

Research Article

Problems and Countermeasures of China's International Trade in Agricultural Products under the "Belt and Road Initiative"

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To make China's international trade in agricultural products develop more quickly and steadily, in this study, through the analysis of the development of international trade and the import and export of agricultural products under the strategy of "The Belt and Road (B&R)," in terms of agricultural products, the problems about the international trade in China are discussed. The results show that under the influence of "B&R," China has established economic cooperation with many countries along the route. Even facing fierce international competition, it can promote the deep development of China's international trade. Based on the discussion of the problems affecting the development of international trade of agricultural products in China, combined with the problems faced by the international development, in this study, the corresponding countermeasures are given, aiming to provide ideas for its future development. Therefore, the analysis of the development of international trade of agricultural products in China under the strategy of "B&R" has positive significance for finding the factors that affect the development of China's agricultural products in international trade and also promoting the steady development of China's international trade in agricultural products.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the coexistence of the consumption demand of agricultural products and the hard constraints of resources and environment has led to the expansion of the import demand for agricultural products year by year, and the import trade of agricultural products has an increasing position in the consumption of agricultural products in China. In 2013, China put forward the strategy of "B&R," which made the emerging economies develop quickly, so does China. With the continuous reconstruction of the global value chain, many developing countries continue to strengthen the cooperation as well as exchanges of economic. In this way, the global transportation logistics network layout will be further adjusted. In recent years, China has been constrained by the low level of domestic agricultural machinery technology, the reduction of arable land, soil pollution, and other problems, and the import demand for agricultural products has been increasing. New trade routes and transport corridors will be formed. Especially, in recent years, China's economic development level is

developing rapidly, and China's share in international trade is growing, which also makes a greater contribution to China's economic growth. The resources of all countries along the "B&R" are different, and the economic complementarity is strong. In order to promote the construction of "B&R," regional advantages need to be brought into full play, proactive opening-up strategies should be implemented, cooperation between the East and the West should be strengthened, and economic growth should be speeded up. Among them, Xinjiang is the transportation hub of cooperation and exchange in Central Asia, South Asia, and West Asia in the northwest. With the help of the comprehensive economic advantages of Shaanxi and Gansu, and the national and cultural advantages of Ningxia and Qinghai, China has closer trade with the countries in the northwest. In the north, Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, and other places mainly cooperate with Russia to build an important window for opening to the north. Southwest China is mainly based on Guangxi and Yunnan to open up economic exchanges with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries so as to form an important gateway for the organic

connection between the maritime Silk Road as well as the Silk Road Economic Belt in the 21st century. From the perspective of the trade structure of agricultural products, they are highly complementary. The country mainly exports resource-intensive products such as fruits and oils and fats, which are the main agricultural products imported by China. For coastal cities, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, it is necessary to make use of their advantages of good openness as well as strong economic strength so that the free trade pilot areas develop well, the unique advantages of overseas Chinese and Hong Kong as well as Macao can be made full use of, and an impetus for the long-term development of the 21st century maritime Silk Road can be provided [1]. Importing agricultural products from countries has important practical significance for China to reduce the impact on the international market, ensure a stable supply of agricultural products, and introduce international resources to improve the competitiveness of agricultural products.

Studying the trade potential of China's imported agricultural products is conducive to clarifying the trade strategy of China's self-imported agricultural products and ensuring the stable supply of domestic agricultural products. China is a large country, whose development of agriculture is related to the development of Chinese economy. Moreover, agriculture, as the basic industry of national survival and development, is an important industry that plays an essential part in the national economy as well as people's livelihood. With the continuous development of industry and science and technology, the proportion of agricultural products trading has declined year by year. However, in the face of the huge population base, the continuous improvement of consumption demand and consumption level, as well as the deepening of the openness of agricultural trade market makes agricultural products occupy an important position in trade. Many factors in the process of development will have a great influence on China's agricultural production, which still has a big gap with developed countries. In terms of the trade of import as well as export, there are a series of problems like trade deficit as well as green barriers [2].

Therefore, under the strategy of "B&R," the problems existing in the China's agricultural products in international trade are discussed and analyzed. On the basis of it, pertinent suggestions are given, which play an essential part in the long-term development of Chinese agricultural products in international trade. In 2017, China's total trade with the economies along the line reached US \$1440.32 billion, an increase of 13.4% compared with 2016.

