VALUE CHAINS OF BASIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS

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Key words: agriculture, competitiveness, value chain of agricultural products, gross product, production, commodity exchange, agricultural commoditization, balance of foreign trade, indicators, cost, new value, revenue, profit, profitability, producer's selling price

Introduction. The competitiveness of agriculture is largely determined by the competitiveness of its products, which is manifested in the production of those products and in the chain from the producer to the consumer. The level of competitiveness of agricultural products in separate links of the latter can be higher or lower due to various reasons, which is evident, especially in the differences in the amount of newly created value and profitability levels. In this case, it is necessary to pay more attention to increasing the competitiveness of individual agricultural products in the circles characterized by relatively low competitiveness. At the same time, we should not ignore the importance of taking measures aimed at increasing the competitiveness of these products in each link of the chain. Particular emphasis is placed on the identification of reserves for increasing competitiveness, the effective use of existing opportunities, taking into account the uniqueness of the value chains of individual agricultural products in this or that country. In this sense, it is of particular interest to develop the value chains of a number of important products in our republic: cereals, in particular: wheat, vegetables, fruits and berries, milk and meat, the comparative analysis of competitiveness in their separate links and the identification of opportunities for improvement. In this context, the development of the value chains of the above-mentioned agricultural products in RA and, as a result of their observation, the presentation of the possibilities of increasing the competitiveness of these products is gaining relevance.

Methodology. The article uses dialectics, scientific abstraction, comparative analy-sis and logical methods. The use of the dialectic method is clearly seen in the study's interrelated consideration of links in the value chains of a number of important agricultural products. The application of the scientific abstraction method applies to the entire research, since the scope of the latter is limited to one characteristic of agricultural competitiveness: the new, added value created in the production of agricultural products and chains from the producer to the consumer, that is, the others were not considered.

The application of the comparative analysis method found its expression in the comparative analysis of the magnitude of the new value created in the separate links of the above-mentioned chain. The use of the logical method is manifested in the study of the production of individual agricultural products according to the logical sequence of rings reflecting the results of their further use (in particular, considering the production of wheat, flour and bread as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd rings, respectively).

Literature review. The characteristics of the competitiveness of agriculture, the factors determining it, the problems of its increase have been recognized by a number of economists, including A. Borel [Borel, 2014, 4], T. Lenskaya [Lenskaya, 2013, 87], K. Saubanov [Saubanov, 2010, 38-53], V. A. Klyukach [Klyukach, 1998, 208], V. Bespyatnykh [Bespyatnykh, 2000, 200], O. Koryakina [Koryakina, 2019, 34], A. Oskanyan, A. Kartashyan [Oskanyan, Kartashyan 2021, 73-87], S. Avetisyan [Avetisyan, 2002, 232-238] and others. However, individual problems were not studied in required depth. It especially refers to the development of value chains of agricultural products from the producer to the consumer, the quantitative assessment and increase of the competitiveness of these products in their individual links, which is more important in this or that country, including in the case of individual products in our republic.

Scientific novelty. Value chains of a number of important agricultural products - wheat, vegetables, fruits and berries, milk and various types of meat from the producer to the consumer - were developed during the study period, and the possibilities of increasing the competitiveness of these products in their separate links were presented. The development of value chains of the main agricultural products in the Republic of Armenia and, as a result of their observation, the presentation of possibilities for increasing the competitiveness of these products.

Analysis. Value chains represent the process of product production and creation of new value in the chains from the producer to the consumer, for the characterization of which are used, in particular, the costs incurred in the production process, the volume of finished products, the income received from the sale, profit or loss, the level of profitability, the process of value creation in different stages of production , on product sales directions and volume indicators, import and export balance data, etc. In other words, value chains are the volume and value assessments of the process of value generation and formation for specific products. A lot of starting data was the basis for the development of value chains and the execution of calculations. In particular, the calculation of the production costs of individual agricultural products was done by us, the data available on the official website of the RA Statistics Committee were the basis for the indicators related to the unit product: yield, food yield, production volume, commercialization level, producer's sale price, sale directions. Moreover, both the baseline data and the calculation data refer to 2022. From a methodological point of view, the "Pros-

pective food value chains in Armenia-2020" researched by the National Agrarian University of Armenia was a certain starting point. the material. In this section of the work, value chains have been developed for a number of important products: cereals, in particular wheat, vegetables, fruits and berries, milk and various types of meat. Chart 1 shows the wheat value chain developed by us.

