Research Article

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Exportation and Survival of Agro-Export Companies in Peru (2014–2023)

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to analyze the exports of Peru's agro-export sector and determine the survival rate of companies using the Kaplan-Meier curve. A quantitative methodology was used, with a non-experimental design and a descriptive approach, based on export data provided by SUNAT, PROMPERÚ, and INFOTRADE. The results showed sustained growth in the FOB value of sector exports between 2014 and 2023, with an average annual increase of 9%, though variations in volume and price depended on the year. The survival rate of agro-export companies, calculated using the Kaplan-Meier curve, revealed that only a small percentage of companies remain in the market for more than 10 years, with large companies exhibiting a significantly higher survival rate compared to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. The main barriers to survival identified were limited access to financing, deficiencies in logistical infrastructure, and low investment in innovation and technology. In conclusion, company size and adaptability are confirmed as key factors in international success. It is recommended to improve financing conditions for SMEs, develop infrastructure that facilitates exports, and encourage investment in R&D to increase competitiveness. Likewise, it is suggested to diversify the export markets of Peruvian products, reducing dependency on a few products and countries to ensure greater sector resilience.

Keywords: *Agro-exports, Business Survival, Kaplan-Meier Curve, Competitiveness, Innovation*

1. Introduction

Peru is a country experiencing constant growth in its exports, with an average annual increase of 13% over the past five years, surpassing Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Colombia, which grew by 9%, 11%, 5%, and 11%, respectively (International Trade Center, 2023). One of the Peruvian sectors that has specialized and expanded significantly is agro-exports, particularly grapes, blueberries, and avocados (Montes, Pantaleón, et al., 2024; Montes, Vasquez, et al., 2024; Montes Ninaquispe et al., 2024). Additionally, international trade policy has played a key role through the signing of trade agreements—currently totaling 22—with major global powers such as the United States, China, the European Union, and Japan.

A company's ability to compete in international markets not only reflects its robustness and adaptability but also significantly contributes to a country's economic growth and development (Lotfi & Karim, 2017). This study is important because it provides an understanding of how exports affect a nation's economic stability and growth. Exports give companies access to broader markets, allowing them to increase sales and, therefore, revenues (Vanninen et al., 2022). This access to more consumers is especially critical for companies operating in saturated or slow-growing domestic markets.

Additionally, exports foster innovation and quality improvement. International competition compels companies to adopt advanced technologies, improve their production processes, and raise their product standards to meet the demands of more sophisticated and diverse consumers. This process not only benefits companies in terms of international competitiveness but also elevates domestic quality standards, benefiting local consumers (Arbulú Ballesteros et al., 2024).

Exports also have a positive impact on the national economy by generating foreign currency, helping balance the payments and stabilize the national currency. Moreover, export growth is associated with job creation, as exporting companies often require more staff to handle increased production, meet international regulations, and manage export logistics, thus helping to reduce unemployment rates (Xuyang, 2020).

Exportation is a key activity for the global economy, driving economic growth and fostering competition among nations. However, companies entering international markets face numerous challenges that affect their ability to survive (Arce, 2007). A significant problem is the volatility of international markets, which requires companies to adapt quickly to changes in demand, price fluctuations, and variations in the trade policies of importing countries. This constant uncertainty demands highly effective management and the ability to anticipate market trends.

Furthermore, access to adequate financing is a critical barrier for many companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These companies often lack the financial resources necessary to bear the initial costs associated with exporting, such as market research, product modification to meet international standards, and transportation costs. Even when financing is available, the conditions and terms offered by financial institutions may not be favorable, limiting these companies' ability to expand internationally (Piñeiro, 2020).

In addition, tariff and non-tariff barriers imposed by importing countries can pose considerable obstacles. High tariffs, import quotas, and strict regulations can discourage companies from participating in international trade. Non-tariff barriers, such as sanitary and phytosanitary standards, labeling requirements, and technical norms, can also increase compliance costs and complicate access to foreign markets.

