

# COOPERATION BETWEEN INDONESIA AND PAKISTAN IN BOOSTING EXPORT PERFORMANCE OF WILMAR INTERNATIONAL'S PROCESSED PALM OIL PRODUCTS

**Jihan Tavina Husna**

Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

\*e-mail: tavinajihan@gmail.com

## **Keywords**

*Export, Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (IPPTA), Palm Oil, Wilmar International*

## **ABSTRACT**

In international relations, trade cooperation is a strategic step for every country to improve the welfare of its people. As a country which rich in natural resources, Indonesia continues to utilize its potential to perpetuate trade with other countries through export activities. One of Indonesia's leading commodities that is valuable in the global market is palm oil. Many countries have trusted Indonesian palm oil products, one of which is Pakistan. The step to facilitate the export process in the palm oil sector is through the Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (IPPTA). Through the IPPTA framework, the two countries agreed to reduce tariffs and expand the export-import commodities of both countries. This paper focuses on providing an understanding of the impact of IPPTA at the business to government levels, where the author uses Wilmar International as the subject of research. Using the theory of Trade Cooperations: The Purpose, Design and Effects of Preferential Trade Agreements by Malfred Esig, this study found that there were factors outside of tariffs that hampered the increase in palm oil export performance at Wilmar International, which were identified through global conditions, domestic conditions and internal conditions of the company.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the international sphere, each country cannot in fact stand alone to meet its domestic needs. As the highest entity as well as the main actor in international relations, countries build international cooperation with the goal of mutual benefit in various forms. Economic cooperation is the most frequent cooperation carried out by many countries (De Vries et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2024; Zafar et al., 2021). This is done to increase the economic growth of each country and expand the country's commodity exports, as Indonesia has done with several countries.

One of the countries that has a long-term cooperative relationship with Indonesia is Pakistan. Pakistan is a potential market as well as access to Indonesia's commodity market to enter the Central Asian region and its surroundings. Pakistan is ranked 2nd as Indonesia's trading partner in the South Asian region and occupies the 19th position as Indonesia's export destination country with a percentage of 1% of Indonesia's total exports to the world. As for the country of origin of Indonesia's imports, Pakistan occupies the 46th position of Indonesia's total imports to the world. The two have established bilateral relations under the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEP) since 2005 (Nugroho, 2021).

Palm oil is Indonesia's main export commodity to Pakistan. The total percentage of palm oil exports reached 85.8% among other commodities. Pakistan has depended on Indonesia for its palm oil products, so when the export of these products in Indonesia was stopped due to increasing domestic demand, this received a response from Pakistan and a number of other export destination countries (Pangaribuan, 2022). The stoppage in 2016 is very unfortunate because Indonesia's palm oil has been

indicated to be superior in the eyes of the world and Pakistan's demand for this product continues to increase every year. On the other hand, Indonesia's resource nationalism policy to limit the export of raw products to other countries makes Indonesia export processed products. The processed palm oil products exported to Pakistan are Palm Fatty Acid Distillate, Crude Palm Oil (CPO), Palm Kernel Oil (PKO), Mixture of Lauric Fatty Acid, Mixture of Fatty Acid, Vegetable Cooking Oil, and Refined Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Stearin. The processed palm oil products are based on the needs and uses of each type, as for the types of processed products that can be consumed by humans for cooking oil and butter such as Palm Kernel Oil (PKO) and Crude Palm Oil (CPO), while the rest are ingredients for detergents, cosmetics, soaps and so on.

In its development, cooperative relations on the global stage are not only limited to government to government. To facilitate the interaction of international relations in the implementation of free trade, countries often interact at a deeper level up to people to people (Wardani & Budiawan, 2021). However, in this paper, the author will examine the cooperative relationship between Indonesia and Pakistan at the business to government level. Considering that in some of the literature that has existed before, the study of business to government is very minimal, so the author wants to target the output in the form of the role of the business level in the cooperation that is built between the two countries.

