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Determine and Formulation Strategies for the Development of Afghanistan's Agriculture Sector Using SWOT Analysis, SPACE Matrix, and QSPM Approach

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Abstract

The agricultural sector plays a vital role in Afghanistan's economy, but despite national and international efforts to support its growth, the sector has not achieved sustainable and significant development. This has led to problems such as poverty, reduced food security, and an increase in narcotics cultivation. In order to address these challenges and promote the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, a comprehensive study was conducted to formulate appropriate strategies aligned with the country's sustainable economic development goals. The study utilized the Delphi technique and questionnaire instrument to gather insights from experts in the field. By considering various internal and external factors, the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analytical framework was applied to identify suitable strategies. Additionally, the strategic position of the agricultural sector was determined using the SPACE (Strategic Position and Action Evaluation) matrix. Based on the findings, conservative strategies, such as reorientation and revision of executive policies, were identified as crucial for the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector. These strategies emphasize the importance of supportive policies and the evaluation and revision of existing policies and executive plans. By addressing the structural and infrastructural weaknesses within the agricultural sector and capitalizing on external opportunities, it is possible to overcome the challenges and promote sustainable growth. To prioritize the strategies, the study employed the QSPM (Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix) approach. This approach allowed for the sorting of strategies based on their importance and priority, ensuring that the most effective and impactful actions are implemented first. In conclusion, the study highlights the need to focus on conservative strategies, particularly reorientation, and revision of executive policies, to address the challenges faced by Afghanistan's agricultural sector. By doing so, the sector can overcome its weaknesses and take advantage of external opportunities to achieve sustainable and significant growth.

Keywords:
Afghanistan; agriculture; Delphi technique and questionnaire; development strategies; SWOT-QSPM approach

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INTRODUCTION

Development and achieving economic welfare have been primary concerns for humanity as it seeks to exploit the environment and adopt development policies (Mannan, 2014). Agriculture is a crucial economic sector that plays a key role in the development of various countries and regions. Apart from meeting food requirements and providing raw materials for industries, it significantly contributes to a nation's political independence. Therefore, identifying and harnessing existing potentials and enhancing the capacity of the agricultural sector can lay a solid foundation for national growth and development (Taqvaei & Bashaq, 2013). Countries worldwide continue to support their agricultural systems, recognizing agricultural activity as the most effective means of establishing a robust and stable relationship between the population and the land (Durand, 2003). Planning and devising strategies for the growth and development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, as the foremost and crucial economic sector, is a top priority for ensuring sustainable economic development in the country. The significance of the agricultural sector has consistently made it a focal point of macro-national and international policies and development plans for Afghanistan (FAO, 2018). More than 75 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas and depends on the production and income generated by this sector. Despite accounting for about 20 percent of GDP, the agricultural sector employs 45 percent of the workforce, and its products constitute over 90 percent of the value of Afghanistan's exports (NSIA, 2020). The high rates of unemployment (23.9%), income disparities, poverty (54.5%), and food insecurity (44.6%) in various regions of the country highlight the urgent need to prioritize the growth of Afghanistan's agricultural sector (NSIA, 2019). The agricultural sector's low share in comparison to its position in the Afghan economy indicates the need for development and transformation within the sector (MOF, 2020). Despite widespread international support for Afghanistan's agricultural sector, its contribution to Afghanistan's GDP has been declining, and national and international efforts have not yielded satisfactory results (Figure 1) (MOF, 2020; NSIA, 2020). Moreover, this issue has resulted in the expansion of opium (poppy) cultivation in Afghanistan, with the area under poppy cultivation reaching 160,000 hectares in 2019. This cultivation is associated with the depletion of water and soil resources, as well as the perpetuation of war, insecurity, and violence (UNODC, 2019).

Despite the economic and social significance of the agricultural sector, insufficient attention has been given to strategic planning and management for its development. Consequently, its progress has not kept pace with that of other sectors. Disorganized and temporary planning, coupled with a lack of alignment with existing capacities and resources, have failed to yield the necessary efficiency

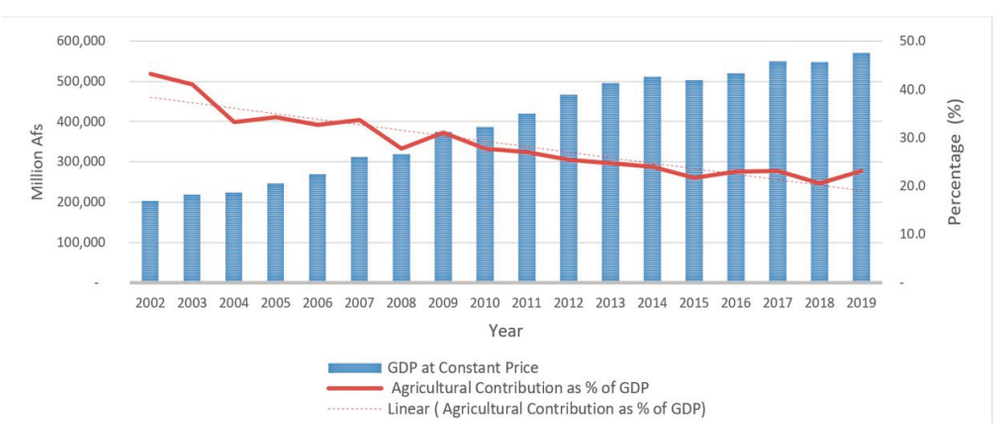

Figure 1. Trend of GDP Growth and the Agricultural Contribution as % of GDP

and effectiveness. Policy-making instability and inadequate allocation of international support, in line with Afghanistan's agricultural sector priorities, have increased production risks in the sector. This, in turn, has impeded sustainable growth, fostered dependency on international support, and left farmers vulnerable. Figure 2 illustrates this issue by depicting the significant fluctuations in the growth of Afghanistan's agricultural sector and GDP (MAIL, 2020).