2. Literature Review

Due to China's "B&R" strategy, the activities of economic as well as trade between countries are becoming more frequent. As a large agricultural country, the export of agricultural products will affect international trade activities to a certain extent.

2.1. "B&R" Strategy. Xu et al. [3] discussed the scientific connotation of the "B&R" strategy. On the basis of analysis, the problems faced in the process of promoting the strategy

were explored, and relevant suggestions were given to enhance the scientific development level of the strategy [4]. Chen Haiyan [5] pointed out in the research that the cultivation of talents is very important under the strategic background of "B&R." In particular, new-type nationalized talents need not only strong foreign language and cross-cultural competence but also the basic knowledge of economic and trade. All of these need to establish a perfect talent training mechanism in colleges and universities and try to establish a new model of joint training of talents with relevant institutions at home and abroad [5]. Peng Hong [6] pointed out that the "B&R" strategy not only brings opportunities to China but also brings challenges to the import as well as export trade. In the research, technology, culture, and infrastructure were analyzed to explore the development path of China's tea export trade [6]. Liu Ruiqing [7] analyzed the unbalanced development of regional economy in China and studied the regional economic development under the opportunity of the "B&R" strategy. It was found that "B&R" can promote the reform and opening up in backward areas as well as promote the establishment of an open economic system [7] in backward areas. Julien Chaisse [8] proposed a huge project to build hundreds of roads, bridges, and railways to connect China and Europe (Julien, 2018).

2.2. Import and Export of Agricultural Products. Chen Jian et al. [9] analyzed how does China's agricultural exports develop and the influence of trade deficit on ASEAN since 2001, and used the modified CMS model to dynamically analyze what factors influence the growth of China's agricultural export. The results show that in terms of the agricultural products, there are four categories. In the first level, the first and third categories of products are mainly competitive effects, while the second and fourth categories are mainly structural effects. This shows that in the first level, the growth of agricultural products is the result of both competitive effects and structural effects. However, in the second level, the whole or classified agricultural products are derived from the overall competitive effect, while the whole agricultural products are derived from the co-renting of the market effect and commodity effect [5]. Yang and Jing [10] used the CMS model to conduct a research on the growth factors of China's agricultural exports to Japan. It can be clearly seen that the increase of Japan's domestic demand will make China's agricultural trade develop quickly. The product structure influences the export growth of agricultural products a lot, while the comprehensive competitiveness effect and product competitiveness effect have a certain role in hindering its growth. On this basis, the response suggestions are given for different influencing factors [10].

2.3. International Trade Development. Zhang [11] analyzed global warming, greenhouse effect, and other topics, pointed out that in terms of the international trade, the low-carbon economy is an important response to global environmental problems, which takes new opportunities for international trade, and also increased trade barriers. Therefore, the

analysis of trade development in low-carbon economy aims to transform the trade mode of the low-carbon economy mode of international trade into a global transformation requiring international cooperation [11]. Yu [12] pointed out that China accounts for an increasing proportion in international economy and trade; especially, the international trade of agricultural products has made a greater contribution to Chinese economic growth. Therefore, to make international trade activities develop very efficiently, and reduce the adverse impact of economic restructuring on agricultural trade, the international trade in agricultural products that affects China's economic growth is analyzed. The results show that the low demand for agricultural products, the increasing competitiveness of the international market, and the changing structure of the market economy affect the development of international trade to some extent. However, there will be opportunities if there are challenges. By promoting agricultural development, promoting economic growth, adjusting economic structure, and promoting economic growth, the efficiency of agricultural production can be ensured, which is beneficial to China's economic growth [12].

To sum up, previous studies focused more on the impact of international trade in agricultural products on economic growth, as well as on the growth path of international trade in agricultural products. Therefore, in this study, under the "B&R" strategy, the development of international trade of agricultural products in China has been analyzed. Besides, corresponding countermeasures are put forward for these problems, which have positive significance for the future growth of Chinese agricultural products international trade."

