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THE ROLE OF STATE STRATEGIC RESERVES IN ENSURING FOOD SECURITY: POLICY EVOLUTION AND REASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY SUPPLY SYSTEM IN THE CASE OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This study examines the development of food security policy in Uzbekistan, with particular emphasis on Law No. LRU-1023 "On Food Security," dated February 3, 2025, and the economic mechanisms established therein. A distinctive feature of the study is its investigation of opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the food supply outsourcing system introduced in accordance with Resolution No. 505 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated September 8, 2022, "On Measures to Further Improve the Procedure for Providing Outsourcing Services for Organizing Meals in the Ministries and Agencies within the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan." By analyzing opportunities to integrate the activities of commercial entities providing military catering services with the system for replenishing state strategic food reserves, the study highlights ways to ensure the quality of strategic food products, use budget funds efficiently, and support market liquidity. Based on the international indicators of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) and the Global Food Security Index (GFSI), the study develops proposals and recommendations aimed at optimizing the replenishment of strategic reserves, strengthening food supply stability, improving supply chain management, and enhancing Uzbekistan's position in international rankings.

Keywords: food security, state strategic reserves, agricultural policy, defense procurement, outsourcing risk, market stabilization, GHI, GFSI.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot O'zbekistonda oziq-ovqat xavfsizligi siyosatining rivojlanishini, xususan, 2025-yil 3-fevraldagi "Oziq-ovqat xavfsizligi to'g'risida"gi O'RQ-1023-sonli Qonun va unda belgilangan iqtisodiy mexanizmlarni tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqotning o'ziga xos jihati O'zbekiston Respublikasi Vazirlar Mahkamasining 2022-yil 8-sentabrdagi "O'zbekiston Respublikasi Qurolli Kuchlari tarkibiga kiruvchi vazirlik va idoralarda ovqatlanishni tashkil etish bo'yicha autsorsing xizmatlarini ko'rsatish tartibini yanada takomillashtirish chora-tadbirlari to'g'risida"gi 505-son qaroriga muvofiq joriy etilgan oziq-ovqat ta'minotini autsorsing asosida tashkil etish tizimining samaradorligini oshirish imkoniyatlarini o'rganishdan iborat. Harbiy ovqatlanish xizmatlarini ko'rsatuvchi tijorat subyektlari faoliyati bilan davlat strategik oziq-ovqat zaxiralari yangilash tizimini o'zaro integratsiyalash imkoniyatlarini tahlil qilish orqali strategik oziq-ovqat mahsulotlari sifatini ta'minlash, budjet mablag'laridan samarali foydalanish va bozor likvidligini qo'llab-quvvatlash yo'nalishlari yoritilgan. Global Hunger Index (GHI) va Global Food Security Index (GFSI) xalqaro ko'rsatkichlari asosida strategik zaxiralarni yangilash jarayonini optimallashtirish, oziq-ovqat ta'minoti barqarorligini mustahkamlash, ta'minot jarayonlarini samarali boshqarish hamda O'zbekistonning xalqaro reytinglardagi mavqeyini yaxshilashga qaratilgan taklif va tavsiyalar ishlab chiqilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: oziq-ovqat xavfsizligi, davlat strategik zaxiralari, agrar siyosat, mudofaa xaridlari, autsorsing xatari, bozorni barqarorlashtirish, GHI, GFSI.

Аннотация: В данном исследовании рассматривается развитие политики обеспечения продовольственной безопасности в Узбекистане, в частности Закон Республики Узбекистан № ЗРУ-1023 «О продовольственной безопасности» от 3 февраля 2025 года и предусмотренные им экономические механизмы. Особенность исследования заключается в изучении возможностей повышения эффективности системы организации продовольственного обеспечения на основе аутсорсинга, внедрённой в соответствии с постановлением Кабинета Министров Республики Узбекистан № 505 от 8 сентября 2022 года «О мерах по дальнейшему совершенствованию порядка оказания аутсорсинговых услуг по организации питания в министерствах и ведомствах, входящих в состав Вооружённых Сил Республики Узбекистан». Посредством анализа возможностей интеграции деятельности коммерческих субъектов, оказывающих услуги по организации питания военнослужащих, с системой обновления государственных стратегических продовольственных резервов раскрываются направления обеспечения

