



Center for Analysis of Economic
Reforms and Communication



ASIAN THINK TANK NETWORK FORUM
Enabling Accessibility and Inclusion through
Digital Trade and E-Commerce

2025

HOW GOVERNMENT LEVERAGES DIGITAL TRADE AND E-COMMERCE TO BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH

A CASE STUDY FROM AZERBAIJAN

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How Government Leverages Digital Trade and E-Commerce to Boost Economic Growth: A Case Study from Azerbaijan

Main issue

- Since late 2014 the significant drop in the prices for utilities in world commodity markets and become more volatile: while a barrel of oil was worth nearly USD 150 in 2008, prices fell to less than USD 30 in 2016.
- The global drop in oil prices had a significant impact also on Azerbaijan economy. From 2010 to 2014, economic growth rate slowed down to an average of 2.7 percent. Unemployment rates have increased recently by 2 percent due to reduction in the export volume and government budget incomes dwindled.
- The need for a new economic growth approach has arisen in Azerbaijan on the background of the deceleration of the country's economic growth, institutional and structural challenges, deficits in balance of payments and non-oil budget.
- At this critical juncture, in 2016 **Azexport** was established as part of a broader strategy to boost non-oil exports and support domestic exporters. **Through its operations, the portal has significantly enhanced the global market access of Azerbaijani products, thereby advancing accessibility and inclusion via digital trade and e-commerce.**



Methodology and Data

- This case study is developed through a qualitative analysis of official reports, internal KPIs, stakeholder interviews, and export data. The methodology combines documentary review, comparative benchmarking, and performance analysis to evaluate the effectiveness and replicability of the Azexport model.
- At the same time, the study draws on the Social Accounting Matrix as well as the results of surveys conducted among users by the portal. Also, the six criteria of OECD/DAC have been used for evaluation.
- The research utilized data from the **State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan**. Notably, since 2017, **Azexport has accumulated a highly valuable database**. This portal serves as a centralized registry of products manufactured in Azerbaijan, providing comprehensive information on all goods produced across the country.
- It also includes detailed data on producers and the regions where these products are manufactured. Since its inception, the portal has collected information on product prices, export orders received from various countries, and many other relevant indicators.

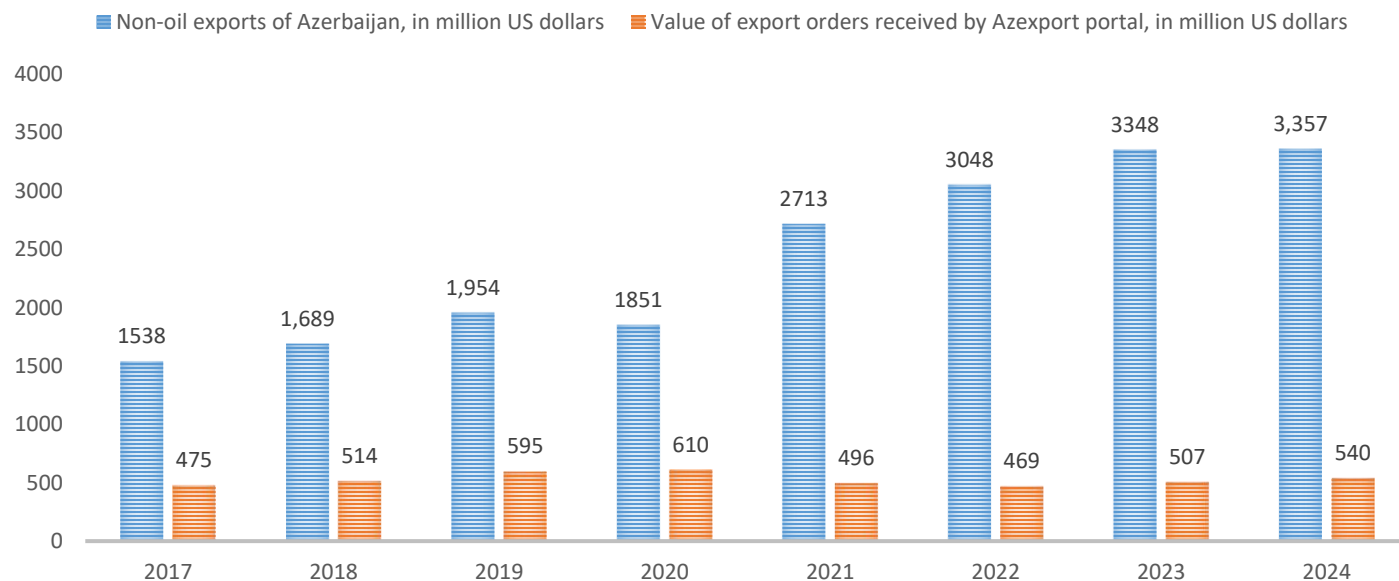




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The dynamics of export orders received by Azexport