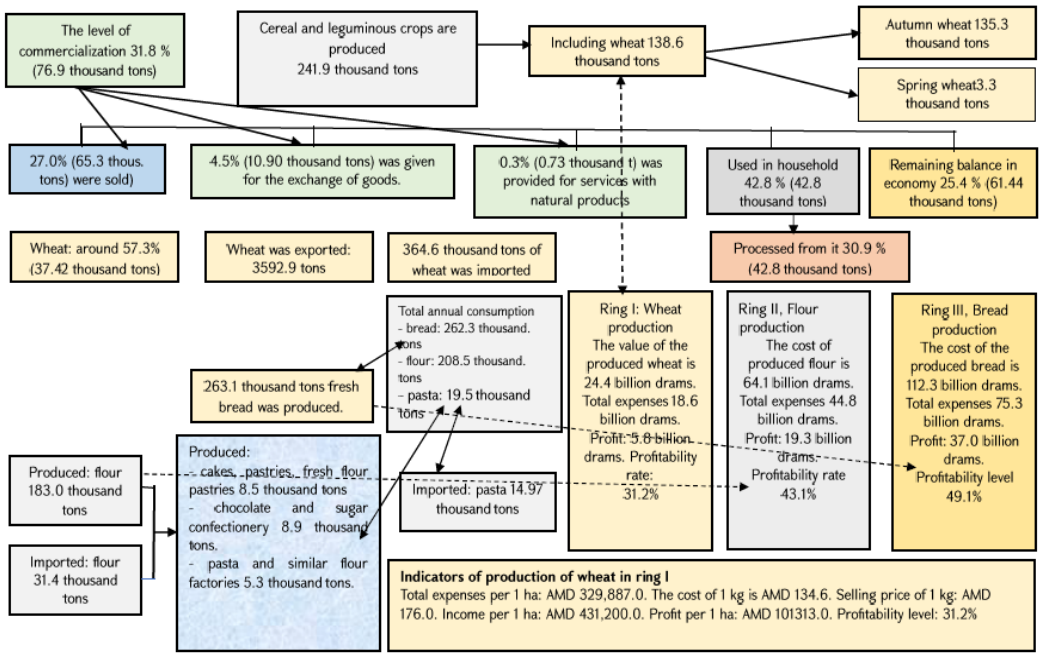

Figure 1. The value chain of wheat in RA according to the data of 2022 (baseline data is based on the official data of the RA Statistics Committee https://www.armstat.am/)

The following is evident from the value chain of cereal crops, particularly wheat, presented in the diagram. The gross production of grain and leguminous crops in 2022 was 241.9 thousand. tons, including wheat 138.6 thousand. tons. At the same time, 97.6% of the produced wheat belongs to autumn wheat, showing areas of agricultural crops, areas of perennial plantations, gross harvest and average yield [RA SC, 2023, 8-9]. The directions and structure of the use of grain and leguminous crops are as follows: 27.0% of the produced grain was sold, 4.5% was given in exchange of goods, 0.3% was given in exchange for services with natural products. The share of consumption in the economy is absolutely predominant, it is 42.8% of the produced volume. Wheat accounts for 57.3% of the sold grain [RA SC, 2023, 8]. The balance of external commodity circulation of wheat is largely negative, thus 3.6 thousand tons of wheat were exported and 364.6 thousand tons of wheat was imported in return. tons [RA SC, 2023,148]. In the observed period, 183.0 thousand tons of flour, 31.4 thousand tons of wheat were imported. At the same time, 263.1 thousand tons of bread was produced in

the republic. [RA SC, 2023, 19], as well as other products mentioned in the value chain made of wheat and flour.