качества стратегически важных продовольственных товаров, эффективного использования бюджетных средств и поддержания рыночной ликвидности. На основе международных показателей Global Hunger Index (GHI) и Global Food Security Index (GFSI) разработаны предложения и рекомендации, направленные на оптимизацию процесса обновления стратегических запасов, укрепление устойчивости продовольственного обеспечения, повышение эффективности управления процессами снабжения и улучшение позиций Узбекистана в международных рейтингах.

Ключевые слова: продовольственная безопасность, государственные стратегические резервы, аграрная политика, оборонные закупки, риски аутсорсинга, стабилизация рынка, GHI, GFSI.

INTRODUCTION

Global agricultural markets are becoming increasingly volatile under the impact of severe climate change, adverse geopolitical conditions, and protectionist trade policies. Amid escalating global climate change and geopolitical instability, state strategic reserves serve as a vital instrument for ensuring macroeconomic stability and a pillar of national security.

For transitional and developing economies, ensuring uninterrupted access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food is not merely an economic indicator, but a fundamental pillar of national sovereignty. Historically, state material reserves were viewed as a strictly fixed emergency contingency fund designated for natural disasters or wartime conditions. However, modern macroeconomic theory recognizes these reserves as dynamic intervention tools capable of stabilizing domestic prices, absorbing supply shocks, and bolstering the resilience of the agri-food value chain.

Ensuring food and grain independence has remained a strategic priority for Uzbekistan since gaining independence in 1991. The adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-1023¹ "On Food Security" on February 3, 2025, marked an important stage in strengthening the country's food security framework and further integrating sectoral programs into a unified legal and economic system.

In this context, the development of effective coordination between civilian market stabilization objectives and national defense procurement represents an important area for further institutional improvement. In particular, the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 505 of September 8, 2022, "On Measures to Further Improve the Procedure for Providing Catering Outsourcing Services in Ministries and Agencies Belonging to the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan," introduced an outsourcing-based approach to military catering services, creating additional opportunities to improve the organization and efficiency of food supply processes. This article examines the regulatory framework and practical aspects of these mechanisms, analyzes Uzbekistan's position in global food security indices, and presents policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the coordination of military logistics with the national strategic food reserve system.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

The theoretical link between state grain storage and economic stability traces back to classical economic doctrines on grain reserves. From a modern national security perspective, Abulqosimov et al. (2022) and Aliyev (2023) conceptualize food security as a critical component of macroeconomic defense against external shocks, emphasizing the role of domestic agricultural production infrastructure.

Recent empirical studies in Uzbekistan have explored various dimensions of this issue:

- financial and foreign exchange mechanisms: Babayev (2024) assessed the legislative parameters governing the allocation of foreign exchange reserves required to finance emergency food imports during global crises;

- international comparative models: Ismoilova (2026) evaluated the feasibility of applying the People's Republic of China's highly centralized, state-regulated food reserve and distribution model to Uzbekistan's institutional context;

- technological interventions: Xoliqova and Axmedova (2025) investigated the role of digital agriculture and smart logistics in minimizing post-harvest losses.

However, a significant gap remains in the existing literature: the operational interaction between commercialized defense catering (outsourcing) and the rotation process of state strategic reserves remains largely unexplored. This article fills that gap by analyzing how public-private partnerships in military logistics affect the consumption and replenishment cycles of strategic food reserves.

¹ <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/7359207>

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods approach combining the tracking of historical policy evolution, legislative content analysis, and comparative statistical modeling. The institutional development of Uzbekistan's agrarian reforms is analyzed across three distinct stages, namely:

1. Decentralization and structural foundation (1990–1994): an analysis of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 97-XII² “On Land” on June 20, 1990 and No. 604-I³ “On Dehqon Farms” on April 30, 1998 which established early mechanisms for private land tenure rights and incentives for smallholder producers.

