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Success Stories of Algerian SMEs in International Markets

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Abstract
This study examines the success stories of a number of Algerian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the agri-food sector that have achieved remarkable performance. It is important to acknowledge that these SMEs have contributed significantly to the country's food security, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, they have demonstrated notable success in export activities.
The findings of this study indicate that accessing and succeeding in international markets is not exclusively reserved for large corporations, nor can it be considered an activity limited to developed countries. In practice, it has been shown that several SMEs in developing countries, such as Algeria, have successfully penetrated international markets.
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Introduction

In a context where the globalization of trade increasingly shapes the global economy, firms are compelled to expand their activities beyond national borders. Within this dynamic, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in fostering economic growth and promoting the international expansion of their home countries. In Algeria, several SMEs have emerged as significant actors on the international stage, demonstrating their ability to excel in export activities and to compete effectively in highly competitive markets.
However, data from INSEE and MOCI highlight that SMEs possess substantial potential to play a key role in the development of a country's international trade and can significantly contribute to export expansion. Nowadays, an increasing number of SMEs are gradually engaging in international activities (Staden, 2022), with some adopting this orientation from their inception as "Born Global" firms. Exporting is widely regarded as a key driver of development (Saridakis et al., 2019), reflecting

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the level of competitiveness of both firms and nations (Chandler, 1986; Hartmann, 1998).

Despite the opportunities offered by globalization, it is worth noting that relatively few firms consider internationalization as a strategic necessity. In this context, this article focuses on presenting a selection of Algerian SMEs operating in the agri-food sector that have successfully expanded into international markets, despite the constraints and complexities encountered in the global business environment.

Accordingly, this research seeks to address the following question: What are the main factors explaining the international success of Algerian SMEs?

Furthermore, this study examines the determinants of SMEs' international success and proposes strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing their competitiveness in foreign markets.

SMEs and Food Security

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a fundamental role in the production and distribution of food products. They contribute significantly to global food availability by ensuring sufficient supply across markets. Firms operating in the agri-food industry are primarily responsible for producing and processing food products and delivering them to consumers at affordable prices while maintaining high quality standards.

Moreover, many of these enterprises are actively engaged in research and development (R&D) to introduce innovative technological processes, thereby improving productivity, product quality, and food safety (Lwesya, 2021). SMEs are also well positioned to offer local, natural, and minimally processed food products, which are often considered more hygienic and sustainable than imported alternatives.

In this regard, it is essential for agri-food enterprises to collaborate closely with regulatory authorities and international organizations to ensure that food production and distribution are conducted in a fair, stable, and sustainable manner. This includes promoting sustainable agricultural practices, reducing food waste, and ensuring fair compensation for agricultural workers.

Figure 1: SMEs' Contribution to Food Security



Source : https://www.fao.org/statistics/fr/

Furthermore, any firm seeking to achieve sustainable success is required to establish robust management and governance structures to ensure food security and guarantee the hygienic quality of food products throughout the entire production chain. This implies the need to train highly qualified personnel capable of rigorously monitoring and enforcing quality and food safety standards.

In addition, it is essential to ensure sustainable production systems that allow for the continuous and sufficient availability of food products throughout the year. Accordingly, firms are encouraged to adopt sustainable production practices that preserve natural resources while minimizing the environmental impact of food production. This involves implementing efficient agricultural processes, reducing food waste, developing and applying environmentally friendly technologies, and promoting sustainable consumption patterns (CAFLEX, 2022).

Moreover, firms can contribute to food security by engaging in research and development (R&D) aimed at designing more efficient and cost-effective production processes. This can be achieved, for instance, through the adoption of biotechnology to enhance agricultural productivity, the development of functional foods to meet specific nutritional needs, and the implementation of more efficient production techniques.

Food Security as a Driver of Export Performance

Undoubtedly, food availability and food safety constitute essential drivers that facilitate the export of large volumes of food products (Kelekci, 2020). However, it should be noted that consumers worldwide have become increasingly demanding regarding food safety standards and now require more sustainable and higher-quality food products (Wodon, 2011). Consequently, firms capable of meeting these rising expectations are more likely to succeed in international markets (Cheriet & Guillaumin, 2013).

It is important to emphasize that food safety has become a prerequisite for any firm intending to engage in the export of food products. Increasingly stringent regulations and standards in terms of food safety are being established by regulatory authorities and competent organizations to ensure consumer protection. Only firms that comply with these rigorous requirements can access and compete in profitable export markets.

In this context, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system, which is a widely recognized method for ensuring food safety, as well as the international standard ISO 22000, which governs food safety management systems across the entire food chain, can be implemented by firms to demonstrate compliance with international food safety standards. These certifications also contribute to enhancing firms' reputation and strengthening their competitive positioning (Abiad & Meho, 2018).