The wheat value chain was considered in three links: wheat production, flour production and bread production. The calculation results in the first ring of wheat production are as follows. The costs for the production of wheat in the republic amounted to 18.6 billion drams, the value of the produced product was 24.4 billion drams, and the profit was 5.8 billion drams. The profitability level of wheat is estimated at 31.2%. Production calculations per hectare are as follows. Production costs amounted to 329.9 thousand. AMD, and labor compensation costs are also included in the calculated costs. The cost price of one kg of wheat was calculated at 134.6 drams, the producer's selling price was 176.0 drams [RA SC, 2023, 34]. The yield of wheat per 1 ha was 431.2 thousand. AMD, profit: 101.3 thousand AMD

Next, we considered the flour production ring. According to calculations, flour production costs here amounted to 44.8 billion drams. The profit was 19.3 billion drams, and the level of profitability was 43.1%. The calculations show that the new value created in the flour production ring is many times higher than the similar indicator of wheat, and also higher in terms of profitability. Next, in the circle of bread production, as can be seen from the chart, the profit made 37.0 billion drams, and the level of profitability was 49.1%. In fact, the new value created in the third ring exceeds the production indicators in the wheat and flour ring. This proves that it is important to take appropriate steps in the field of wheat production to increase competitiveness, in particular, the fulfillment of agrotechnical requirements, the improvement of the quality characteristics of seeds, and the improvement of the quality indicators of the wheat produced as a result. Substitution of imports with local production are important steps for increasing the competitiveness of wheat, which will have a positive impact on the improvement of the indicators of the observed flour and bread chain and, as a result, on the increase of competitiveness.

Next, let's consider the value chain of vegetables, particularly tomatoes, which is presented in the 2nd diagram. The following is evident from the value chain of vegetables, particularly tomatoes, presented in the diagram. The gross output of vegetables in 2022 was 610.4 thousand. tons, including tomatoes: 137.5 thousand. tons [RA SC, 2023, 10]. Directions and structure of vegetables are as follows: 81.4% of the produced vegetables were sold, 1.3% was given for commodity exchange, 0.2% was given for services with natural products. The share of consumption in the economy is not large, it was 11.6% of the produced volume [RA SC, 2023, 10]. Tomatoes make up 22.5% of the sold vegetables. The balance of the external turnover of tomatoes is largely positive. Thus, during the observed period, 43.0 thousand tons were exported. and 4.5 thousand tons of tomatoes were imported in return. 27.0 thousand tons of tomatoes were processed during

this priod. Also, 2.0 thousand tons of tomato paste, 1.18 million liters of tomato juice, 0.6 thousand tons of ketchup and sauces were produced. The value chain of tomatoes was observed both in terms of unit area and the republic.

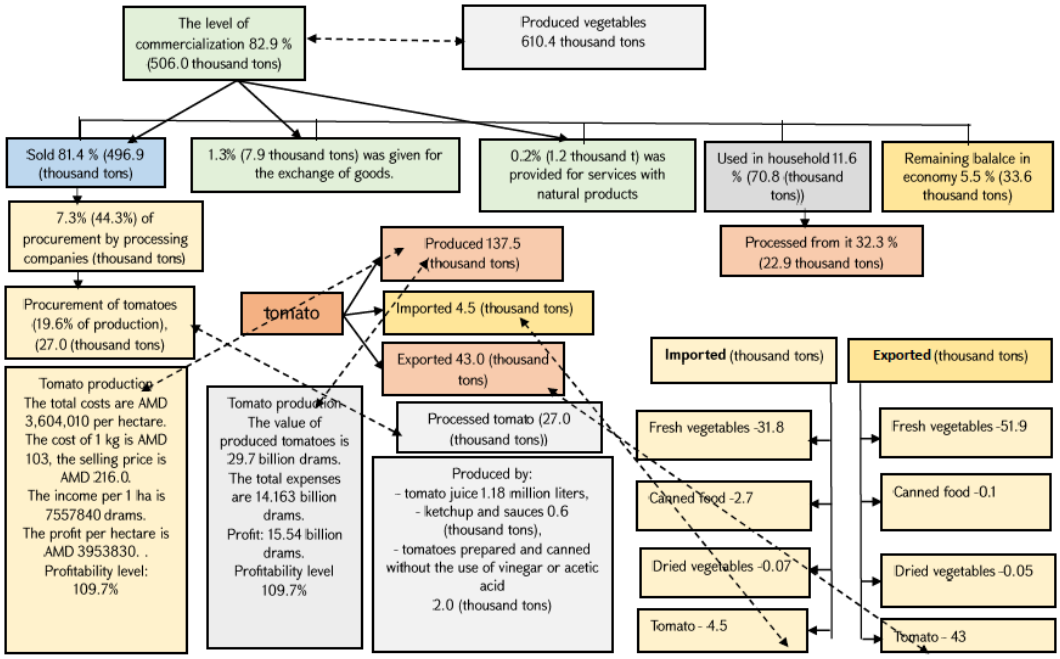

Figure 2. The value chain of vegetables in the Republic of Armenia according to the data of 2022 (the official data of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia https://www.armstat.am/ was used as the basis for the baseline data)