- **Azerbaijan's non-oil exports increased 2.2 times in 2024 compared to 2017, reaching a total of USD 3,357 million.** During this period, a dynamic growth trend was also observed in the volume of export orders received through the portal.
- **Figure 1:** The dynamics of export orders received by Azexport and Azerbaijan's non-oil exports



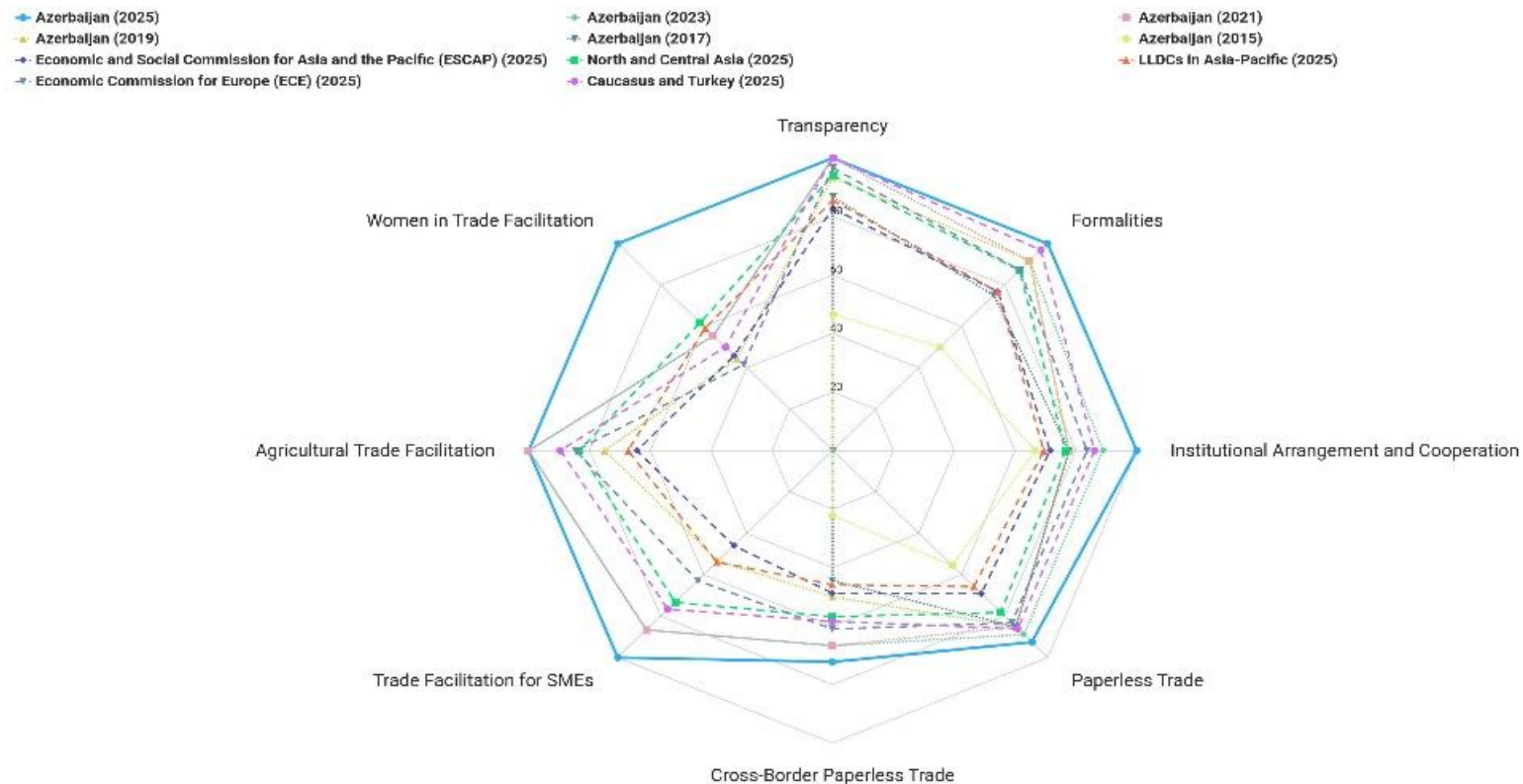


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Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation

Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation

Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2025



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2025 | UNTFSURVEY.ORG



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Findings

- A key success of portal was the **introduction of a “reverse dropshipping” model—implemented globally for the first time**, which enabled Azerbaijani products to be featured on international platforms such as www.alibaba.com, www.tradeindia.com, www.all.biz, and www.agroserver.ru. In other words, once a product is listed on Azexport, it is automatically reflected on more than 10 other popular platforms. All costs related to membership, listing, marketing, and business matching services are covered by the government. As a result, entrepreneurs receive thousands of quotations, purchase requests, and sales orders—completely free of charge.
- Thanks to this model, significant outcomes were achieved within a short period:
- The online presence of Azerbaijani products increased more than 60-fold.
- Over **50,000 unique orders and inquiries** were received (from 2017 to 2025).
- Azerbaijan's export geography expanded to **122 countries**.