In this paper, the business level that the author targets to study is a Multinational Cooperations (MNC), namely Wilmar International. Wilmar International Company is a Singapore-based agribusiness-focused company founded in 1991. In Indonesia, Wilmar International focuses on producing vegetable oils and specialty oils for the food industry and general trade. Some of the countries that are the destinations for Indonesia's palm oil exports are China, Pakistan, India and Viet Nam. Each country does not focus on importing one finished product, Pakistan is one of Indonesia's export countries that focuses on many processed palm oil products along with two other countries (India and Viet Nam) while China focuses on finished butter products. Thus, each country has its own portion in taking processed palm oil products at Wilmar International.

As one of the implementations of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEP), Indonesia and Pakistan have established an agreement under the framework of the Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (IPPTA). This agreement was agreed in 2012 and implemented in 2013. Broadly speaking, IPPTA is an agreement to reduce tariffs on certain products between Indonesia and Pakistan. (Anugrah, 2023) In 2018, there has been a change in the protocol signed by the Indonesian Minister of Trade and the Minister of Trade and Textile Industry of Pakistan. The protocol for amending the agreement changes several articles in the Indonesia-Pakistan PTA agreement and replaces several annexes in the agreement. With the change protocol, the number of Indonesia-Pakistan goods trade schedule of commitment will be 280 Indonesia tariff posts and 320 Pakistan tariff posts. (F. Center, 2018) The following are the significances of the Indonesia-Pakistan PTA protocol before and after the changes:

**Table 1.** Agreement Before Protocol Changes

Indonesian			Pakistan		
<i>Number of Tariff Lines</i>	<i>Average MFN Tariff</i>	<i>Average PTA Tariff</i>	<i>Number of Tariff Lines</i>	<i>Average MFN Tariff</i>	<i>Average PTA Tariff</i>
232	8.7%	3.2%	311	16%	11%

**Table 2.** Agreement After a Change in Protocol

Indonesian		Pakistan	
<i>Number of Tariff Lines</i>	<i>Average PTA Tariff</i>	<i>Number of Tariff Lines</i>	<i>Average PTA Tariff</i>
280	3.04%	320	11%

*Source: (FTA Center, 2018)*

The amended protocol above has provided benefits for Indonesia and Pakistan, especially in the aspect of agreed product tariffs. However, for Wilmar International companies as an industry that produces products that have been agreed upon in the IPPTA, they do not get a significant influence. This research will critically examine the causes of the non-optimal impact of protocol changes at the business to government level. Based on these problems, in this paper the author will propose a formulation of the problem "why did the change in the protocol in the Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (IPPTA) not have a significant impact on the export performance at Wilmar International?". Through

this study, it is hoped that several impacts of IPPTA can be identified after the change in protocol along with the factors that hinder IPPTA's influence at the business to government level.

After World War I, liberalism was present as a perspective that had a strong impact on the global stage. For example, the existence of open diplomacy, free trade, peaceful settlement of disputes, and the formation of the League of Nations which is now the United Nations are forms of liberal efforts to create world peace (Satriyadi, 2014). Liberals further hold that the way to avoid getting involved in war is to cooperate with the nations of the world—as well as to jointly form security agencies.

One of the cooperation that is widely carried out by countries in the world is cooperation in the field of trade. By definition, trading is an activity of the exchange process based on the will of the parties involved—where they have the right to determine the profit and loss from the activity. Therefore, both parties involved can decide whether they will continue to trade with other countries to meet their domestic needs. The subjects of international trade include citizens, export companies, import companies, state-owned companies, and industrial companies.

In analyzing this paper, the author uses the concept in the book of Dür & Elsig (2015) entitled *"Trade Cooperations: The Purpose, Design and Effects of Preferential Trade Agreements."* As explained in the previous sub-section, the cooperation between Indonesia and Pakistan is under the framework of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) which was ratified by both parties in 2012. Dür & Elsig (2015) define the PTA as an agreement that liberalizes trade between two or more countries but does not extend this liberalization to all countries. Nowadays, PTA is considered the most prominent and important governance because of its function that is inseparable from regulating trade and investment flows in this era. PTAs have become the main tool for achieving market opening and providing regulatory innovation, as negotiations within the scope of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have yielded only modest results. Thus, countries rely on PTA to regulate issues ranging from trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights, competition, to government procurement rules.