The calculation results in the tomato production ring are as follows. The costs for the production of tomatoes amounted to 14.1 billion drams, the value of the produced product - 30.9 billion drams, the amount of profit, according to the calculation, made 16.8 billion drams. The level of profitability of tomatoes is significantly high and made 109.7%. Production calculations per hectare of tomatoes are as follows. Production costs amounted to 3604.0 thousand. AMD The cost price of one kilogram of tomatoes was calculated at 103.0 AMD, the producer's selling price was 216.0 AMD. [RA SC, 2023, 34]. The income from the sale of tomatoes was 7557.8 thousand per 1 ha. AMD, profit: 3953.8 thousand AMD. The data of the presented calculation value chains prove that the competitiveness of vegetables, particularly tomatoes, is high in the country compared to other crops, but here too it is necessary to take steps to increase competitiveness. They include: correct selection of vegetable varieties, implementation of cultivation, plant protection and other measures defined by agrotechnical measures. It is considered important to improve the sales process, in particular, to establish mutually beneficial contractual relations with processing companies for sales of vegetables.

We also need to consider the value chain of fruits and berries, in particular, Indian and eukaryots, which is presented in the 3rd diagram.

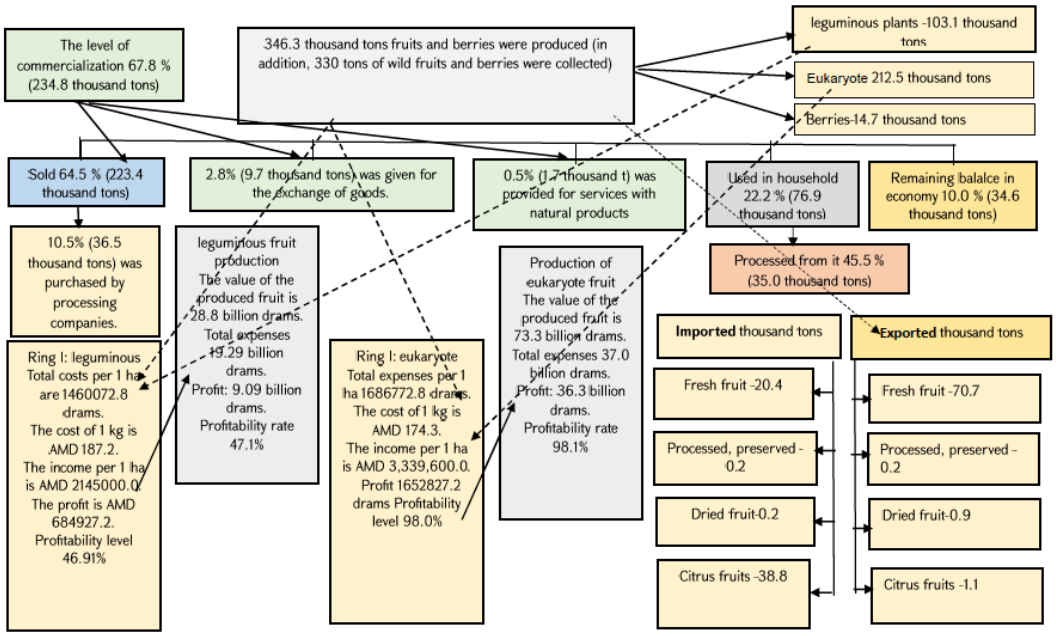

Figure 3. The value chain of fruits and berries in the Republic of Armenia according to the data of 2022 (the official data of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia https://www.armstat.am/ was used as the basis for the baseline data)

The following is evident from the value chain of fruits and berries, particularly of Indian and eukaryots, presented in the diagram. The gross production of fruit and berries in 2022 was 346.3 thousand. tons, including leguminous - 103.1, eukaryots - 212.5, berries - 14.7 thousand tons [HH VC, 2023, 14]. Directions and structure of fruit and berry use are as follows. 64.5% of the produced fruits and berries were sold, 2.8% was given in exchange of goods, 0.5% was given in exchange for services with natural products. The share of use in the economy is significant, it is 22.2% of the produced volume [HK VK, 2023, 12] 36.5 thousand tons were purchased by the processing companies.