Another critical aspect is the capacity for innovation and technological adaptation. In a globally competitive environment, exporting companies must stay at the forefront of technological innovations to improve efficiency and product quality. The lack of investment in research and development can result in a loss of competitiveness, as obsolete or low-quality products fail to attract international consumers (Nugroho et al., 2019).

Additionally, international competition is fierce. Companies must compete with others from around the world, many of which may have advantages in terms of production costs, product quality, or market access. Globalization has intensified this competition, meaning that only the strongest and most adaptable companies can survive long-term in international markets (Kuzmin et al., 2014).

Finally, cultural adaptation and understanding of local markets are essential for export success. Companies must be able to adapt their marketing strategies, products, and services to meet the preferences and expectations of consumers in different regions. This cultural adaptation not only involves changes in products but also in communication methods and market entry strategies (Shimokhin et al., 2022).

The goal of this research was to analyze the exports of the Peruvian agro-export sector and determine the survival rate of companies using the Kaplan-Meier curve. This analysis is relevant to Peru's economic development, given the impact of agro-exports on job creation, income generation, and the country's sustained economic growth.

In the context of specific countries, issues related to exportation and the survival of exporting companies vary significantly. For example, in the United States, despite being one of the world's largest economies with a robust support system for exporters, companies still face challenges such as international competition and fluctuations in trade policies. The trade war between the United States and China exemplified how tariff policies can drastically affect exports, creating uncertainty for companies dependent on bilateral trade (Achtzehn et al., 2023).

In contrast, developing countries face even more significant barriers. In many African nations, poor infrastructure and a lack of access to modern technology hinder local companies from effectively competing in international markets (Yessirkepova et al., 2022). Additionally, government policies in some of these countries can be unstable, creating an uncertain environment for exporting companies. Corruption and bureaucracy can also delay or even prevent the export process (Lemessa et al., 2018).

In Asia, countries like China and India have seen significant export growth, driven by favorable government policies and strong investment in infrastructure and technology (Yang et al., 2023). However, companies in these countries still have to navigate a complex regulatory environment and face tariff barriers imposed by other nations. Despite their success, Chinese and Indian companies must also contend with concerns over quality perception and intellectual property in Western markets.

In Europe, economic integration through the European Union has facilitated trade among member states by reducing tariff barriers and standardizing many regulations. However, Brexit has introduced new uncertainties and complications for UK companies exporting to the European Union and vice versa (Utari, 2021). New tariff and non-tariff barriers have forced companies to restructure their supply chains and adapt to new regulations.

In Latin America, exporting companies face a combination of internal and external problems. Countries like Brazil and Argentina have significant export potential due to their natural and agricultural resources, but fluctuations in economic policies and monetary instability negatively affect exporting companies. Monetary devaluations can make products more competitive internationally in the short term, but inflation and economic uncertainty can undermine these benefits (Sanchez & Monforte, 2017).

In the case of Peru, exportation is a key driver of the national economy, with important products like blueberries (Montes Ninaquispe, Arbulú Ballesteros, et al., 2024) significantly contributing to GDP and employment generation. However, Peruvian companies face unique challenges that affect their survival in international markets (Ivanova, 2019). One of the main problems is dependency on a limited number of export products, primarily minerals. This dependency makes the economy vulnerable to price fluctuations in global markets and international demand. Moreover, previous research has identified the potential of agricultural products in their competitiveness and diversification (Montes Ninaquispe, Castillo-Coronado, et al., 2024).

Peru's logistical infrastructure also presents significant limitations. Deficiencies in transportation systems and port capacity can increase export costs and times, affecting the competitiveness of Peruvian products in the global market (Bossio et al., 2017). Improving infrastructure is crucial to facilitate trade and reduce export-related costs.