## **METHODS**

This study aims to answer the question of why the change in the protocol in the Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (IPPTA) does not have a significant impact on export performance at the Business to Government level. The author uses a qualitative research method, which focuses on holistic-contextual understanding without statistical procedures. The research process is divided into three stages: description, reduction, and selection. In the description stage, the researcher describes the findings in the field; In the reduction stage, the collected information is filtered to focus on relevant data; And at the selection stage, the researcher details the focus of the research. The variables in this study involve Trade Cooperation through Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) as an independent variable, as well as the export performance of Palm Oil products at Wilmar International as a dependent variable.

The authors use qualitative data collected through interviews with relevant parties as well as secondary data from journals, news, scientific writings, and official documents. Although the main method is qualitative, statistical data is also used to support the research findings. It is hoped that this study will produce a clearer picture of the factors that affect the export performance of Palm Oil products, which were previously not well understood. The results of the research are expected to be accepted and utilized by the wider community to understand the role of IPPTA in trade.

## **RESULTS**

### **Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement**

As a non-traditional strategic trading partner for Indonesia, Pakistan establishes economic cooperation through IPPTA. The implementation of this agreement is regulated within the framework of Presidential Regulation Number 98 of 2012. This regulation provides a legal basis to regulate economic cooperation between Indonesia and Pakistan through trade preferences. In an effort to be effective, IPPTA underwent a change in the protocol of the agreement in 2018. Protocol to Amend the Preferential Trade Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Islamic Republic of Pakistan Indonesia and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, signed on January 27, 2018 in Islamabad, Pakistan (F. T. A. Center, 2018). This protocol is the legal umbrella of the process of expanding and amending the IPPTA agreement.

The implementation of IPPTA gives Indonesia preferential tariffs for 311 tariff posts related to export products destined for Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan benefits from preferential tariffs for 232

tariff posts related to export products destined for Indonesia. Indonesia can obtain more tariff posts with preferential tariffs within the framework of this agreement not without cause. The difference in the number of tariff posts obtained by Indonesia and Pakistan is inseparable from the fact that the average tariff in Indonesia is basically lower than the average Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff owned by Pakistan (Anugrah, 2023). The high utilization rate of IPPTA on the export side of Indonesia is triggered by the success of palm oil exports that have succeeded in taking advantage of preferential tariffs to Pakistan. In fact, IPPTA has had a positive effect on Indonesia's trade balance with Pakistan – as evidenced by the increase in surplus every year. So, in this case, Pakistan's demand for Indonesia's palm oil is one of the main factors that drives the export of these products significantly.

Indonesia's exports to Pakistan in several commodities show a significant concentration, which has become the focus of the export-oriented sector. In addition to palm oil, products that dominate Indonesia's exports to Pakistan include vegetable products, fruits, motor vehicles, textiles, textile products, coffee, machine tools, paper, rubber and natural gas. Likewise, Pakistan's main export products to Indonesia have also experienced a significant increase in exports, including passenger vehicles, vehicle parts, natural fibers, coal and areca nuts. The increase reflects the positive dynamics in trade cooperation between Indonesia and Pakistan and creates opportunities for export diversification and is able to strengthen bilateral trade relations.

In the context of IPPTA, the scope of Indonesia products that receive preference in Pakistan is limited to 313 tariff posts. Although the number is limited, these products are classified as Indonesia's leading export category to Pakistan. Since 2016, 193 products have received a Certificate of Origin (COO) and taken advantage of trade preferences to Pakistan (Anugrah, 2023). The purpose of the issuance of the COO is to verify the origin of the goods and ensure that the product is eligible for preferential rates in accordance with the provisions of the IPPTA.

### The Impact of IPPTA at the Business to Government Level

In addition to Government to Government, IPPTA has exerted influence at the Business level or at the company level. Instead of providing significant benefits, IPPTA does not provide much difference in export quantity before the change in protocol and after the change in protocol. The only thing that has changed is that the tariff is not with other aspects such as investment, labor, technology transfer and other relevant aspects. Unfortunately, the tariff change alone does not provide a significant figure at the business-to-government level. The following is the data obtained by the author after processing export data of Palm Oil Wilmar International processed products from 2012 to 2018 (before the change in protocol) and 2018 to 2023 (after the change in the protocol).