Furthermore, food availability can represent a significant competitive advantage for entering international food markets. Firms with substantial and diversified production capacities are better positioned to offer a wide range of food products that meet the diverse needs of global consumers. In addition, large-scale production can contribute to reducing operational costs and improving price competitiveness.

Finally, the sustainability and stability of food production are key determinants in the export process. Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environmental and social implications of food production. Firms that adopt sustainable practices such as efficient management of natural resources, reduction of greenhouse gas

emissions, and preservation of biodiversity are more likely to address these concerns and enhance their competitiveness in international markets.

Exports in Algeria

According to data published by the National Agency for the Promotion of Foreign Trade, Algerian exports have experienced a contrasted evolution in recent years, largely driven by fluctuations in hydrocarbon prices and external shocks, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic (ALGEX, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

In 2019, national exports reached approximately USD 38.4 billion, before declining to USD 27.3 billion in 2020 (−28.8%), due to the combined effects of the global health crisis and the collapse in hydrocarbon prices (World Bank, 2022).

A gradual recovery was observed in 2021, with exports reaching around USD 35 billion**,** followed by an exceptional rebound in 2022, when exports rose to approximately USD 60–62 billion, largely driven by the increase in energy prices within a specific geopolitical context (IMF, 2023; Bank of Algeria, 2023).

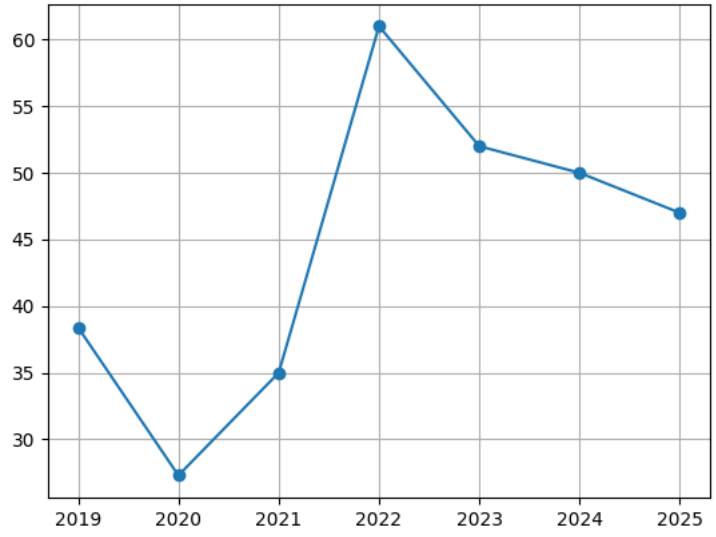
In 2023, exports remained at a relatively high level, ranging between USD 50 and 55 billion**,** despite a stabilization in global energy markets (ONS, 2024). For 2024, estimates place exports between USD 48 and 52 billion, reflecting a gradual normalization of international prices (World Bank, 2025).

Projections for 2025 indicate that exports are expected to remain within a range of USD 45 to 50 billion**,** confirming the structural dependence on hydrocarbons, despite ongoing efforts to diversify the economy (IMF, 2025).

The structure of Algerian exports remains largely dominated by hydrocarbons, which account for more than 90% of export revenues, although non-hydrocarbon exports have shown relative growth, reaching approximately USD 5 to 7 billion between 2023 and 2024 (ALGEX, 2024).

Algeria’s main trading partners continue to be concentrated in Europe (Italy, Spain, and France), as well as in the United States and China, with a growing orientation toward African markets in line with regional economic integration strategies (World Bank, 2024; ALGEX, 2023).

Figure 1 : Evolution of Exports in Algeria (2018–2025)



Source : ALGEX.dz

In conclusion, although Algerian exports have experienced a period of relative instability in recent years due to various unforeseen events-such as the COVID-19 pandemic and fluctuations in global commodity prices-Algeria continues to make significant efforts to diversify its export portfolio and to promote domestic products in international markets..

Profile of Export-Oriented Algerian SMEs

Algerian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engaged in export activities are generally present across a wide range of international markets. A significant proportion of their sales volume is generated through the products and services they offer abroad. The main characteristics of export-oriented Algerian SMEs are outlined below:

- Sectors of activity: Algerian exporting SMEs operate across diverse sectors, including agri-food, pharmaceuticals, textiles and apparel, construction, energy production, and other industries.
- Firm size: These enterprises are typically small to medium-sized, employing fewer than 250 workers.
- Export markets: Algerian SMEs primarily export their products to markets in Africa, Europe, Asia, as well as to several Arab countries.
- Exported products: They offer a wide range of products across various sectors, notably in agri-food, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, chemicals, and related industries.