3. The Growth of International Trade in Agricultural Products under the "B&R" Strategy

3.1. China's International Economic and Trade Development. Data show that from 2013 to 2018, more than 90 billion US dollars has been invested in the "B&R" countries by the enterprises in China. In addition, the average annual growth of that is 5.2%. The amount of newly signed foreign contracts in the countries along the line has exceeded 600 billion US dollars. The average annual growth is 11.9%. In addition, the overseas economic as well as trade cooperation zone built in the countries along the line has also become an important platform for reducing economic growth and industrial agglomeration, helping the host country solve the employment problem of nearly 300000 people [4].

It can be seen that, with the continuous expansion of trade, the innovation of trade mode is also accelerating. Due to multilateral mechanisms like BRICs (member countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), e-commerce cooperation documents have been formed, and substantive steps are accelerated. At the same time, cross-border electricity providers and other new formats and new models also provide a new impetus for the "B&R" trade flow [13].

In 2018, the agricultural trade promotion report released by the Ministry of agriculture's agricultural trade promotion center of China showed that 2018 was the fifth year of the "B&R," and it was also the most fruitful year. Cooperation documents are signed between China and more than 60 countries. Globally, 122 countries have begun to pay attention to this initiative, including the traditional Asia Europe region, Africa, and the America. By 2017, per capita income in the economies along the "B&R" area, including China, had increased [14]. Among them, the data of the top 30 countries per capita GDP along the line are shown in Figure 1, and the data of per capita GDP in the 35 countries can be clearly seen in Figure 2.

Therefore, these countries can be divided into different income economics according to the level of economic development. Countries with GDP per capita in the top 18 belong to high-income economies, countries with GDP per capita in the 19th to 39th place belong to the upper middle income economies, countries with GDP per capita in the 40th to 61st place belong to the lower middle income economies, and countries with GDP per capita in the 62nd to 65th place belong to the low-income economies. This also shows that China's "B&R" has been recognized by more countries and can work together to develop international trade as well as promote the economic growth of all countries [15].

3.2. International Trade Development of Agricultural Products in China. Since "B&R" was put forward in 2013, the results have been remarkable, and the volume of imports as well as exports has reached a higher level. In 2017, China's total trade with the economies along the line reached US \$1440.32 billion, an increase of 13.4% compared with 2016. This ended the negative growth situation caused by factors such as slow recovery of the global economy, low trade development, and falling commodity prices in 2015 and 2016, which exceeded China's overall foreign trade growth by 5.9%, which accounts for 36.2% of the total trade in that year. The export trade volume reached US \$774.26 billion, up 8.5 percentage points year on year, accounting for 34.1% of the total export volume (the total export volume is about US 2270 billion). The volume of import trade reached US \$666.05 billion, an increase of 19.8% over last year, which accounts for 39.0% of the total import volume [16]. The international import and export volume and growth rate in 2012–2017 are shown in Figure 3. Among them, the proportion of China's import as well as export volume of "B&R" to China's foreign trade is shown in Figure 4.

As a big agricultural country, China's export trade of agricultural products plays an essential role in international trade. On the basis of the data of the Ministry of Commerce of China, from January to May 2019, China's import as well as export of agricultural products reached US \$90.17 billion, an increase of 2.4% year on year. In May 2019, China's import as well as export of agricultural products amounted to US \$19.45 billion, down 0.2% month on month (which is the change ratio of quantity in two consecutive statistical cycles) and 4.7% year on year. The export value of agricultural products was US \$30 billion, down 3.4% year on year. In May 2019, China's agricultural exports reached US

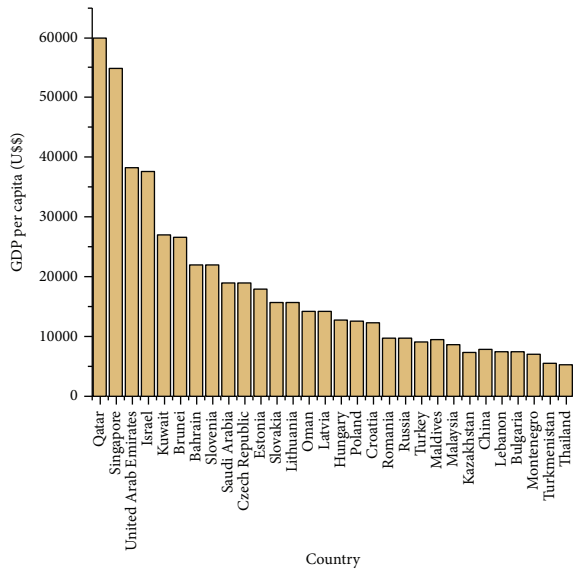


FIGURE 1: Per capita GDP (the top 30) along the “B&R” area in 2017.