The balance of the fruit's foreign trade turnover is positive. 20.4 thousand were imported in the considered year, and the export was 70.7 thousand. tons [RA SC, 2023, 148]. The value chain of the fruit was considered for Indian and eukaryots.

The calculation results in the first leguminous type production ring are as follows. The expenses for the production of leguminouss in the republic amounted to 19.29 billion drams, the value of the produced products was 28.38 billion drams, and the profit was 9.09 billion drams. According to the calculation, the level of profitability of leguminous species was 47.1%.

Production calculations per hectare are as follows. Production costs amounted to 1460.1 thousand. AMD (calculated costs include labor compensation costs). The cost price of one kg of eukaryots was 187.2 drams, the producer's selling price was 275.0 drams. The income of the leguminous variety per 1 ha was calculated at 2145.0 thousand. AMD, profit: 684.9 thousand. AMD, profitability level: 46.91%.

Next, the calculation results in the ring of eukaryots production are as follows. The expenses for the production of eukaryotss in the republic amounted to 37.0 billion drams, the value of the produced products was 73.3 billion drams, and the profit was calculated to 36.3 billion drams. According to the calculation, the level of profitability of eukaryots was 98.1%.

Production calculations per hectare are as follows. Production costs amounted to 1686.8 thousand. AMD, labor compensation costs are also included in the calculated costs here. The cost of one kg of eukaryots was calculated at 174.3 AMD, the producer's selling price was 345.0 AMD. The yield of eukaryots per 1 ha was 3339.6 thousand. AMD, profit: 1628.8 thousand. AMD (profitability level: 98.0%).

Calculations prove that in terms of competitiveness, the competitiveness of eukaryots is significantly high. In particular, in terms of the republic, the new value created in the value chain of eukaryots was 36.3 billion drams, compared to 9.09 billion drams of the newly created value in the value chain of the production of leguminous. If we consider the newly created value per 1 ha, it is 1652.9 AMD thousand for eukaryots, and for leguminous - 684.9 thousand AMD

Here, there is a certain significant difference in terms of the competitiveness of eukaryots compared to the Indian ones. In particular, according to the calculations, the cost per unit area of eukaryots species increased by 15.5% compared to the Indian ones, but the increase in the newly created value was 2.4 times according to the calculations.

In the current situation, there are reserves in the fruit growing branch of the republic, in particular, in the direction of increasing the competitiveness of Indian and eukaryots growing. In this direction, the use of intensive technologies, particularly the development of intensive horticulture, is considered important. This refers to agrotechnical and technological links, in particular, the selection of the variety of planting material, the location of the garden area, the establishment of the garden and cultivation technologies, modern irrigation technologies, hail protection networks, the use of modern technologies for combating frost, etc.

Next, we examine the value chain of the main animal husbandry product - milk, which is presented in diagram 4.

The following is evident from the value chain of milk presented in the diagram. The gross milk production in 2022 was 623.1 thousand. tons [Food Security, 2023, 64]. Directions and structure of milk use are as follows. 62.1% of the produced milk was sold, and 98.88% of the sold milk went to farms, and 1.12% to agricultural trade organizations. 2.0% of produced milk was given in exchange of goods, 0.4% was given in exchange for services with natural products. The share of consumption in the economy is significant, almost 1/3 of the produced milk (31.7% or 197.5 thousand tons). The balance at the end of the observed year was 3.8% or 23.7 thousand. tons [MA, 2023, 15]. 79.6% or 320 thousand tons of commercial milk was sold to processing companies.

