Research on Sales Strategies for Unsold Agricultural Products

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Abstract: The issue of unsold agricultural products constrains the development of rural economy and the increase of farmers' income. Research indicates that the causes of unsold agricultural products involve multiple links including production, circulation, market, and policy. At the production end, there are problems such as blind planting, backward technology, and lack of standards. The circulation link is restricted by high logistics costs, multiple intermediate levels, and insufficient warehousing technology. The market end faces challenges like demand forecasting deviations, information asymmetry, and weak brand power. The policy environment has issues such as insufficient precision in support measures and the impact of sudden risks. In response to these problems, this study proposes a systematic sales strategy: enhancing product value through standardized production and deep processing, establishing a differentiated pricing and dynamic price adjustment mechanism, expanding e-commerce and direct sales channels to reduce circulation costs, and utilizing advertising and public welfare marketing to increase market awareness. The implementation of these strategies requires the integration of technological, policy, and market resources to promote precise matching of supply and demand, providing practical references for solving the problem of unsold agricultural products.

Keywords: Unsold Agricultural Products; Sales Strategies; Advertising

1. Introduction

In recent years, the phenomenon of unsold agricultural products has occurred frequently, with large quantities of fruits, vegetables, and grains piling up in fields. This not only causes a waste of resources but also affects farmers' enthusiasm for production. With the upgrading of consumption and intensified market competition, traditional sales models struggle to adapt to changes in market demand. Issues such as the long agricultural production cycle, fragmented industrial chains, and weak anti-risk capabilities, when combined with the impacts of natural disasters and market fluctuations, further amplify the risk of unsold agricultural products. Existing research mostly focuses on analyzing the causes of unsold agricultural products, with insufficient exploration of systematic solutions, especially a lack of implementable strategic designs. This study adopts a whole-industry-chain perspective, combines the characteristics of agricultural production with market laws, and constructs a four-dimensional strategy system covering products, prices, channels, and promotions. By improving quality standards and extending the value chain through deep processing, balancing supply and demand contradictions through differentiated pricing, shortening the circulation link by relying on e-commerce and direct connections between farms and supermarkets, and expanding market influence through new media and public welfare marketing, the strategy design emphasizes both short-term emergency responses and long-term development. It highlights the synergistic effects of policy guidance, technological empowerment, and market-driven forces, aiming to provide decision-making support for local governments, agricultural entities, and relevant parties in the industrial chain, and assisting in achieving the multi-win goals of increasing farmers' income, upgrading industries, and stabilizing the market.

2. Analysis of the Causes of Unsold Agricultural Products

2.1 Factors in the Production Link

Blind Following in Planting Leading to Overproduction: Agricultural production decisions lack scientific guidance. Some

farmers rely on short-term market conditions to adjust their planting plans. When the price of a certain agricultural product rises significantly, nearby farmers quickly expand their planting areas, ignoring the market demand capacity. This phenomenon is particularly evident in crops with long storage periods, such as garlic and ginger[1]. Due to the long growth cycle of agricultural products, by the time similar products hit the market, the market supply-demand relationship has already reversed. The excess production cannot be promptly digested, ultimately leading to a sharp drop in prices and a large backlog of products in fields or warehouses. Such problems are more pronounced in areas with poor information access, where farmers find it difficult to obtain cross-regional market dynamics, exacerbating regional risks of unsold agricultural products.

Backward Planting Technology Affecting Product Quality: Traditional farming methods still dominate, and the agricultural technology promotion system is inadequate in some regions. Farmers have low acceptance of new varieties and continue to use outdated methods such as high-density planting and excessive fertilization, resulting in decreased crop resilience. Frequent pests and diseases force farmers to increase pesticide use, but without scientific guidance, this can easily lead to excessive pesticide residues. Unstable quality directly affects consumers' willingness to purchase, making it difficult to tap into the mid-to-high-end market. Some specialty agricultural products, due to poor appearance, cannot enter high-end supermarkets or export channels and can only be sold at low prices in the local market, further compressing profit margins.

Lack of Standardized Production and Quality Control: The small-scale farming model leads to significant differences in the specifications of the same type of agricultural products. Taking fruits as an example, there are no unified grading standards for indicators such as single fruit weight, sugar content, and appearance defects. Buyers need to invest additional manpower in sorting, indirectly increasing procurement costs. The popularization rate of pesticide residue detection equipment is low at the grassroots level, and some farmers use prohibited or restricted drugs in pursuit of higher yields. To avoid quality disputes, large buyers often choose to cooperate with large-scale production bases, forcing individual farmers' products to be diverted to low-end wholesale markets, narrowing their sales channels.