Another important challenge is market diversification. Currently, a large portion of Peruvian exports is directed to a limited number of countries, making companies vulnerable to changes in the trade policies of these destinations. Diversifying export markets is essential to reducing risks and increasing the resilience of Peruvian exporting companies (Montes et al., 2024).

In addition, Peruvian companies must improve their capacity for innovation and technological adaptation (Borja, 2020). Investment in research and development is relatively low compared to other countries in the region, limiting companies' ability to develop new products and improve the quality of existing ones. Fostering an environment of innovation and supporting companies in their R&D efforts is fundamental to increasing competitiveness in the international market.

The survival of exporting companies is understood as the duration of time companies remain in the international market from the time they enter until they exit. Exporting companies' survival increases with market experience (Albornoz et al., 2016). Companies that remain in the international market have specific characteristics that allow them to do so, such as an organization designed to satisfy their clients, strategic locations that enhance competitiveness, and relevant assets (Zegarra, 2019).

As companies continue producing, they generate employment, which in turn creates income and subsequent consumption, driving economic growth. It is especially important to support micro and small businesses through government programs. A well-functioning company contributes to the sustainability of the economy and its long-term development (Confecámaras, 2020).

The advantage of the survival of exporting companies is that they will be sustainable over time, generating employment consistently. This is particularly important since Peru has developed its exports, and it is essential to understand how companies work, learn from their successful experiences, and identify the factors contributing to their success to develop support programs, especially for micro and small businesses. This is particularly linked to market diversification and technological innovation (Park et al., 2019).

Employee training greatly influences a company's survival, as do strategic partnerships with universities. Companies that engage with employees holding doctoral degrees will achieve higher levels of technological innovation, better working conditions, and improved organization, which will enable greater survival (Garavito Hernández et al., 2020). Additionally, it is asserted that the average life expectancy of companies changes depending on the availability and use of technological innovation resources, especially those oriented toward marketing, management experience, and the capacity to implement mutual collaboration strategies between internal and external areas (Sánchez, 2020).

It should be noted that this indicator limits the study when new companies are considered to have been in the market for less than 10 years. These companies continue to operate but will still appear as if they had been in the market for less than 10 years.

2. Materials and Methods

To carry out this research, data from all agricultural sector export operations published by SUNAT were used, cross-referenced with INFOTRADE from PROMPERÚ and AZATRADE. This study follows a quantitative approach, as the data analyzed are numerical, with a descriptive scope as results are presented through tables and figures. The design is non-experimental since the survival variable was not manipulated, and it is cross-sectional, with 2023 taken as the base year.

For the calculation of survival, the Kaplan-Meier indicator was employed to estimate the probability that agro-export companies continue to operate in the export business and their duration in the market. This indicator allows for an assessment of the performance of companies both at the general level and among large, medium-sized, small, and micro-enterprises within the sector under study

3. Results

In Table 1, the evolution of Peruvian exporting companies is shown in terms of FOB value in thousands of USD, volume in MT, and price in USD/kg. From 2014 to 2023, all three metrics have increased steadily over time. According to Table 1, Peru's agricultural sector exports are growing, with an average annual increase in FOB value of 9%. During this study period, the highest growth occurred in [year], while the lowest was in 2015, with 4%. Export volumes, expressed in MT, experienced the highest growth in 2018, with 20%, but in 2023, there was a negative growth of -4%. Prices saw their highest increase in 2023, with 15%, while the largest negative growth was in 2018, with -4%. The average annual price growth was 2%. This price increase has contributed to a higher overall export value.