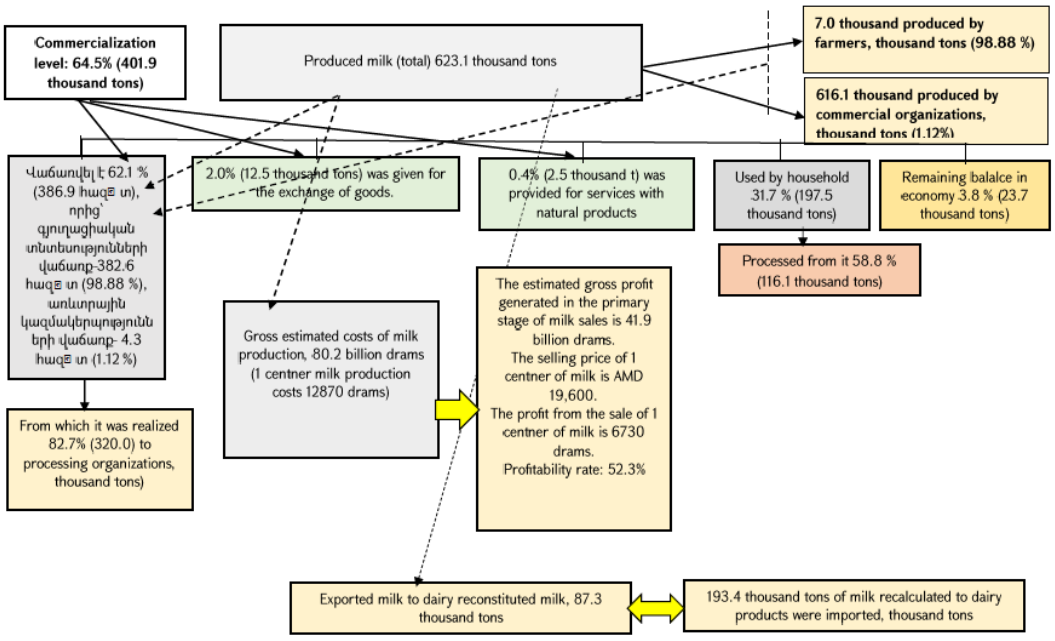

Figure 4. The value chain of milk in the Republic of Armenia according to the data of 2022 (the official data of the Statistics Committee of the Republic of Armenia https://www.armstat.am/ was used as the basis for the baseline data)

The balance of milk turnover is significantly negative. Here, in order to have summary data, we converted the imported and exported milk and milk products into milk using the appropriate coefficients. The volume of milk and milk products exported here made 87.3 thousand. tons, and imported - 193.4 thousand. tons, that is, the balance was 106.1 thousand. tons. The calculations show that the total calculated costs of milk in the republic were 80.2 billion drams, and the calculated gross profit was 41.9 billion drams. According to the calculation, the production costs per centner of milk were 12,870 AMD, and the profit from the sale of 1 centner of milk was 6,730 AMD. According to calculations, the level of profitability was 52.3%.

Our studies show that there are certain reserves for increasing the competitiveness of milk. The calculations were made in the case of food yield, in particular, the average milk yield of one cow is 2470 kg. If the latter is compared with the milk yield provided in some livestock farms operating in our republic, then that average index is significantly lower, which is one of the reasons for low competitiveness.

Increasing the competitiveness of milk production requires the improvement of the herd structure of agricultural animals, particularly in cattle breeding, through the consistent increase of the specific weight of animals with high foraging and pedigree characteristics. It is also considered important to improve the behavior and feeding conditions of dairy cattle. Ensuring the proportions of juicy feed and other types of feed is considered important for increasing milk yield.

Our next focus is the value chain of another main livestock product, meat, which is presented in diagram 5. The following is evident from the meat value chain presented in the diagram. Gross meat production in 2022 by slaughter weight was 103.4 thousand. tons, of which beef - 65.6 thousand, sheep meat - 10.8 thousand tons, pork - 15.1 thousand tons and poultry meat - 11.9 thousand tons.

The directions and structure of meat use are as follows. 83.7% of the produced meat was sold, and 88.7% of the sold meat went to farms, and 11.3% to agricultural commercial organizations. 0.4% of the produced meat was given in exchange of goods, 0.09% was given in exchange for services with natural products. The share of consumption in the economy is not large, 15% of the produced meat. The balance at the end of the considered year was 0.8% or 0.13 thousand tons [RRH VC, 2023, 14].

