improved, and the material infrastructure of rural areas was strengthened. For example, the increase in raw cotton production from 2.824 million tons in 1960 to 4.495 million tons in 1970 demonstrates a significant expansion of agricultural production. At the same time, the strengthening of technical equipment and expansion of irrigation systems contributed to the modernization of production processes.

However, the structural characteristics of this growth are of particular importance.

First, the growth in agricultural production became largely dependent on cotton production. Second, a significant proportion of newly irrigated lands was allocated to cotton cultivation. Third, the expansion of water-resource use intensified competition with other needs. Fourth, the increased use of chemical inputs in agricultural production heightened environmental risks.

From this perspective, the 1960s can be characterized as a period in which elements of both extensive and intensive development were combined in Uzbekistan's agriculture. Extensive development was achieved through the development of new lands and the expansion of cultivated areas, while intensive development was



associated with mechanization, the use of mineral fertilizers and chemical crop-protection agents, the introduction of new agricultural technologies, and the improvement of irrigation systems. However, the overall objective of both directions was primarily to increase cotton production.

Therefore, from a historical perspective, it is not sufficient to assess agricultural efficiency solely on the basis of gross output. Soil fertility, rational use of water resources, a balanced crop structure, and the provision of food for the population should also be regarded as important indicators.

Studies indicate that the irrigation system in the Fergana Valley during 1950–1970 was adapted to the needs of the cotton monopoly. A similar situation was observed in other irrigated regions of Uzbekistan. As a result, alongside the economic efficiency of agricultural production, environmental and social consequences also emerged.

In the 1960s, the agricultural management system was based on centralized planning. Farms sought to fulfill production targets established by higher authorities. Although this system strengthened production discipline, it complicated the process of taking into account the natural conditions and actual capabilities of individual farms.

Another important issue associated with the expansion of cotton production during 1960–1970 was the use of labor resources. Since cotton cultivation required a large amount of labor, the rural population was extensively involved in seasonal agricultural activities. Despite the development of mechanization, the share of manual labor in cotton harvesting remained high for a long period. This situation had a direct impact on the lifestyle of the rural population as well.

Overall, during 1960–1970, quantitative growth and structural imbalance simultaneously characterized agriculture in the Uzbek SSR. On the one hand, new lands were developed, irrigation and land-reclamation systems expanded, and the use of agricultural machinery and chemical inputs increased. On the other hand, the



excessive specialization of agriculture in cotton production created conditions for the deepening of economic and environmental problems.

CONCLUSION. During 1960–1970, agriculture in the Uzbek SSR developed within the framework of the centralized agrarian policy of the Soviet Union. The main characteristic of this period was that, alongside the expansion of agricultural production and its technical modernization, agriculture became increasingly specialized in cotton production. The expansion of irrigated lands, intensive use of water resources, growth in cotton-growing areas, and widespread application of chemical inputs became among the principal factors contributing to environmental problems that became increasingly evident in subsequent decades.

Although agriculture in the Uzbek SSR experienced significant development during 1960–1970 in terms of production volume, technical equipment, and irrigation capacity, the principal direction of this development was increasingly determined by the Soviet Union's demand for raw cotton rather than by the republic's internal food and economic interests.

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