Table 1: Peruvian Agricultural Sector Exports

Year	FOB Value (Thousands USD)	Volume (MT)	Price (USD/kg)
2014	4,205,335	2,352,171	1.79
2015	4,374,012	2,419,330	1.81
2016	4,688,194	2,639,088	1.78
2017	5,118,540	2,770,409	1.85
2018	5,896,969	3,334,009	1.77
2019	6,515,039	3,522,525	1.85
2020	6,933,072	3,876,656	1.79
2021	7,979,347	4,188,102	1.91
2022	8,404,783	4,445,062	1.89
2023	9,294,787	4,268,859	2.18

Table 2 shows the evolution of the number of Peruvian agro-exporting companies, destination markets, and exported goods from 2014 to 2023. Over these years, all three have grown steadily. It is worth noting that by 2023, there were 2,309 exporting companies, 140 destination markets, and 612 exported goods.

Table 2: Number of Companies, Destination Markets, and Exported Goods in Peru's Agro-Export Sector

Year	Companies	Markets	Goods Exported
2014	1824	158	564
2015	1950	145	551
2016	1946	140	553
2017	1969	143	569
2018	1960	144	608
2019	2048	144	582
2020	2017	143	562
2021	2173	136	615
2022	2298	133	621
2023	2309	140	612

As seen in Table 3, the entry and exit rates of companies during the period from 2014 to 2022 were very similar. However, this changed in 2023, when the entry rate was only 12%, while the exit rate increased significantly to 31%. This can be attributed to the anticipated arrival of the *El Niño* phenomenon, which caused companies to take precautions and thus fail to export in 2023.

Table 3: Entry and Exit Rates of Exporting Companies

Año	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Companies	1823	1950	1946	1968	1959	2046	2017	2173	2156	1804
New Entries		636	576	528	564	607	547	624	507	210
Entry Rate		33%	30%	27%	29%	30%	27%	29%	24%	12%

Exits		509	580	506	573	520	576	468	524	562
Exit Rate		26%	30%	26%	29%	25%	29%	22%	24%	31%

In Figure 1, the net balance of exporting companies is detailed. It remained stable, but in 2023, there was a considerable decrease, with the net balance falling from 2,156 exporting companies in 2022 to 1,804 in 2023.

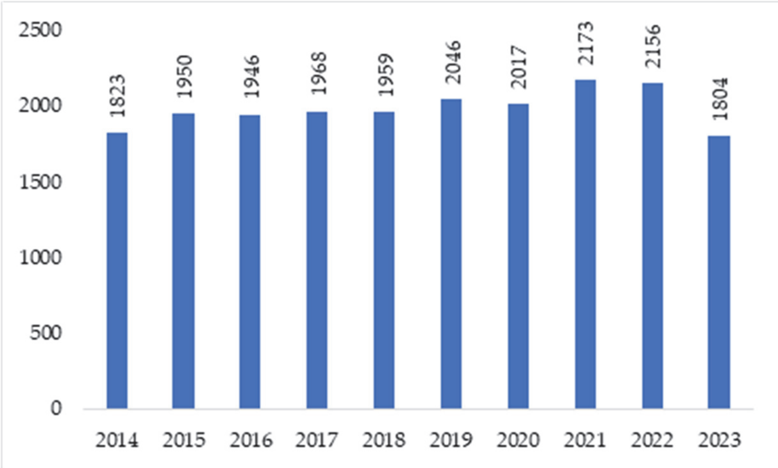

Figure 1: Net Balance of Exporting Companies (2014-2023)

In Figure 2, it can be observed that only 9% of companies manage to remain in the market for more than 10 consecutive years. Additionally, after one year, the survival rate is 0.66, meaning 37% of companies cease exporting within a year of starting operations.