It should be acknowledged that export-oriented SMEs in Algeria face several constraints, mainly related to the complexity of export procedures, limited competitiveness of exportable products, and insufficient financial support and institutional backing.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, Algerian exporting SMEs continue to play a significant role in the national economy. They contribute to job creation, the

diversification of exports, and the development of trade relations with numerous countries worldwide.

Selected Agri-food SMEs Worldwide

This section presents a selection of small and medium-sized enterprises and small and medium-sized industries (SMEs–SMIs) that have successfully established themselves in international markets within the agri-food sector.

Figure 2 : Examples of global SMEs in the agri-food sector



Source : Raymond et al**.** Marketing International. Chenelière Education. 2018 Tc Média livres Inc.

Selected International Agri-food SMEs

- **Innocent Drinks:**
  Founded in 1999 in the United Kingdom, Innocent Drinks initially entered the local market by offering fresh beverages, particularly smoothies. Today, it is considered one of the leading companies in the fresh beverages and fruit juice sector, with a presence in more than 20 countries.
- **Chobani:**
  Established in 2005 in the United States, Chobani began by producing traditional Greek yogurt in a modest facility with limited resources. It has since expanded significantly and is now present in more than 15 countries.
- **Bel Group:**
  Founded in 1865 in France, Bel Group specializes in the production of cheese made from cow's milk. It is now recognized as one of the world's leading cheese producers, operating in over 130 countries and offering well-known brands such as *The Laughing Cow*, *Mini Babybel*, and *Boursin*.
- **Grupo Bimbo:**
  Grupo Bimbo is a Mexican company specializing in the production of bread, biscuits, and other bakery products. It distributes its products in more than 30 countries worldwide.
- **Ferrero:**
  Ferrero is an Italian company specializing in the production of chocolate and confectionery products, including well-known brands such as *Nutella*, *Kinder*, and Ferrero Rocher. The company operates in more than 170 countries worldwide.
- **Yoplait:**
  Yoplait is a French company specializing in the production of yogurt and dairy-based desserts. Its products are marketed in more than 50 countries worldwide.

- **Haribo:**
  Haribo is a German company specializing in the production of gummy confectionery, including its well-known gummy bears. The company's products are sold in more than 100 countries worldwide.
- **Nando's:**
  Founded in 1987 in South Africa, Nando's began as a small restaurant in Johannesburg specializing in flame-grilled chicken. It has since expanded internationally and is now present in more than 30 countries. The brand is known for its rich and diverse African-inspired cuisine, particularly its signature spicy marinated grilled chicken.

Reasons for the Success of Export-Oriented SMEs in Algeria

In Algeria, a significant number of SMEs operating in the agri-food sector have successfully exported their products to various countries.

Figure 3 : Export-Oriented Algerian SMEs in the Agri-food Sector



Source : ALGEX.dz

Case Study: Haddoud Salim Company

Haddoud Salim Company is an Algerian enterprise specializing in the production and commercialization of dates. Established in 1998, it is located in the city of Biskra, in southern Algeria. The company offers a wide range of high-quality dates, some of which are produced internally, while others are sourced from local producers in the region.

The company consistently ensures that its dates are cultivated, harvested, and processed in accordance with stringent quality standards, thereby guaranteeing both product quality and freshness. It has successfully expanded into international markets, particularly in Europe and Asia, due to the high quality of its products and its ability to meet the specific requirements of its customers.

Moreover, the company has developed a sustainable development strategy by collaborating with local producers to promote environmentally responsible production practices and the adoption of ethical standards. In addition, Haddoud Salim Company has successfully combined tradition and modernity by implementing advanced packaging facilities and adopting innovative packaging approaches, while maintaining rigorous quality standards to ensure superior taste and product excellence.

Case Study: NCA Rouiba

NCA Rouiba is an Algerian company founded in 1955, specializing in the production and commercialization of non-alcoholic beverages, including fruit juices, soft drinks, and energy drinks. The company is located in Rouiba, in the Algiers region of Algeria.

The company has implemented an ambitious export strategy, primarily targeting African and Middle Eastern markets. It has successfully expanded into markets such as Tunisia, Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, and Saudi Arabia, as well as certain European countries, including France and Belgium.

By investing in modern equipment and complying with international standards related to quality and food safety, NCA Rouiba has developed a strategy that ensures the consistent quality of its products. Furthermore, the company continuously strengthens its distribution network by collaborating closely with regional partners.

Case Study: Numidia

Numidia is an Algerian company established in 2007 in the Wilaya of Oran, in western Algeria. It specializes in the production and commercialization of premium extra-virgin olive oil.

The company is renowned for the high quality of its olive oil, which is produced from carefully selected olives and extracted through cold-pressing techniques. Numidia's products are certified organic and comply with international standards related to quality and food safety.