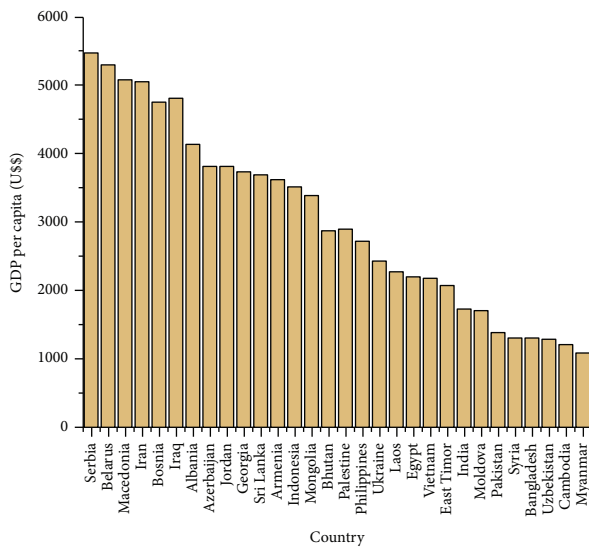


FIGURE 2: Per capita GDP (the latter 35 places) along the “B&R” area in 2017.

\$6.64 billion, up 7.9% on a month-on-month basis and 0.1% on a year-on-year basis. China’s imports of agricultural products amounted to US \$60.17 billion, up 5.6% year on year [17]. In May 2019, China’s imports of agricultural products amounted to US \$12.81 billion, down 4.0% month on month and 6.9% year on year. The amount of import and export from June 2017 to May 2019 is shown in Figure 5.

Among them, the import and export amount by continent is shown in Figure 6.

On the basis of the category of agricultural products, the import and export situation is shown in Table 1.

The above table shows that among the export products, the grain increased by 43.8% in the same period, which is the

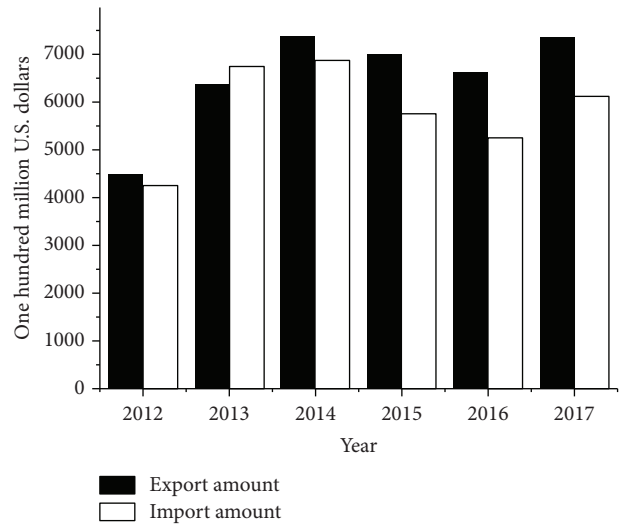


FIGURE 3: International import as well as export volume and growth rate from 2012 to 2017.

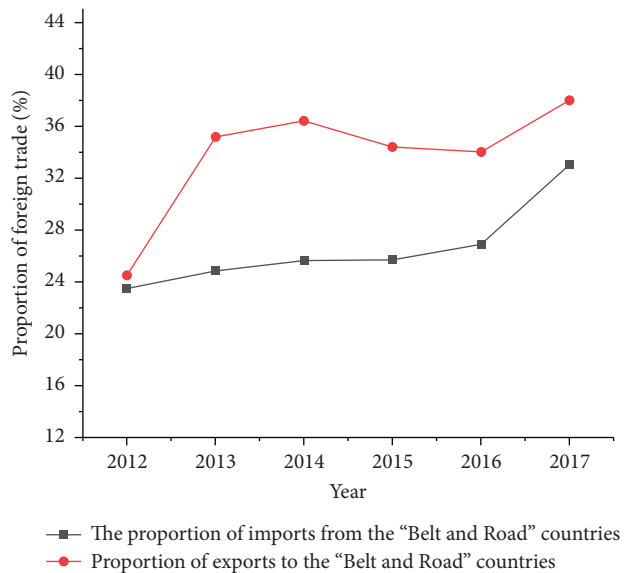


FIGURE 4: Proportion of China’s import as well as export volume to China’s foreign trade volume between 2012 and 2017.

fastest growth among all export products. The second is dairy, eggs, honey, and other edible animal products, reaching 31.2%. Among the imported products, meat products accounted for 143.2%, followed by poultry and offal products accounted for 45.8%.