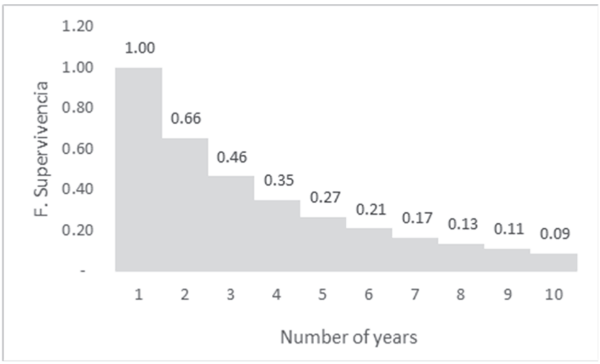

Figure 2: Survival Rate of Exporting Companies

Table 4 shows the export value in thousands of FOB USD by company size, using 2023 as the base year. Large companies represent 80.14% of Peruvian exports in FOB USD, though they are few, with only 191 exporting companies, which represents 7.88% of the total companies by size. Microenterprises have the smallest exportable FOB value, representing only 0.38% of total exports, and account for 23.35% of companies by size.

Table 4: Valor exportado y cantidad de empresas según tamaño – año base: 2023

Company Size	FOB Value (Thousands USD)	% of Total Exports	Number of Companies	% of Total Companies
Total	10,126,862	100.00	2424	100.00
Large	7,752,861	76.56	191	7.88
Medium	1,962,974	19.38	614	25.33
Small	372,297	3.68	1053	43.44
Micro	38,730	0.38	566	23.35

Note: Large company = exports ≥ USD 10 million; medium company = exports ≥ USD 1 million; small company = exports ≥ USD 100,000; microenterprise = exports < USD 100,000.

In Figure 3, it can be seen that 65% of large Peruvian agro-exporting companies remain in the market after 10 years of exporting. Additionally, the survival rate after one year of export activity is 0.98, meaning only 2% of large companies exit the export market. By the fifth year, 92% remain, but the decline becomes steeper by the sixth year, with only 85% continuing.

Large agro-exporting companies have a long-term vision of more than 10 years, a secured market for selling their production, and the financial capacity to support their operations.

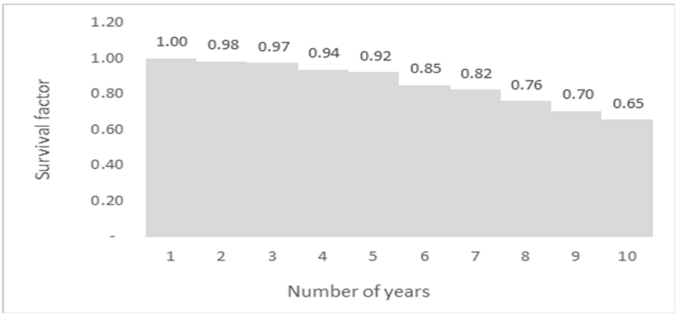

Figure 3: Survival Rate of Large Exporting Companies

According to Figure 4, 35% of medium-sized Peruvian agro-exporting companies remain in the market after 10 years of exporting. Additionally, the survival rate after one year is 0.93, meaning that only 7% of medium-sized companies exit the export market. By the fifth year, 67% remain, and by the sixth year, 59%. Medium-sized companies develop their negotiation capacity with their clients to ensure their survival by signing future production agreements. This strategy allows them to secure the sale of their production, and those that succeed in doing so ensure their continuity in the market.

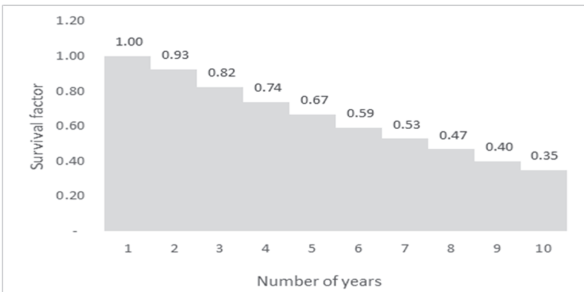

Figure 4: Survival Rate of Medium-Sized Exporting Companies (Base Year: 2023)

Figure 5 shows that only 19% of small companies in Peru's agro-export sector remain in the market after 10 years of exporting. Additionally, the survival rate after one year of export activity is 0.82, meaning that 18% of small companies exit the export market. By the fifth year, only 46% remain, and by the sixth year, only 38%. After 10 years, 81% have exited the market. Small agro-exporting companies depend heavily on their clients and have limited negotiation power. Their operations are always constrained by production capacity, they lack technical assistance, and they do not have access to financing.