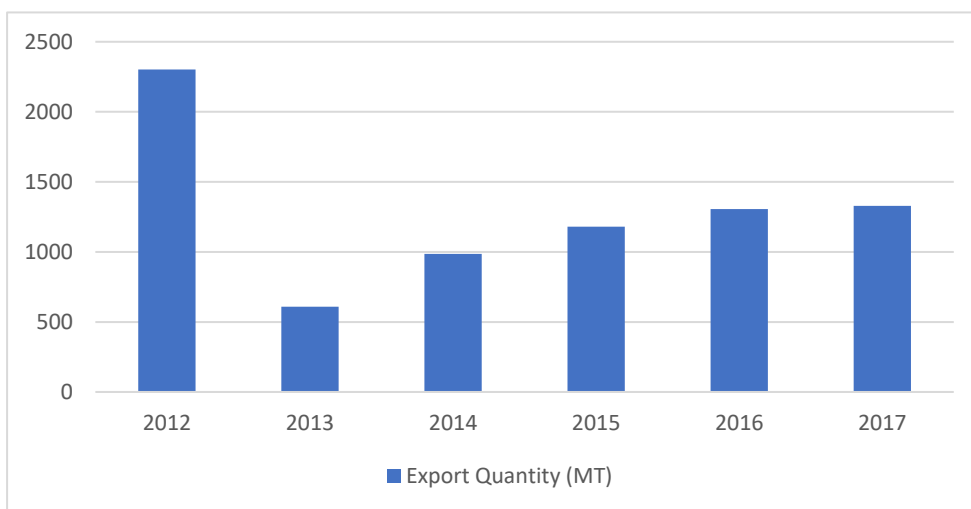
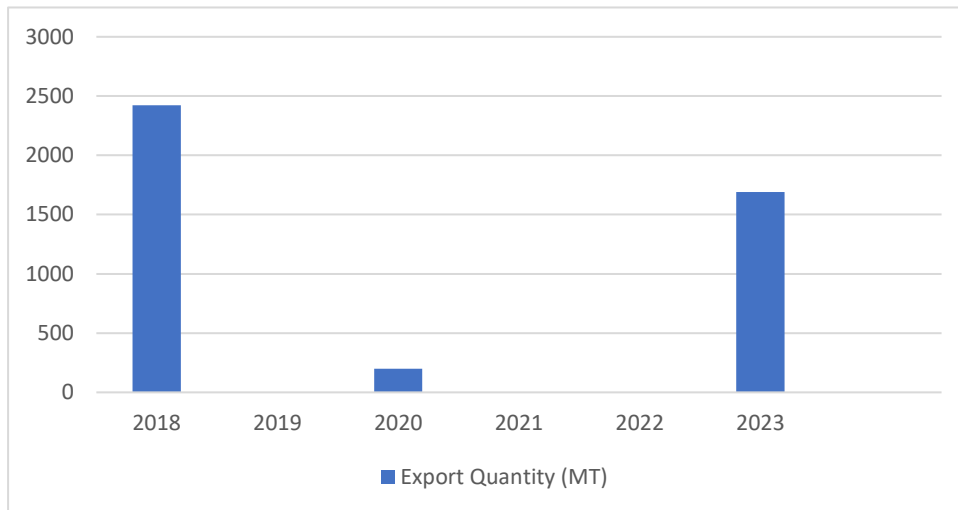


Figure 1. Indonesian Palm Oil Exports to Pakistan (before IPPTA renewal)  
Source: Processed by Author, 2024



**Figure 2.** Indonesian Palm Oil Exports to Pakistan (before IPPTA renewal)  
*Source: Processed by Author, 2024*

**Palm Oil Export Value**

The data above is an export trend of Indonesia to Pakistan from 2012 to 2023 which is differentiated based on data before the update of the protocol at the IPPTA and after the update of the protocol at the IPPTA. Export data before the renewal of the protocol began in 2012 with 2,302.8 MT (Metric Ton unit), 2013 with 609 MT, 2014 with 985.04 MT, 2015 with 1,179.34 MT, 2016 with 1,304.73 MT and 2017 with 1,327.55 MT. Meanwhile, data after the change in protocol showed results in 2018 with a figure of 2,422.32 MT, 2019 there were no palm oil exports to Pakistan, 2020 with a figure of 199.43 MT, 2021 to 2022 there were no palm oil exports to Pakistan and 2023 with a figure of 1,681.64 MT. Based on these data, it can be seen that in terms of quantity, palm oil exports to Pakistan have reached a figure of almost 2500, which was never achieved in the period before the enactment of the IPPTA. This is an indication that the change in the protocol in IPPTA has an effect at least on the quantity of exports, although it can be said that the difference in numbers is not too significant.