2. Grain independence strategy (1995–2024): an analysis of the “Food Program” (1995–1998). This legislative instrument shifted land allocation away from the cotton monoculture toward wheat cultivation, enabling the country to transition from a net grain importer to a partial exporter by 2000.

3. Integrated food governance (2025–present): an evaluation of the Law “On Food Security” (2025). Article 4 of the law legally defines food security as the continuous and full provision of socially significant food products.

The institutional framework established by the Law “On Food Security” designates the Ministry of Agriculture as the primary regulatory authority, supported by a coordinated network comprising the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Investments, Industry and Trade, and local executive government bodies. Significantly, the law explicitly identifies the creation of state reserves and revolving reserve funds as key instruments for securing domestic production to cover at least 80 percent of the population's total annual demand.

To assess the empirical outcomes of these policies, the study utilized secondary data from the Global Hunger Index, compiled by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide, alongside historical data from Economist Impact's Global Food Security Index.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Modern public procurement can be aligned with the effective management of strategic reserves through well-coordinated supply and consumption mechanisms. In accordance with Resolution No. 505 of 2022, food service operations across the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan were transferred to private catering contractors, creating an opportunity to organize catering services through specialized providers. Historically, the military system played an important role in the consumption and rotation of the state's strategic food reserves. Given the limited shelf lives of food commodities such as meat, sugar, butter, fats and oils, pulses, and canned goods, the regular and predictable consumption of military units supported the systematic renewal of stocks. This approach helped replenish reserves with freshly produced goods while contributing to the continuity of supply and the balanced management of food resources.

Following the introduction of the outsourcing model, contractors began independently procuring food from open commercial markets, contributing to greater flexibility and efficiency in organizing food supplies. This approach created opportunities to further improve the coordination of procurement processes with the requirements concerning the volume, quality, storage conditions, and shelf-life monitoring of state reserves. Accordingly, several areas for further enhancement of the system can be identified:

Improved reserve rotation: Strengthening coordination between military food consumption and state strategic reserves can support the regular utilization and replenishment of food stocks, contributing to improved quality management and more efficient reserve utilization.

Fiscal efficiency: Coordinating state reserve management with commercial food procurement can help optimize public expenditure by reducing unnecessary storage-related costs and improving the planning of food procurement for military personnel.

Enhanced crisis preparedness: In the event of climate-induced supply fluctuations, regional trade restrictions, or the implementation of special operational periods stipulated in the Defense Doctrine, stronger coordination between private contractors and state institutions can contribute to maintaining stable supply chains and strengthening the role of strategic reserves in ensuring market and food supply stability.

To further strengthen these opportunities, appropriate regulatory mechanisms can be integrated into the procurement system. Relevant amendments may be introduced to the Resolution “On measures to further improve the procedure for providing outsourcing services for catering in ministries and agencies of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan,” as well as to standard contracts governing catering services for military personnel across Armed Forces entities. In this regard, establishing a requirement for contractors to procure a specified share (70–80 percent) of essential non-perishable commodities directly from state strategic reserves at regulated prices could contribute to strengthening the systematic utilization and replenishment of strategic food stocks. Such an approach would support the development of a stable, resilient, and uninterrupted reserve

2 <https://lex.uz/acts/-147456> (The document became invalid — 01.07.1998)

3 <https://lex.uz/acts/-31613> (The document became invalid — 02.04.2021)

rotation cycle.

To evaluate the macro-level performance of Uzbekistan's food security system, the country's indicators were benchmarked against global indices (Table 1).

Table 1.
GHI dynamics in selected CIS and Baltic countries⁴

Country	2000 GHI	2008 GHI	2016 GHI	2025 GHI	2025 rating and severity category
Belarus	<5	<5	<5	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Estonia	<5	<5	<5	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Latvia	5.3	<5	<5	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Lithuania	<5	<5	<5	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Russia	10.4	6.8	<5	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Kazakhstan	12.0	10.2	5.7	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Armenia	19.3	11.6	6.4	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Uzbekistan	24.2	15.4	8.3	<5	1–25 (Very low)
Moldova	18.1	15.0	5.8	5.1	26 (Low)
Azerbaijan	25.2	14.1	8.1	5.6	29 (Low)
Kyrgyzstan	18.4	12.2	8.9	8.0	43 (Low)
Turkmenistan	19.9	14.3	10.2	9.9	50 (Low)
Ukraine	12.8	10.0	9.7	10.4	55 (Medium)
Tajikistan	39.3	26.9	15.3	12.8	63 (Medium)