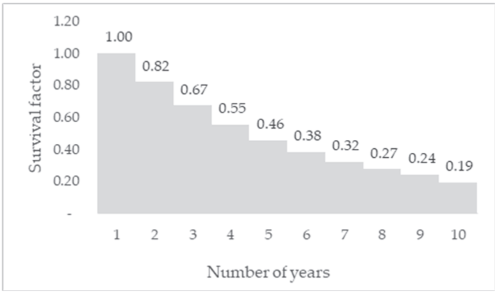

Figure 5: Survival Rate of Small Exporting Companies (Base Year: 2023)

In Figure 6, it is shown that only 7% of microenterprises in Peru's agro-export sector remain in the market after 10 years of exporting. Additionally, the survival rate after one year of export activity is 0.65, meaning that 35% of microenterprises exit the export market. By the fifth year, only 26% remain, and by the sixth year, only 21%. After 10 years, 93% of microenterprises have exited the market, with relatively few continuing. This is due to the lack of technical assistance, financing capacity, market knowledge, and awareness of industry trends.

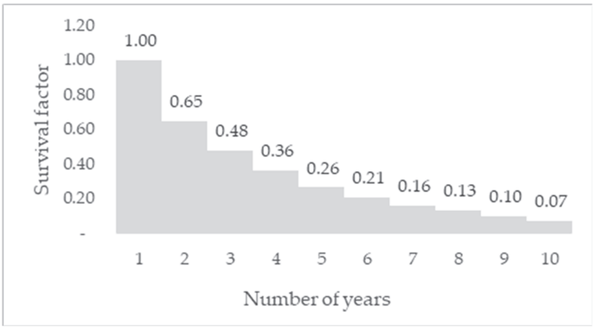

Figure 6: Survival Rate of Micro Exporting Companies (Base Year: 2023)

4. Discussion

The results obtained highlight several critical aspects that warrant discussion. Firstly, a sustained growth in the FOB value of agro-exports was observed during the period 2014–2023, which aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of exports as a driver of economic growth in developing countries (Lotfi & Karim, 2017). This increase in exports reflects the ability of Peruvian companies to compete in international markets, though it also reveals a concentration of success among a small group of large companies, while micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face greater challenges in remaining active in the long term (Zegarra, 2019).

The Kaplan-Meier curve analysis reveals that, although a significant percentage of companies enter the international market, only a small group remains active for more than ten years. This finding is consistent with Albornoz et al. (2016), who noted that survival in international markets is closely linked to accumulated experience and adaptability. The survival rate of Peruvian companies is particularly low in the early years, suggesting that businesses face significant difficulties during the initial stages of internationalization. Critical factors include market volatility, tariff and non-tariff barriers, and limited access to financing (Piñeiro, 2020; Arce, 2007).

Large agro-exporting companies, which represent a small percentage of the total, demonstrate a remarkable capacity for survival compared to SMEs. These companies account for most of the FOB export value and tend to benefit from economies of scale, greater access to capital, and better logistical infrastructures, allowing them to adapt more easily to international demands and regulations (Bossio et al., 2017). This finding is consistent with studies by Montes et al. (2024), who identified that large Peruvian agro-exporting companies exhibit greater resilience in international markets due to their capacity for innovation and product diversification.