2.2 Factors in the Circulation Link

Inadequate Logistics and Distribution Systems: Road construction in remote mountainous areas lags behind, making it difficult for large transport vehicles to pass. Fresh agricultural products need to be transferred multiple times using small trucks, increasing the damage rate during loading and unloading. The cold chain logistics network coverage is insufficient, and normal temperature transportation leads to dehydration and wilting of leafy vegetables and squeezing damage of berry fruits. Some townships lack professional packaging sites, and farmers directly use simple containers such as woven bags and bamboo baskets, resulting in poor product protection during transportation. Logistics costs account for a high proportion of the terminal selling price, forcing buyers to lower the procurement price at the production site, creating a vicious cycle[2].

Excessive Intermediate Links Driving Up Costs: The traditional circulation chain includes multiple levels of intermediaries, with each level adding a markup usually ranging from 10% to 30%. The gap between the field procurement price and the supermarket retail price can reach several times, with consumers paying high prices without benefiting the producers. Information opacity puts farmers at a disadvantage, with some intermediaries using information gaps to buy at low prices and sell at high prices. Although e-commerce platforms shorten the circulation link, comprehensive costs such as logistics, packaging, and platform commissions are still higher than those of traditional channels, making it difficult for small and medium-sized farmers to bear the initial investment pressure.

Insufficient Warehousing Facilities and Preservation Technologies: The coverage rate of pre-cooling equipment at production sites is less than 30%, and most fruits and vegetables are piled up in the open air after harvest. High temperatures accelerate respiration, leading to the loss of nutrients and shriveled skins. Potatoes, onions, and other storage-resistant crops are prone to sprouting or mildewing due

to improper humidity control in warehouses. Advanced technologies such as controlled atmosphere storage and vacuum pre-cooling are only applied in large-scale bases, while ordinary farmers still rely on traditional storage methods such as cellars and simple sheds[3]. During periods of unsold agricultural products, there is a lack of emergency storage capacity, forcing a large amount of agricultural products to be sold at low prices or destroyed on-site.

2.3 Factors in the Market Link

Inaccurate Market Demand Forecasting: There is a natural contradiction between the agricultural production cycle and the pace of market changes. It usually takes 3 to 8 months from planting to harvesting, while consumption trends may undergo fundamental changes during this period. The fluctuations in the catering industry's demand have a significant impact on agricultural products. For example, a reduction in orders from catering chains can directly lead to the unsold status of specific ingredients. Farmers lack professional analytical tools and mainly rely on neighborhood exchanges or local newspapers for information, resulting in decision-making lagging behind actual market changes[4]. The similarity of planting structures across regions exacerbates the risk of supply-demand mismatches.

Intense Market Competition and Information Asymmetry: The national logistics network enables products from different production areas to compete in the same market. When Yunnan leafy vegetables and Shandong greenhouse vegetables enter the North China market simultaneously, differences in transportation costs directly affect pricing space. Farmers have limited understanding of the price formation mechanism in the terminal market and cannot adjust their shipment rhythm based on consumer feedback. Buyers use their information advantage to conduct cross-regional price comparisons, further squeezing the profits of production sites. Some regions experience vicious competition, with blind price reductions leading to industry-wide losses and undermining the sustainable development of the industry.

Monotonous Marketing Methods and Weak Brand Awareness: Most primary agricultural products are sold in bulk through production-area wholesale markets, with packaging only indicating the category and weight, lacking value-added information such as origin traceability and quality certification. The construction of regional public brands lags behind, and successful cases such as Wuchang rice and Yangcheng Lake hairy crabs are difficult to replicate. Small and medium-sized farmers adapt slowly to new channels such as e-commerce live streaming and community group buying and still rely on buyers coming to their doorsteps for procurement. The development of deep-processed products is insufficient, making it impossible to extend the sales cycle through forms such as canned food and freeze-dried products, missing opportunities to increase added value.[5]

2.4 Factors in the Policy and Environmental Link

Insufficient Policy Support and Precision: Agricultural subsidies are mostly concentrated on the production front end, such as seeds and agricultural machinery purchases, with few support policies for post-production commercialization processing. The application threshold for subsidies for cold chain facility construction is high, requiring matching conditions such as land and funds, which are difficult for small-scale cooperatives to meet. The content of e-commerce training courses is highly homogeneous and fails to design practical operation plans based on the characteristics of local products. Some poverty alleviation projects blindly introduce crop varieties that are not suitable for the local climate, resulting in weak product competitiveness due to technical deficiencies in the later stages.