**Product Stability**

On the other hand, the data shows the stability of Wilmar International's processed palm oil products. Before the change in the protocol, exports were still fairly stable. Although there was a considerable decrease in numbers from 2012 to 2013, the increase continued to occur from 2013 to 2017. In contrast to export data after the change in protocol, the numbers show a fluctuating trend. Moreover, in three years, palm oil product exports to Pakistan were recorded at 0. According to the author, the change in the protocol in IPPTA has been proven by changing the tariff alone does not have a significant impact on the aspect of palm oil export value and product stability. There are obstacles in other variables that cause the trend of palm oil exports to Pakistan to be unstable at the global level to the internal level of the company.

**Analysis of Obstacles to Improving Palm Oil Export Performance at Wilmar International**  
**Global Conditions**

- 1) Covid-19 pandemic: At the end of 2019 international trade activities have been shaken by the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus – which attacked the respiratory system and was first discovered in Wuhan, China. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) only designated Covid-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The significance of the virus that has spread to 200 countries has caused the world to experience a global health crisis which has also had an impact on the economic crisis. As a sovereign entity, the state has the responsibility to improve national security standards and adopt a number of policies such as travel bans, implementing lockdowns, and closing the country's borders (Ningrum & Deviani, 2022). Likewise, Indonesia's export-import situation is hampered, Indonesia relies on existing domestic inventories while making strict quarantine efforts in its country. According to World



Trade Organization (WTO) data, world trade volume has decreased by almost 15% during this period.

The inhibition of export-import activities affects the performance of trade at the company level—including Wilmar International. From 2020 to 2022, Indonesia only exported one export to Pakistan with a total of 199.43 MT at the end of 2020. This causes losses in the company—which causes export performance to be unproductive. Not only Pakistan's export destination, Indonesia of course also carries out restrictions with other countries such as countries in Africa, India, China, Viet Nam and others. On the one hand, this may be a form of prioritizing needs for exporting countries, but on the other hand, the availability of goods in the global market will be reduced. Therefore, the Covid-19 pandemic phenomenon is one of the reasons for the hampered improvement in palm oil export performance at Wilmar International.

- 2) **Black Sea Grain Initiative:** As one of the world's largest palm oil producing countries, Russia's export decisions are important to consider in international relations. The conflict with Ukraine is one of the factors hindering Russia's export policy. In 2022, the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine is escalating—which will automatically become an obstacle to the production of products such as wheat, palm oil and other commodities. This will also have an impact on accelerating price increases in developing countries that depend on imports. To enable the export of foodstuffs from Ukraine through a safe maritime corridor from three main Ports namely Ukraine, Chornomorsk, Odesa and Pivdennyi on the Black Sea to the rest of the world, Russia together with Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations announced the Black Sea Grain initiative on July 22, 2022 (Watson, 2022). This agreement is basically inseparable from efforts to build peace in the Russia-Ukraine conflict through the Joint Coordination Center (JCC) consisting of representatives of Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations. The cause of the decline in palm oil exports in Indonesia is also influenced by the Black Sea Grain Initiative (Fakih, 2023). The initiative basically opens up trade routes so that it is easier. Various types of grains can be exported at low prices. This results in the main export destinations of these commodities (China and India) having abundant stocks so as to reduce imports from other countries, such as Indonesia.

### ***Domestic Conditions***

- 1) **Regulation:** The first regulation that is an obstacle to improving palm oil export performance is the IP form regulation (Indonesia-Pakistan form). In fact, the IP form has been implemented since the first time Indonesia and Pakistan signed the IPPTA. However, regulatory changes have only occurred since the last five years. In the first step of processing the IP form, the exporting country must make an IPSKA or Certificate of Origin for each product to be exported. Before the change, exporters (Wilmar International) could order as many IPSKAS as possible while currently the IPSKA form must be obtained in installments on the condition that the transport ship has arrived at the port. This results in company expenses—which if it gets a long response from the Ministry of Trade to get IPSKA, then the company must pay the cost of staying on the ship.