Thus, the strategy of “B&R” plays an essential role in the international trade of agricultural products in China. It accelerates the export of China’s agricultural products. Meanwhile, it promotes the sharing of agricultural technology resources and the adjustment of China’s agricultural product structure, which shows that the agricultural product chain under the “B&R” strategy provides an inexhaustible motive force for the long-term and healthy development of China’s international trade in agricultural products.

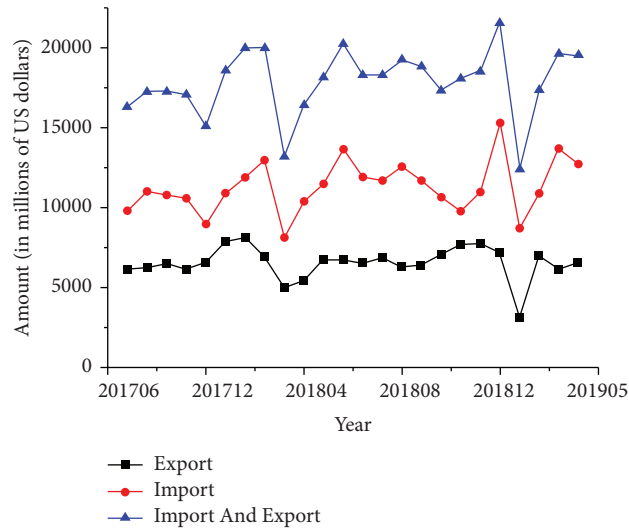


FIGURE 5: Amount of import and export from June 2017 to May 2019.

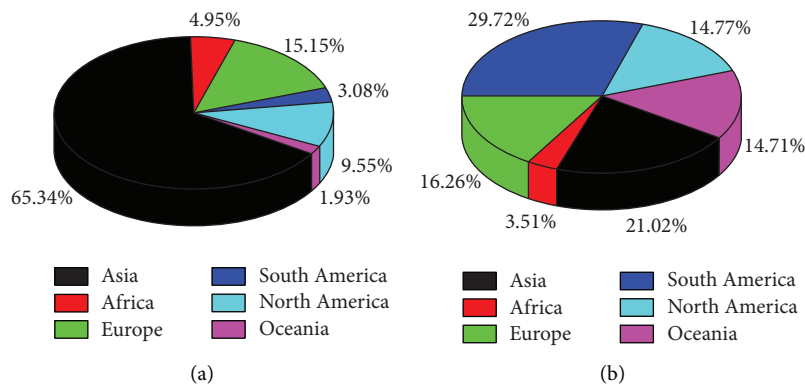


FIGURE 6: Import and export amount by continent from January to May 2019. (a) Import amount by continent and (b) export amount by continent.

However, there are still some problems in the development of China’s agricultural trade, which are generally reflected in the slowdown of agricultural exports, high dependence on the origin, and trade barriers encountered in the export process [18].

In terms of the slowdown of agricultural product export, the import of agricultural products in China has changed significantly, while the corresponding export has decreased, especially the export of some traditional agricultural products. For example, the use of fruits and nuts, drinks, wine and vinegar, food industry residues, waste materials, and animal feed will be affected to a certain extent by local land supply, labor price, and logistics cost, resulting in the instability of its output and price, thus making its export unstable.

In terms of the origin of agricultural products, Japan, South Korea, and other neighboring countries, as well as the United States, Europe, and other developed regions are the main destination of China’s agricultural products, so agricultural exports are highly dependent on them. Once

affected by the market of the destination country, the export of products will be affected.