As shown in Table 1, Uzbekistan has achieved notable progress in reducing hunger: its GHI score fell from 24.2 in 2000 to the “Very Low” threshold (<5) by 2025, placing the country among the world's top 25 nations in eliminating hunger. This reflects the success of baseline policies on per capita calorie distribution. However, the GHI primarily measures severe undernutrition and does not fully capture the sustainability of the food system.

To encompass parameters such as structural quality, purchasing power of the population, and availability, the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) —dominated by developed economies—was analyzed (for example, Finland ranks 1st with 83.7 points, and Ireland ranks 2nd with 81.7 points) (Table 2).

Table 2
Global Food Security Index ranking indicators of selected countries⁵
Rank/Score (out of 100 points)

Countries	2014	2018	2019	2022
Kazakhstan	57/53,3	57/57,7	48/67,3	32/72,1
Russia	40/62,7	42/67,0	42/69,7	43/69,1
Belarus	47/60,8	44/65,7	36/70,9	55/64,5
Azerbaijan	62/50,3	56/58,2	53/64,8	66/59,8
Ukraine	52/56,4	63/55,7	76/57,1	71/57,9
Uzbekistan	73/46,0	80/45,9	71/59,0	73/57,5
Tajikistan	81/38,7	91/40,7	93/49,0	75/56,7

As shown in Table 2, although Uzbekistan's absolute GFSI score improved from 46.0 in 2014 to 57.5 in 2022, the country's position in the global ranking remained unchanged at 73rd place.

This indicates that, according to GHI criteria, Uzbekistan has achieved significant progress in addressing basic hunger, while further opportunities exist to strengthen key components of the food supply chain, particularly food supply stability, storage infrastructure, and emergency resilience. Enhancing the coordination and circulation of food products between the military and state strategic reserves could serve as an effective mechanism for further improving the “Supply Chain Infrastructure” and “Availability” sub-indicators under the

⁴ Source: Summarized by the author based on the Global Hunger Index annual reports.

⁵ Source: compiled based on data from the Global Food Security Index.

GFSI.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The structural transformation of Uzbekistan's food security paradigm requires aligning microeconomic incentives—namely, the private and material interests of individual market entities—with macroeconomic defense strategies. This study highlights the importance of integrating defense catering services with state logistics networks and strengthening coordination between market entities and public institutions. Enhancing the efficiency of the state strategic reserve system offers several multifaceted benefits:

1. Market stabilization: A highly liquid and regularly replenished strategic reserve enables the state to carry out rapid market interventions to prevent sharp price increases in food markets during periods of global shortages.

2. Fiscal efficiency: Aligning military consumption with the rotation and replenishment cycles of strategic reserves prevents products from expiring and being written off, thereby enhancing the efficiency of state budget expenditure.

3. Strategic geopolitical potential: Robust and regularly replenished reserves guarantee uninterrupted logistical support for the Armed Forces during critical periods, while expanding Uzbekistan's capacity to deliver international humanitarian aid and elevating its geopolitical standing.

4. Optimization of index indicators: Systematically improving reserve management directly contributes to better performance in the Global Food Security Index, improving international risk assessments and investment attractiveness.

5. Mandatory integration: Introducing amendments to the Resolution "On measures to further improve the procedure for providing outsourcing services for the organization of catering in ministries and agencies of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan," requiring defense-sector catering contractors to procure designated quotas of storable products exclusively from state reserves, will ensure that strategic reserves are maintained at sufficient volumes and high quality.

6. Digital inventory monitoring: Implementing an automated, real-time monitoring network connecting the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Defense, and strategic reserve warehouses. This system should dynamically track product shelf-life parameters and establish optimal timelines for stock replenishment and rotation.

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