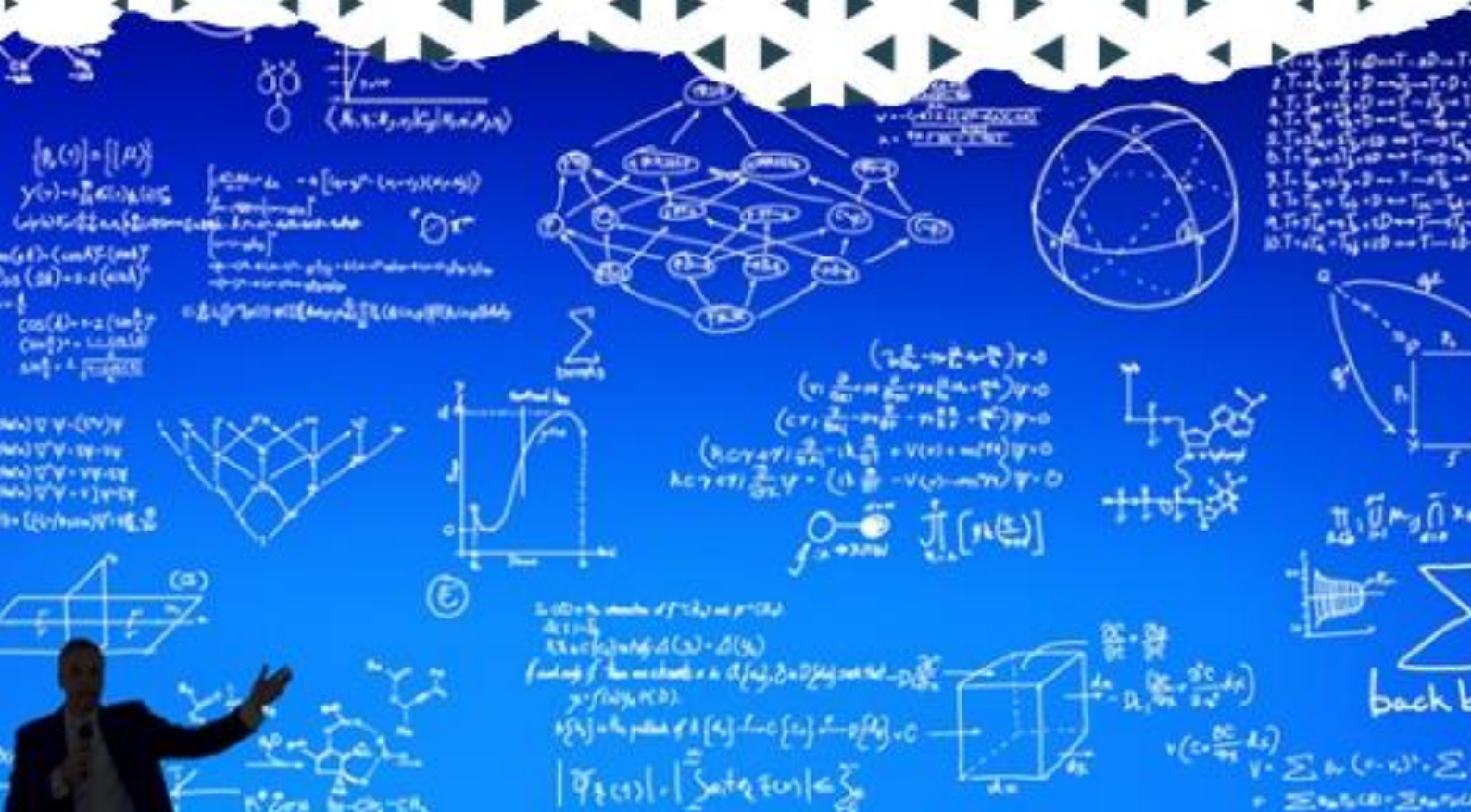




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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN THE GRAIN PRODUCTS COMPLEX OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT. The article examines the processes of forming entrepreneurial structures and innovation ecosystems in the grain products complex of the Republic of Uzbekistan under conditions of grain market liberalization and the implementation of state policies aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. The study identifies key barriers to the development of innovative entrepreneurship within the sector and determines promising directions for the formation of sustainable agro-industrial clusters.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystem, grain products complex, small and medium-sized enterprises, agro-industrial cluster, Uzbekistan, liberalization, flour-milling industry.

The grain products complex of the Republic of Uzbekistan is currently undergoing a qualitative transformation of its entrepreneurial environment. The government's transition from state regulation to market-based grain pricing, implemented on June 1, 2022, created broad opportunities for private business development. In recent years, approximately 160 private grain-processing enterprises have commenced operations in the country, and by 2022 private millers accounted for 54% of the 3.5 million tons of flour produced nationwide [1]. This process demonstrates the emergence of a competitive entrepreneurial ecosystem in an industry that was previously subject to strict state control.

The government actively creates institutional conditions for entrepreneurship development within the agro-industrial sector. Presidential Decree No. UP-50 dated March 19, 2025, "On Measures to Increase the Role of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses in the Economy," provides for the establishment of 16 specialized agricultural companies, the creation of 9 modern agro-industrial enterprises, and the implementation of at least 200 startup projects involving small business entities with the support of the National Venture Fund "UzVC" [2]. For enterprises operating in the grain products industry, particular importance is attached to accelerated VAT refund mechanisms and access to project offices designed to facilitate rapid industrial development.

The cluster model of production organization has become a key instrument for building innovation ecosystems within the grain industry. Presidential Resolution No. PP-214 dated July 5, 2023, "On Additional Measures to Ensure Employment Through the Development of Cotton-Textile and Grain Clusters," institutionalized the creation of integrated production and marketing associations connecting grain producers, processing enterprises, logistics operators, and retail distributors into a unified value chain [3]. The cluster approach enables small and medium-sized enterprises to gain access to infrastructure, technologies, and markets that would otherwise remain inaccessible under isolated operating conditions.

The Innovation Development Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 established target indicators directly affecting the grain products sector. These include a threefold increase in the number of innovation infrastructure entities (technology parks, technology transfer centers, business incubators, and accelerators), an increase in the number of domestic industrial enterprises engaged in technological



innovation to 600 units, and a fourfold rise in employment generated through innovative entrepreneurship [4]. For grain-processing enterprises, these objectives imply a transition from simple reproduction toward an innovation-driven development model involving the introduction of resource-saving technologies, digital production management systems, and new product lines.

At the same time, entrepreneurship development in the grain products complex faces several systemic barriers. Insufficient internal and borrowed financial resources, difficulties in obtaining long-term loans, and the lack of liquid collateral significantly limit the ability of small flour-milling enterprises to acquire modern high-tech equipment [5]. The Comprehensive Program for Continuous Support of Small Businesses (Presidential Resolution No. 306 dated September 14, 2023) provides for concessional loans with terms of up to seven years and amounts of up to UZS 1.5 billion, as well as grant financing for innovation commercialization projects of up to UZS 2 billion under state scientific development programs [6].

Thus, the grain products industry of Uzbekistan is creating favorable conditions for the establishment of a comprehensive innovation-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem that includes a competitive grain-processing market, state support mechanisms for small and medium-sized enterprises, a cluster-based production model, and institutional innovation infrastructure. Further development of the sector requires the synchronization of entrepreneurship support measures with national innovation development goals and environmental modernization initiatives. Such an approach will ensure sustainable growth in the competitiveness of Uzbek grain-product manufacturers in both domestic and international markets.

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