The trade balance of meat is significantly negative. The volume of meat exported here was 395.3 tons, and the volume of imported meat was 54.7 thousand tons, that is, the balance was 54.3 thousand. tons. The data of the foreign trade turnover according to different types of meat is given in the diagram. With the largest volumes: 38.3 thousand. Tons of poultry meat was imported, followed by pork meat - 11.4 thousand. tons [RA SC, 2023,148] .

The calculations show that the gross estimated costs of meat production in the republic amounted to 225.1 billion drams, of which beef - 146.0 billion, mutton - 25.7, pork - 34.1 and poultry - 19.3 billion drams. The calculated gross profit was 67.9 billion drams, of which beef - 40.1 billion, mutton - 8.5, pork - 18.1 and poultry - 10.3 billion.

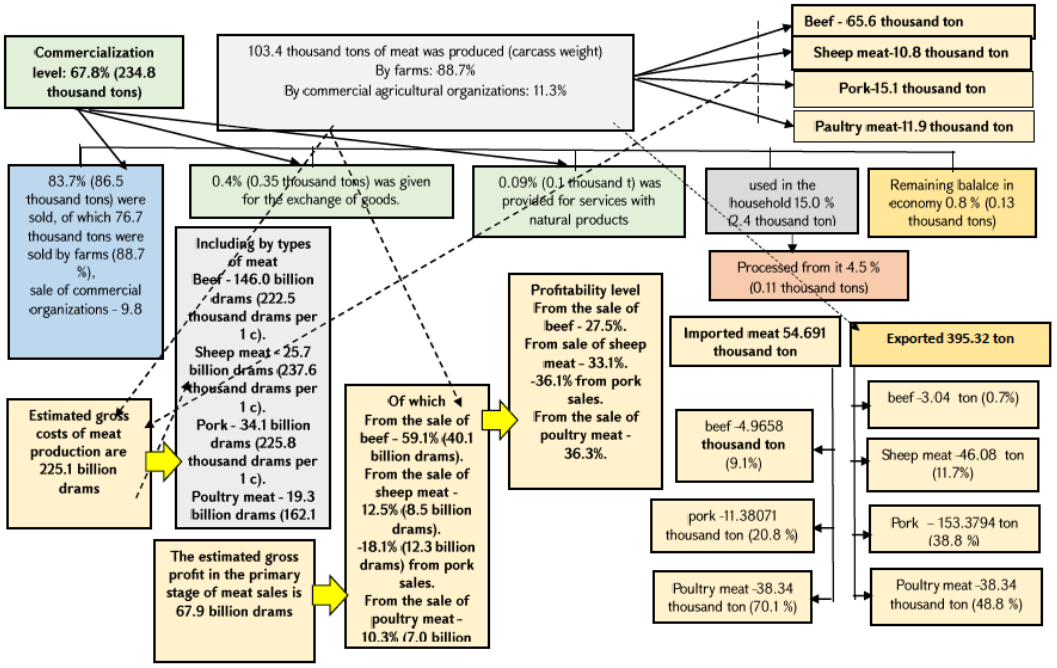

Figure 5. The value chain of meat in the Republic of Armenia according to the data of 2022 (the official data of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia https://www.armstat.am/ was used as the basis for the baseline data)

Estimated costs per centner for different types of meat were 222.5 thousand for beef, 237.6 thousand for mutton, 225.8 thousand for pork and 162.1 thousand AMD for poultry. As for the profit obtained from the sale of 1 centners of meat according to individual categories, it was 61.2, 78,6, 81.5 and 58.8 thousand AMD The figures obtained as a result of the calculation prove that the highest new value per unit volume of meat is created in pig farming, and then in sheep farming. Profitability level for beef, sheep, pork and poultry according to calculations was respectively 27,5% 33,1% 36,1% and 36.3 %.

The calculations show that the most important indicator defining competitiveness in the field of meat production, the level of profitability, is not high. If the level of profitability in the cattle breeding branch is low, the greatest value is created in the field of beef production in the republic. It is necessary to take steps to increase competitiveness in all sub-branches of meat production. In particular, it refers to the improvement of pedigree and foraging characteristics of the number of livestock in all sub-branches, implementing it gradually through replenishment with the number of livestock with high pedigree characteristics. It is particularly important to solve the problems of animal feeding, applying adequate feeding of the fodder ration. Here, it is particularly important to choose the right combination of feed and their additives according to the

type of animal, in accordance with the recommended rations. It is also necessary to improve the conditions of animal behavior. It is particularly important to improve the condition of one's own fodder production, both in terms of quantity and quality. The latter is one of the important steps in increasing the competitiveness of livestock farming. It is also important to implement measures to prevent animal diseases and, in case of detected diseases, to respond quickly and implement appropriate measures.