The second regulation is customs regulation. Customs has high standards for containers, documents, physical goods, and so on. In the context of palm oil exports, companies are often complicated by standard container requirements. Wilmar International often gets container rejection when it comes to shipping goods. Likewise, the Goods Export Notification (PEB) is often rejected by customs without a definite reason. This makes the Wilmar International company or other companies that will send the goods to queue up again and repeat the step from the beginning. According to Wilmar International, such a step is considered less practical and results in a postponement of the delivery time of goods that should be 'fixed'. However, the conditions and standards that have been set by customs basically have their own considerations. However, sometimes this stipulation gets a counter from the exporter because it does not facilitate the delivery process or the export performance itself.

- 2) **Oil Scarcity:** In 2022, Indonesia experienced a shortage of oil supply. The government is pursuing various policies but is considered ineffective to overcome the scarcity of domestic oil. This is what prompted the outbreak of the export ban in early 2022. Some of the factors that cause oil supply to become scarce are: (1). Instability of palm oil supply, (2). Fluctuation

in raw material prices, (3). Suspicion of cartels by irresponsible parties (Fathia et al., 2022). In fact, the export ban policy then still received a negative response from the community, such as farmers' crops that were not absorbed. However, the government itself focuses on this scarcity to meet domestic needs first before supplying abroad. The policy issued at that time was Regulation of the Minister of Trade Number 22 of 2022 where the government temporarily prohibited export activities from all regions of Indonesia including Bonded Zones (KB) for CPO (Crude Palm Oil) products and their derivatives, namely RBD Palm Oil, RBD Palm Olein and Used Cooking Oil (Fathia et al., 2022). In this case, Customs and Excise are authorized to supervise the implementation of the export ban policy and will take strict action against all violations of the policy.

### **Company Conditions**

- 1) Logistics Leaks: It is undeniable that a reputable company has individuals in charge of its duties. Several times in the shipping process there are logistical leaks—which in this context is cardboard as packaging from palm oil. The lack of strict checks on the goods to be shipped is a problem in this regard. However, on the other hand, logistics leaks are sometimes not the fault of individuals—but an inevitable disaster due to certain reasons such as too much cargo and so on. This is then ultimately returned to the agreement of the exporter and buyer regarding price, quality and insurance negotiations. In some cases, these problems can be the responsibility of the exporter or the buyer—the exporter will be solely responsible for any damages provided the buyer is willing to pay more. If this willingness is not met, then logistics leakage will automatically be the responsibility of the buyer.
- 2) Response to IPPTA Changes: Changes in the articles in the IPPTA certainly do not give a 'inevitability' of change to the company. According to Wilmar International, it is necessary to consider the conditions to be able to immediately implement protocol updates. One of the considerations is the political phenomenon after the renewal of the article and the detailed review of whether the renewal has a good or bad impact on the company. While considering the political phenomenon, Wilmar International decided to restrict the export of any palm oil products to Pakistan. Although in the end, Wilmar International found that there were benefits obtained from the implementation of the IPPTA—the reduction of export tariffs was considered to provide benefits for the palm oil export performance of the leading company. So it is evident that at the beginning of the IPPTA article was implemented, the export quantity reached almost 2,500 MT – which has never been achieved before.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Indonesia-Malaysia Partnership for Trade Agreement (IPPTA) has reduced tariffs on palm oil, but it has not significantly improved Indonesia's export performance. The agreement has led to a shift in Malaysia's palm oil market share in Pakistan to 82%, improved customs procedures, and expanded market access for Indonesian products in South Asia. Pakistan is expected to become a regional hub for Indonesia's exports, diversifying its export destination countries from traditional markets. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Sea Grain initiative have also posed challenges, including complicated regulations and oil scarcity in 2022. Additionally, logistics issues and political considerations at the company level have hindered Indonesia's palm oil exports to Pakistan. Future research should explore the impact of global factors, domestic trade regulations, and internal challenges within companies to enhance Indonesia's export resilience and market diversification strategies.

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