Impact of Natural Disasters and Emergencies: Climate change increases the frequency of extreme weather events, such as late spring frosts, droughts, and hailstorms, leading to crop reductions. For example, the flood disaster in the Yangtze River Basin in 2020 caused millions of mu of farmland to be completely destroyed, and the crops replanted after the disaster had reduced quality due to insufficient growth periods. Sudden public health events disrupted logistics, and export-oriented agricultural products faced order cancellations. The escalation of international trade barriers increased the difficulty of inspection and quarantine, forcing some fruits and vegetables with strict

preservation requirements to be diverted to the domestic market, impacting the domestic market balance.

3. Specific Sales Strategies for Unsold Agricultural Products

3.1 Product Strategies

Enhancing Product Quality and Standardization: Agricultural production entities should introduce modern agricultural technology guidance and optimize planting management processes. By establishing standardized planting manuals, they can regulate operations such as fertilization, irrigation, and pest and disease control. Promote the cultivation of crop varieties with strong disease resistance and high market recognition to reduce the problems of excessive pesticide and fertilizer use. Improve the agricultural product quality inspection system and establish rapid inspection stations at production sites to ensure that indicators such as pesticide residues and heavy metal content meet national standards[6]. Gradually implement a grading and classification system, dividing products into different grades based on indicators such as size, color, and sugar content to meet the needs of different consumer groups.

Developing Deep-Processed Agricultural Products: Explore diversified processing paths for primary agricultural products. Grain crops can be transformed into convenient foods such as instant rice noodles and multigrain meal replacements. Fruits and vegetables can be processed into preserved fruits, freeze-dried slices, NFC juices, and other products with extended shelf lives. Oil crops can be refined into high-end edible oils or cosmetic raw materials. During the processing, attention should be paid to retaining nutrients and applying for qualifications such as green food and organic certification to increase product premium space. Collaborate with scientific research institutions to develop new processing technologies, such as using ultra-high pressure sterilization technology to produce additive-free preserved foods.

Building Characteristic Agricultural Product Brands: It is necessary to tap into regional cultural connotations and construct differentiated brand images. Protect the intellectual property rights of specialty products through geographical indication certification, such as typical cases like Yantai apples and Gannan navel oranges. Design a unified visual identification system, including elements such as brand logos, packaging designs, and promotional slogans. Establish a brand story system, highlighting the advantages of the production area's ecological environment, traditional craftsmanship, or cultural history. Jointly organize brand promotion activities with local governments, invite media and buyers to conduct on-site inspections of production bases, and enhance market trust.

3.2 Pricing Strategies

Combining Cost-Oriented Pricing and Market-Oriented Pricing: Establish a transparent cost accounting mechanism to accurately calculate production costs such as land rent, agricultural input costs, and labor management. Refer to the market average prices of similar products and determine the benchmark price range in combination with quality differences. For high-end categories such as certified organic products and geographical indication products, the premium can be appropriately increased. Continuously monitor the price changes of competitors and adopt flexible pricing strategies during the peak sales season to avoid blindly following price reductions and causing profit losses[7].

Differentiated Pricing and Promotional Pricing Strategies: Implement layered pricing based on sales channels and customer groups. High-end packaged products for supermarket channels can adopt higher prices, while large orders from community group buying can be given bulk discounts. Offer first-order discounts for new users on e-commerce platforms and issue full-reduction coupons to old customers to increase repurchase rates. Design time-limited special offer activities during the concentrated listing period of agricultural products and use pre-sale models to lock in some orders in advance, alleviating warehouse pressure. For products with a high risk of unsold status, try the "buy-one-get-one-free" strategy, such as buying fruits and getting deep-processed fruit jams for free.

Establishing a Dynamic Price Adjustment Mechanism: Construct a market price early warning system that integrates information sources such as the price monitoring platform

of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the market data of large wholesale markets. When a continuous decline in the prices of similar products is detected, promptly initiate an emergency price adjustment plan. Set up an intelligent price adjustment module on fresh food e-commerce platforms to automatically adjust promotional efforts based on inventory turnover rates. Sign floating price agreements with buyers, agreeing to adjust the supply price in proportion according to market fluctuations to achieve risk sharing.