Findings

- From its inception, **Azexport introduced a innovative** approach: rather than promoting the portal itself, the focus was placed on showcasing the products listed on it.
- Furthermore, services of international and local logistics and transportation companies were integrated into the system, and secure payment options via VISA, MasterCard, and American Express were made available.
- Since 2019 portal started new initiative aimed at opening the portal to export opportunities for Azerbaijan's creative products to foreign markets through international e-commerce platforms.
- Additionally, **portal contributes to the inclusion of vulnerable groups** by promoting handmade products crafted by persons with disabilities and works of art by creative individuals, helping them reach potential customers.
- Thus, portal has made a substantial contribution to **enabling accessibility and inclusion through digital trade and e-commerce in Azerbaijan.**





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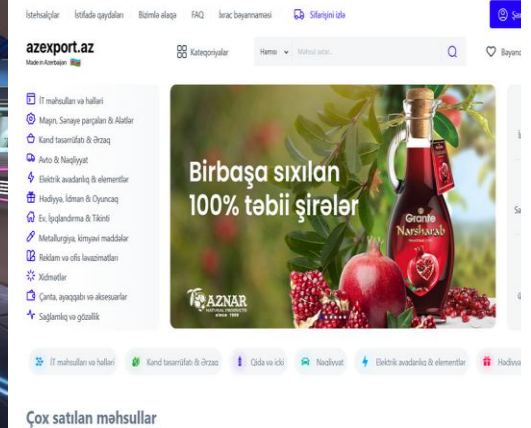
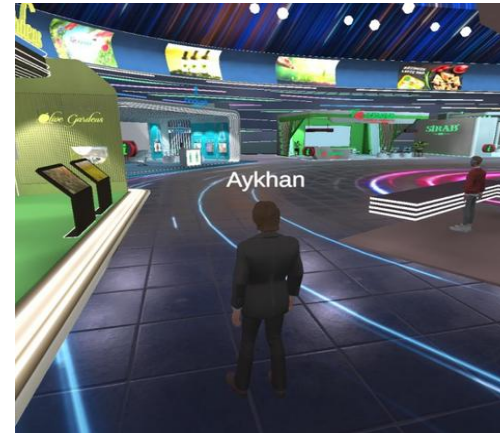
Findings

Azexport has become a gateway for SMEs to access international markets. While large companies in Azerbaijan typically have dedicated export departments and specialized staff, small businesses often lack these resources. Portal created new opportunities for such small enterprises—particularly **agricultural producers**, who account for 36% of employment in the country.

Azexport created the **first-ever virtual exhibition** and conference space in the region. This is not just an online event hall — it's a **digital gateway** that removes physical borders.

Exporters can present their products to **any buyer worldwide** without leaving Azerbaijan.

Foreign companies and investors can connect directly, saving **time, costs, and logistics.**



Findings

- Azexport today is also the only government-authorized issuer of the Free Sales Certificate. Free Sale Certificate, which opens new opportunities for Azerbaijan's food and cosmetics products to access over 30 additional countries.
- On the other side, as one of the main components of digitalization infrastructure, **Digital Trade Hub of Azerbaijan** (DTH) service section has been created. DTH is an all-in-one e-business service portal launched and **endorsed** by the government. It offers a wide range of unique crossborder services for trade facilitation and doing business, including B2B and B2G services.
- In addition to these achievements, **Azexport has quickly evolved into an early warning system.** A sudden spike in orders for a specific product from regional countries often signals emerging shortages in those markets. In such cases, the Azerbaijani government can intervene by regulating the export of high-demand goods, thereby **helping to prevent extreme price increases and ensuring domestic market stability.**



Policy recommendation

- *Creation of a National “Digital Product Content Database” (DPCD)*
- *Expansion of Support for Inclusive Trade*
- *Regional Representation in the Digital Exhibition Hall*
- *Robotic Fulfillment and Smart Logistics Integration*
- *Mobile Application and International Certifications*
- *International Merchant Integration and Cross-Border Trade Facilitation*
- *Implementing a Human-Centered AI Product-Market Matching System*
- *ESG-Driven Product Visibility and Promotion*





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THANK YOU!

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