The company has successfully entered international markets, particularly in Europe and North America. Owing to the excellence of its products, Numidia has received several international awards, enhancing its reputation and visibility in global markets.

Case Study: Soummam Dairy

Soummam Dairy is an Algerian company founded in 1990 in the Wilaya of Béjaïa. It produces and markets a wide range of dairy products, including UHT milk, various types of yogurt, fresh cheeses, and ripened cheeses.

The company is also well known for its traditional fermented milk product, *Lben*, which is widely consumed across Algeria. Soummam Dairy has implemented an ambitious export strategy primarily targeting European and North African markets. It has successfully established a presence in several North African countries (Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya), as well as in European markets such as France and Italy.

The company has developed a quality assurance strategy by investing in modern equipment and ensuring compliance with international standards related to quality and food safety, thereby maintaining high product standards.

Case Study: Lesieur Cristal Algeria

Lesieur Cristal Algeria is a joint venture between Lesieur, a globally recognized French producer of edible oils, and the Algerian company Cristal. The company is considered a leading player in the agri-food sector in Algeria.

It offers a wide range of vegetable oils, including sunflower oil, olive oil, soybean oil, and corn oil. In addition, it produces vegetable fats, margarine, and other related products such as sauces, mayonnaise, and condiments. The company is also active in the production of animal feed for poultry, cattle, and sheep.

Lesieur Cristal Algeria is well known for the high quality of its products and its strong commitment to meeting customer expectations. It is also actively engaged in sustainable development initiatives, particularly through the selection of high-quality ingredients and the implementation of sustainable production and distribution practices. A significant share of its production is exported to various countries, especially in Africa and Europe.

Case Study: Bimo

Bimo is an Algerian company established in 1995 in the Wilaya of Blida. It specializes in the production of a wide range of biscuits, including sweet and savory biscuits, filled biscuits, cereal-based biscuits, as well as other bakery products.

The company has built a strong reputation in the Algerian market, largely due to the quality of its products and its commitment to customer satisfaction. Bimo also engages in social and environmental initiatives by supporting local communities and promoting sustainable manufacturing and distribution practices. Its products are exported to several European and Middle Eastern countries.

Case Study: El Boustène

El Boustène is an Algerian company founded in 2000 in the city of Béjaïa, a region renowned for the quality of its olives. The company specializes in the production of virgin olive oil derived from locally sourced olives.

It utilizes advanced technologies and modern equipment to extract high-quality oil, offering a variety of products, including extra virgin and mild olive oil. El Boustène has adopted sustainable production practices by implementing environmentally friendly cultivation and harvesting techniques.

Furthermore, the company places strong emphasis on preserving the quality and nutritional value of its products through appropriate processing and storage methods. A significant portion of its production is exported to various countries, particularly in Europe and Asia, where it is highly appreciated for its taste and nutritional quality. El Boustène is also widely distributed across the Algerian market and is recognized as one of the leading producers of premium olive oil.

Case Study: EPE Agrodiv

EPE Agrodiv is an Algerian company established in 2008, primarily dedicated to the production of high-quality agricultural products, including fruits and vegetables, through the adoption of modern cultivation and packaging techniques.

The company offers a wide range of agricultural products such as potatoes, onions, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, and zucchini. To achieve this, it employs advanced, efficient, and sustainable farming technologies, including drip irrigation systems and greenhouse cultivation, ensuring high productivity and superior product quality.

Some of EPE Agrodiv's products are exported to various countries, particularly in Europe and Asia. The company has built a strong reputation based on the high quality of its products and its ability to supply significant volumes of fresh vegetables throughout the year.

Conclusion

In conclusion, export-oriented SMEs in Algeria can be regarded as a key driver of economic development. These enterprises contribute to economic growth and social development by creating employment opportunities, strengthening the local agricultural sector, and fostering international trade partnerships.

Algerian SMEs have primarily focused on the production and export of agri-food products and have successfully established themselves in international markets by offering high-quality goods that comply with international standards. Furthermore, these enterprises have benefited from public support, particularly in terms of guidance and financial assistance. Mechanisms such as the Special Fund for the Promotion of Exports (FSPE) have been implemented to stimulate export growth and support exporting SMEs.

Indeed, Algerian exporting SMEs have achieved notable success in international markets by offering diversified and high-quality products that meet global standards, particularly in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Their commitment, professionalism, and capacity to develop innovative and high-quality products have enabled them to gain recognition and establish a strong presence internationally.

Ultimately, Algerian exporting SMEs represent a model to follow for firms seeking economic success and aiming to foster a renewed entrepreneurial dynamism in Algeria. They are expected to play a crucial role in diversifying the national economy and improving the country's trade balance.

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