3.3 Channel Strategies

Expanding Traditional Sales Channels: Strengthen long-term cooperation with agricultural product wholesale markets and establish fixed supply counters to increase exposure. Participate in regional production-marketing docking meetings and sign direct procurement agreements with supermarket chains to reduce intermediate links. Set up convenient sales points in urban communities and adopt the model of "picked today, delivered tomorrow" to ensure product freshness. Explore the order agriculture model and sign guaranteed procurement contracts with catering enterprises, school canteens, and other large customers during the planting season to avoid the risk of unsold products in advance[8].

Actively Developing E-commerce Channels: Form a professional e-commerce operation team and open official flagship stores on platforms such as Taobao and JD.com. Use short-video platforms to carry out live streaming sales, showing the planting environment and harvesting process to enhance consumer trust. Develop WeChat mini-programs to build a private domain traffic pool and cultivate loyal customer groups through a member points system. Cooperate with community group buying platforms and adopt the "produce-based-on-sales" model to organize harvesting according to order quantities, reducing the risk of inventory backlog. Build a cloud warehouse system at the production site to achieve nearby sorting and shipping of e-commerce orders, shortening logistics timeliness.

Carrying Out Direct Sales Models Such as Farm-Supermarket docking and Farm-Enterprise docking: Establish a large-scale collection and distribution center to uniformly meet the procurement needs of large supermarkets. Package products according to supermarket quality standards and provide QR code traceability services. Build raw material direct supply bases with food processing enterprises to customize primary processed products of specific specifications. Explore the "production base + central kitchen" model to directly deliver agricultural products to the pre-processing centers of catering enterprises. Develop order-based export agriculture and connect with cross-border trading companies to meet international market demands.

3.4 Promotional Strategies

Advertising Strategies: Produce high-quality promotional videos to showcase the ecological environment of the production area and product characteristics on channels such as TV stations and high-speed rail media. Place information flow advertisements on platforms such as Toutiao and Douyin to precisely reach target consumer groups. Write soft news reports telling the stories of new farmers' entrepreneurship and spread them through authoritative media such as Xinhua News Agency and Farmer's Daily. Design creative posters for display at subway stations and bus stops, highlighting the core selling points of the products. Collaborate with food bloggers to develop agricultural product recipes and launch cooking challenge competitions on social media to expand the dissemination effect.

Personal Selling and Participation in Agricultural Product Exhibitions: Train professional sales personnel to carry out in-depth community tasting and promotion activities. Set up promotional counters in large supermarkets and arrange personnel to explain the differentiated advantages of the products. Regularly participate in exhibitions such as the China International Agricultural Products Trade Fair and the Green Food Exposition every year to directly connect with national buyer resources. Hold product tasting events at the exhibitions and invite industry experts to evaluate the quality. Collect customer feedback information and promptly improve product packaging and service processes[9].

Public Relations and Public Welfare Marketing Activities: Jointly carry out love-assisting-farmers activities with the Red Cross Society and charitable organizations, donating a portion of sales to rural education

projects. Launch a public welfare plan during the school opening season, such as "donating a book to a mountain primary school for every box of fruit sold." Hold agricultural product cultural festivals and design interactive projects such as parent-child picking and farming experience to enhance consumer stickiness. Cooperate with tourist attractions to develop "agriculture + tourism" routes, where tourists can place orders online after visiting the bases. In the event of natural disasters leading to unsold agricultural products, promptly launch "charity sales" activities to obtain public support through media dissemination.

4. Conclusion

The essence of unsold agricultural products is the concentrated manifestation of the failure of coordination in various links of the industrial chain. The sales strategy system proposed in this study systematically responds to core contradictions such as the blindness at the production end, high losses at the circulation end, and low efficiency at the market end through four paths: product quality improvement, price optimization, channel innovation, and promotion upgrading. Standardized production and brand building can enhance the bargaining power of products, dynamic pricing mechanisms help balance supply and demand fluctuations, e-commerce direct connections and farm-enterprise docking can effectively compress intermediate costs, and new media marketing opens up national market channels for regional specialty agricultural products. The future implementation of these strategies requires strengthening support in three aspects: First, improve the agricultural big data platform to achieve intelligent decision-making in planting planning, price early warning, and logistics scheduling; second, increase investment in infrastructure such as cold chain warehousing and grading packaging to enhance the anti-risk resilience of the industrial chain; third, cultivate new-type agricultural business entities and improve market response speed through organizational forms such as cooperatives and family farms[10].

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