From the perspective of trade barriers (trade barriers are generally divided into non-tariff barriers and tariff barriers), due to the continuous innovation of technology, attention is paid to the quality and safety of agricultural products. Most of the export destination countries will carry out strict testing on Chinese agricultural products, including pesticide residues, packaging, and labeling. When testing some agricultural products, the testing standards of some indicators are also increased or modified, which constitutes a new trade barrier for China’s agricultural exports, which makes China’s agricultural products have uncertain risks in international trade.

3.3. Countermeasures and Suggestions. In view of the above problems, first, a variety of ways can be used to enhance the added value of export agricultural products. Optimizing the export structure of agricultural products can effectively

TABLE 1: Import and export by category from January to May 2019 (unit: USD 10000).

Serial number	Category	Export from January to May			Import from January to May		
		2019	2018	Year-on-year increase (%)	2019年	2018年	Year-on-year increase (%)
1	Live animals	18344.8	18811.6	-2.5	20193.7	14071.9	43.5
2	Livestock meat and offal	7783.8	11326.9	-31.3	540514.7	414161.6	30.5
3	Poultry meat and offal	23857.1	21969.0	8.6	66644.2	45716.0	45.8
4	Aquatic products, seafood	503746.3	519051.3	-2.9	597478.7	440595.6	35.6
5	Dairy, eggs, honey, and other edible animal products	45599.0	34760.5	31.2	515276.6	454799.6	13.3
6	Other animal products	100686.6	113129.1	-11.0	37451.7	31,882.4	17.5
7	Living plants and flowers	18414.4	15806.6	16.5	10959.6	11510.0	-4.8
8	Edible vegetable	371095.5	417024.1	-11.0	80601.7	106000.5	-24.0
9	Edible fruits and nuts	159238.2	186040.8	-14.4	545331.8	402700.3	35.4
10	Coffee, tea, yerba mate, and spices	143257.0	129334.4	10.8	35825.6	24633.5	45.4
11	Grain	47390.0	32946.9	43.8	230612.4	322386.1	-28.5
12	Milling industry products	31835.2	31774.6	0.2	62792.3	52669.0	19.2
13	Oil, industrial or medicinal plants, rice straw, straw, and feed	123662.8	117599.6	5.2	1552203.7	1778818.0	-12.7
14	Plant juice	67010.2	63470.3	5.6	18030.2	12451.2	44.8
15	Plant materials for knitting	5308.8	5609.6	-5.4	6950.7	6003.1	15.8
16	Animal and vegetable oils as well as their decomposition products	42834.6	42665.4	0.4	357030.3	337328.0	5.8
17	Meat products	71923.2	77009.6	-6.6	2827.6	1162.6	143.2
18	Aquatic products	302556.0	308373.0	-1.9	10858.8	8475.6	28.1
19	Sugar and sugar food	70117.5	70232.7	-0.2	51215.5	58266.6	-12.1
20	Cocoa and its products	14050.8	13510.2	4.0	27966.0	23287.1	20.1
21	Cereals, flour, starch products, and pastries	63764.5	60820.0	4.8	40444.9	39775.9	1.7
22	Vegetables, fruits, and nut products	308729.3	336282.0	-8.2	57047.8	50779.0	12.3
23	Miscellaneous products	151760.8	146900.0	3.3	142576.5	115163.2	23.8
24	Beverages, wine, and vinegar	78171.7	91451.2	-14.5	227367.1	265652.4	-14.4
25	Residues and wastes of food industry, prepared animal feed	116784.9	131946.2	-11.5	172070.5	124535.2	38.2
26	Tobacco and any tobacco products	46134.1	39061.8	18.1	113774.3	117296.7	-3.0
27	Other agricultural products	65910.7	70262.5	-6.2	492761.3	437624.9	12.6
	Poultry products	126836.3	115328.8	10.0	81462.6	56500.6	44.2
* Total	Livestock products	123894.8	142670.8	-13.2	1281484.7	1136047.4	12.8

promote the development of China's export trade of agricultural products. Therefore, the traditional extensive management and development mode can be changed, and the industrial structure of agricultural products can be upgraded and optimized. In addition, more attention should be paid to the deep processing of agricultural products, advanced science as well as technology should be used to continuously improve the production technology of agricultural products, and the scientific and technological content of agricultural products should be improved. The deep processing industry of agricultural products needs to be vigorously developed, and the technical content of agricultural products should be improved. The more intensive the technology is, the higher the quality of agricultural production is. For simple and primary agricultural products, more attention should be paid to product quality and price in the export process, and product quantity should be considered on the basis of ensuring our own costs and certain interests. In addition, in product promotion, it is necessary to pay attention to product advantages, brand effect, and green environmental protection to further

enhance its popularity. For those deep-processed agricultural products, it is essential to adjust the industrial structure according to the market situation and the strategic advantages of "B&R", and provide relevant funds and technical support for market demand. In order to diversify China's import market, China's trade cooperation with countries along the "the Belt and Road" has been strengthened day by day, which has reduced the market share of China's imported agricultural products.

