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Potential and Determinants of Agricultural Integration between Egypt and the Arab Countries

The majority of Arab countries face many economic and political risks due to the insufficient agricultural production that meets their food needs, where these countries mainly depend on the main producing countries in the world to secure these needs despite the fact that Arab countries have the agricultural economic resources and the relative and competitive advantage in producing many agricultural products that allow them to achieve better levels of food security. Egypt tops the lead among the Arab countries in terms of the amount of production for many agricultural and animal products; however it achieves a deficit in some agricultural products, which requires activating the Egyptian Arab agricultural integration and exploiting mutual capabilities in enhancing food security in Egypt and Arab countries. The research aimed at estimating the productive capacity of the Arab countries for different crops and animal products, analysing the structure of Arab agricultural trade, and identifying prospects and determinants of agricultural integration between Egypt and Arab countries. The results revealed that, most Arab countries suffer from a large deficit in grains, legumes, meat and poultry, while achieving a surplus in vegetables, milk and eggs, and achieving self-sufficiency or close to achieve it in all of oil crops, fruits, roots and tubers during the average period 2013-2017. The results indicated also that the surplus of some agricultural products in Egypt represents export opportunities to Arab countries while the deficit represents import opportunities for Egypt from Arab countries. The results also showed that the crops which represent opportunities for Egyptian exports are rice (cereals), dry beans (legumes), peanuts (oil crops), oranges, grapes, mandarin, lemon and dates (fruits), onions, tomatoes and green beans (vegetables), Potatoes (roots and tubers) with estimated surplus of about 91.1, 58.4, 8.1, 878.4, 85.9, 32.5, 24.9, 19.6, 448.9, 55.8, 26.2 and 394.7 thousand tons respectively as an average during the period 2013-2017. As for the crops that represent opportunities for Egyptian imports, it is sesame (oil crops), bananas and apples (fruits), milk and fish, where the deficit amounted to about 9.1, 24.6, 214.7, 71.5 and 221.2 thousand tons respectively as an average during the period of 2013-2017. The results revealed that the most important obstacles facing agricultural integration between Egypt and Arab countries are the weakness and the similarity of the agricultural production structures of the Arab countries, the



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absence and the weakness of the institutional framework necessary to manage the agricultural integration process, and the absence of political stability in some Arab countries which delayed the completion of many agricultural integration projects. The study recommends the necessity of directing Egypt's agricultural surplus to Arab countries that face a deficit instead of exporting them to other countries, and *vice versa* in the case of surplus in Arab countries, each Arab country specializes in crops and production that have a comparative advantage in it, which helps to increase the level of integration and interdependence among Arab countries, and finally reviving some of the joint Arab agricultural projects.

Keywords: Arab agricultural integration, foreign trade, transportation model.