Conclusions. The following conclusions were made as a result of the research of the value chains of basic agricultural products and the possibilities of increasing competitiveness in the Republic of Armenia.

1. The new value created in the bread production circle exceeds the corresponding indicator in the wheat and flour production circle.

This proves that it is important to take appropriate steps in the field of wheat production to increase competitiveness, in particular, the fulfillment of agrotechnical requirements, the improvement of the quality characteristics of seeds, and the improvement of the quality indicators of the wheat produced as a result. Substitution of imports at the expense of local production are important steps for increasing the competitiveness of wheat, which will have a positive impact on the improvement of the indicators of the observed flour and bread chain and, as a result, on the increase of competitiveness.

2. The competitiveness of vegetables, particularly tomatoes, is high compared to other crops, but it is necessary to take steps to increase its competitiveness, which include the correct selection of vegetable varieties, the implementation of cultivation, plant protection and other measures defined by agrotechnical measures. It is considered important to improve the sales process, in particular, to establish mutually beneficial contractual relations with processing companies for the sale of vegetables.

3. In the fruit growing branch, in particular, there are certain reserves in the direction of increasing the competitiveness of Indian and pome fruit growing. In this direction, the use of intensive technologies, particularly the development of intensive horticulture, is considered important. This refers to agrotechnical and technological links, in particular the selection of planting material varieties, the location of the garden area, the establishment of the garden and cultivation technologies, modern irrigation technologies, hail protection networks, the use of modern frost protection technologies, etc.

4. Increasing the competitiveness of milk production requires the improvement of the herd structure of agricultural animals, particularly in cattle breeding, through the consistent increase of the specific weight of animals with high foraging and pedigree characteristics. It is also considered important to improve the behavior and feeding conditions of dairy cattle. Ensuring the proportions of juicy feed and other types of feed is considered important for increasing milk yield.

5. The highest new value per unit volume of meat is created in pig farming, followed by sheep farming.

The most important indicator defining competitiveness in the field of meat production is the level of profitability. If the level of profitability in the cattle breeding branch is low, the greatest value is created in the field of beef production in the republic. It is necessary to take steps to increase competitiveness in all sub-branches of meat production. In particular, it refers to the improvement of pedigree and foraging characteristics of the number of livestock in all sub-branches, implementing it gradually through replenishment with the number of livestock with high pedigree characteristics. It is particularly important to solve the problems of animal feeding, applying adequate feeding of the fodder ration. Here, it is particularly important to choose the right combination of feed and their additives according to the type of animal, in accordance with the recommended rations. It is also necessary to improve the conditions of animal behavior. It is particularly important to improve the condition of one's own food production, both in terms of quantity and quality; the latter is one of the important steps in increasing the competitiveness of livestock farming. It is also important to implement measures to prevent animal diseases and, in case of detected diseases, to respond quickly and implement appropriate measures.

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Value chains of basic agricultural products in the Republic of Armenia and opportunities for increasing competitiveness

Key words: agriculture, competitiveness, value chain of agricultural products, gross product, production, commodity exchange, agricultural commoditization, balance of foreign trade, indicators, cost, new value, revenue, profit, profitability, producer's selling price

Opportunities to increase the competitiveness of agricultural products become more visible when considering them in the chain from the producer to the consumer. Such an approach makes it possible to form a more complete picture of the competitiveness of agricultural products in individual links of the chain and to take measures aimed at increasing it, taking into account the uniqueness of the value chains of each of these products in this or that country. In this sense, it is of particular interest to develop the value chains of a number of important products in our republic: cereals, in particular: wheat, vegetables, fruits and berries, milk and meat, the comparative analysis of competitiveness in their separate links and the identification of opportunities for improvement. As a result of the development of the mentioned securities, the analysis of the competitiveness of these products in their separate links, the article presents the possibilities of increasing the competitiveness.