The second is to effectively carry out trade activities with the help of "B&R" related trade facilitation. International trade is inseparable from the support of international logistics. Agricultural products are relatively special and have high requirements for transportation conditions; especially when they are transported for a long time, the support of infrastructure such as cold chain logistics and transportation roads is needed to ensure the quality of products. Cold chain logistics generally refers to a systematic project in which frozen food is always in the specified low temperature environment in all links from production, storage, transportation, sales to consumption so as to ensure food quality

and reduce food consumption. The “B&R” links the more than 100 countries. Both infrastructure and trade activities have enabled many countries to liberate and diversify their trade, which, to a certain extent, has promoted the development of international trade. Meanwhile, under the background of “B&R,” the related costs of international trade in agricultural products will also be reduced.

The third is to develop international trade in combination with cross-border e-commerce. With the development of e-commerce, traditional agricultural trade activities are not enough to cope with the more developed market environment. If the current market demand and supply cannot be accurately judged, to some extent, it will produce high trade costs. The slowing down of trade activities and capital turnover has increased the risk of products and capital to some extent. The development of e-commerce gives more possibilities to international trade. Therefore, cross-border e-commerce can be used to effectively solve the problems faced by agricultural products in the trade process and effectively promote the healthy development of trade activities. The use of cross-border e-commerce can not only obtain market dynamics around the world in time but also speed up international trade activities. The most important thing is to ensure the rapid turnover and security of funds. The simplification of the communication process can improve the volume of transactions to a certain extent and also make people have more time to deal with more trade affairs. In this way, it provides effective technical support for the cross-border e-commerce of agricultural products in terms of technical means and increases a more powerful guarantee for farmers’ income. However, for many farmers, they know little about e-commerce. In addition, there are still some drawbacks in the current cross-border e-commerce in China, which requires the state to invest more funds and technologies to support and help farmers to realize the transformation of products and funds.

At last, the quality of agricultural products is effectively supervised and managed. In view of the problem of trade barriers faced by China’s agricultural trade, the relevant departments of the state need to strengthen the supervision and management of the quality and safety of agricultural products at ordinary times and strive to eliminate the existing adverse factors to ensure the quality of agricultural products. No matter in the production, transportation, or final sale of agricultural products, strict inspection and quarantine system should be implemented to ensure the quality and safety of agricultural products. In addition, it is necessary to consciously improve production standards to make products greener and more environmental friendly. For some obviously discriminatory barriers, the state needs to formulate certain countermeasures to support agricultural trade.

4. Conclusions

In this study, by analyzing the import and export of agricultural products in recent years and the factors that affect the import and export trade of agricultural products, the problems existing in the development of international trade in China’s agricultural products under the strategy of

“B&R” are explored, and on this basis, targeted countermeasures and suggestions are given to promote the development of China’s agricultural products. However, in this study, the international trade activities of bulk commodities are not specifically analyzed. In the later study, agricultural products will be refined, and the import and export situation will be analyzed from the aspects of tea, rice, garlic, etc. In this study, the development problems and influencing factors of China’s agricultural products in international trade under the strategy of “B&R” are analyzed, and the corresponding countermeasures and suggestions for the problems are given, which can provide more ideas for the development of China’s agricultural products in international trade and provide a broader platform for the steady and sustained development of international trade in agricultural products. More opportunities can be firmly grasped to promote the development of agricultural products in all aspects. The following article should pay full attention to social and ecological benefits, develop green agriculture, let the concept of green development cover planting and breeding industry, agricultural product processing industry, and other fields, truly integrate the concept and spirit of green into modern agricultural development, and take the road of sustainable development.

Data Availability

This article does not cover data research. No data were used to support this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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