However, small and micro-enterprises face significant challenges in remaining in the international market. The results show that a lack of access to financing, logistical limitations, and low investment in innovation and technology are determining factors that limit their competitiveness (Nugroho et al., 2019). Investment in research and development (R&D) is particularly low in Peru's agro-export sector, which affects companies' ability to innovate and improve product quality—essential elements for competing in global markets (Garavito Hernández et al., 2020). Although Peru has its National Strategic Export Plan 2025, whose main objective is the internationalization of companies through exports (MINCETUR, 2015), efforts have been made to encourage national companies to export, as it benefits the country. However, according to the results, while the number of exporting companies has been increasing, many also exit the market quickly, particularly small and micro-enterprises. This is largely due to a lack of support, especially from the government, as it is not enough to merely promote market entry but also to ensure the sustainability of businesses in the international market.

5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of Peruvian agro-export sector exports and the determination of the survival rate of companies using the Kaplan-Meier curve, it is concluded that during the analyzed period, Peru's agro-exports experienced consistent growth in terms of value and volume, significantly contributing to the country's economic development. However, this growth has been more prominent among large companies, while small and micro-enterprises face greater difficulties in remaining active in the international market. The Kaplan-Meier curve shows that only a small percentage of agro-export companies manage to remain in the market for more than ten years. The survival rate drops considerably during the early years of participation, reflecting the operational and structural challenges faced by these companies, especially smaller ones.

Additionally, large agro-exporting companies show a greater capacity for long-term survival compared to medium, small, and micro-enterprises. This suggests that company size and access to resources play a key role in competitiveness and sustainability in international markets. Companies that managed to stay in the market longer shared characteristics such as the ability to innovate, diversify products, and adapt to changing market demands. Therefore, diversification and innovation are crucial elements for improving the survival rates of companies in the sector.

Another relevant point is the need to improve access to financing and logistical infrastructure, especially for small and medium-sized companies that face significant barriers in these areas. These limitations directly affect their competitiveness and ability to expand in the international market. Addressing these issues through policies and strategies aimed at strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of companies—by providing better financial resources, developing adequate infrastructure, and supporting innovation—is essential.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Peruvian government, financial institutions, and trade promotion organizations, such as PROMPERÚ, implement specific policies and programs to strengthen the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the agro-export sector. Firstly, improving access to financing is suggested, offering more favorable conditions and credit lines that allow SMEs to cover initial export costs and encourage investment in technological innovation. Additionally, it is crucial to develop the country's logistics infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, to reduce export costs and times, thereby increasing the competitiveness of Peruvian products in the global market. Furthermore, it is recommended to promote training and technical advisory programs that guide companies in market and product diversification, reducing their dependence on a limited number of trade destinations. Finally, it is suggested to foster strategic alliances with universities and research centers to encourage innovation and improve the quality of agro-export products, facilitating the sustainability and long-term growth of companies. Likewise, despite the existence of the *Ruta Exportadora* program, which aims to strengthen exporting companies, technical assistance is not effectively reaching small and micro-enterprises.

In addition to the recommendations directed at the government, agro-exporting companies are advised to implement product and market diversification strategies. This involves identifying new business opportunities in emerging markets and adapting their products to meet the specific needs and regulations of those destinations. Companies are also encouraged to invest in technological innovation, as the adoption of advanced technologies and continuous improvement in product quality can enhance their competitiveness in the international market. Collaboration with universities and research centers is key to accessing R&D resources that enable the development of higher value-added products tailored to global demands. It is also essential to leverage the *Centers for Productive Innovation and Technology Transfer* by developing technologies specifically aimed at supporting less advantaged companies.

Moreover, educational institutions should strengthen partnerships with the agro-export sector to offer specific training programs in areas such as business management, exports, and the handling of new technologies. This will allow companies to have a more skilled workforce capable of facing the challenges of the international market.

Finally, international organizations and chambers of commerce are encouraged to facilitate networking spaces and participation in international trade fairs, where companies can establish contacts, learn about new trends, and access business opportunities in global markets. These organizations can also offer mentoring programs and technical advisory services to help companies improve their market entry strategies and optimize their export processes. Likewise, it is recommended to improve the country's logistical infrastructure, focusing on reducing export costs and enhancing international connectivity.

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