Given the special role and significance of the agricultural sector in the Afghan economy, along with the ineffectiveness of policies, limited production resources, and insufficient international support, the development of a comprehensive strategy for the sector has become increasingly important. Furthermore, Afghanistan's commitments to the international community in achieving the goals outlined in key documents such as the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), National Priority Programs (NPPs), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further emphasize the need for such a strategy (MAIL, 2020; MRRD, 2020).

The National Framework for Peace and Development of Afghanistan (ANPDF) is a program aimed at achieving self-reliance, increasing the welfare of the people, and building a productive and broad-based economy that generates employment opportunities. This program represents Afghanistan's future vision for establishing a political, social, and economic environment that will enable the country to strengthen peace, security, sustainable development, and prosperity. The initial version of the program, covering the years 2017-2021, was presented at the 2016 conference in Brussels on Afghanistan, which sought to foster cooperation for the welfare and peace of Afghanistan. Subsequently, at the "Afghanistan 2020 Conference" held in Geneva, Switzerland, the second version of the program for the years 2021-2025 was introduced. This version specifically focuses on the goals of peace-building, state-building, and market development. With the endorsement of the international community, Afghanistan is dedicated to achieving these objectives (MOF, 2020).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, represent a universal call to action aimed at eradicating poverty, safeguarding the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly officially adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 ambitious Global Goals. These Goals build upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals while encompassing new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace, and justice, among other priorities. In Afghanistan, these Global Goals have been adapted to suit the local context and align with the government's national priorities and development frameworks. As a member of the United Nations, Afghanistan is committed to achieving these goals. The National Priority Programs (NPPs) aim to ensure that the state fulfills its fundamental responsibilities to its citizens and the market, and to accomplish the Afghan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs) and the goals of the Afghan National Framework for Peace and Development (ANPDF). Priority programs of national significance have been identified in line with the objectives of the ANPDF and the SDGs, including the Comprehensive Agriculture Development (MOEC, 2020).

The fundamental requirement for development is the growth of national production, which depends on the optimal utilization of economic capacity at both national and regional levels. The quantitative and qualitative advancement of products, utilizing the capacities and capabilities of a country's regions, will contribute to the dynamic growth and development of the national economy. Undoubtedly, achieving this is not feasible without identifying the factors driving agricultural growth (Ansari & Salami, 2016). On the other hand, supporting the agricul-

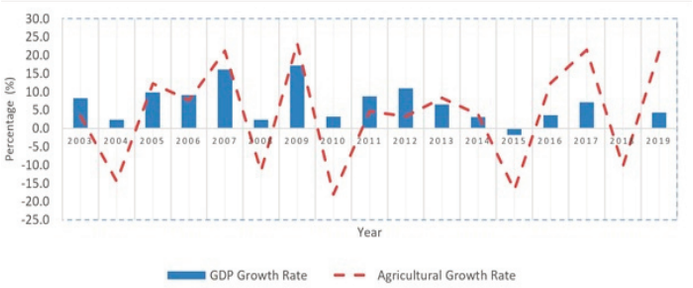

Figure 2. Trend of GDP Growth Rate and Agricultural Growth Rate

tural sector is crucial for various reasons, such as job creation, boosting production in backward and forward industries, ensuring food security, promoting rural development, preventing migration, ensuring environmental sustainability, maintaining national security, generating value, and earning national and foreign exchange. These requirements, including comparative advantage and production structure, aim to achieve self-sufficiency, improve farmers' incomes and livelihoods, and reduce poverty. These principles apply to all countries (Barry, 1992). It is important for the government to pay attention to this sector and support it in foreign trade, effectively competing against international competitors (Mohammadian et al., 2019). Products such as pistachios, chilgoza, saffron, pomegranates, grapes, various dried fruits, and medicinal plants are exported, while products such as wheat, barley, and corn are among the major imports in Afghanistan's agricultural sector (NSIA, 2020).

However, in the current situation, Afghanistan's agricultural sector infrastructure has not evolved due to years of war, insecurity, and a lack of specialized planning. According to FAO reports on Afghanistan's water resources, the country has an annual water extraction potential of 75 billion cubic meters, with 76 percent being surface water and 24 percent groundwater (FAO, 2018). However, less than 50 percent of the arable and fertile land is utilized, and more than 70 percent of the country's water resources remain inaccessible due to a lack of proper management. As a result, not all production capacities of Afghanistan's agricultural sector are utilized, and limited agricultural production is carried out at high costs due to low productivity (Nikzad, 2012). Proper management of national and international support resources for Afghanistan's agricultural sector also entails recognizing the existing internal capacities within the sector (Kirwan, 1987). Afghanistan became a member of the World Trade Organization on July 29, 2016, after nearly 12 years of observer status. With Afghanistan's membership in the World Trade Organization and its presence in the global economic competition, the importance of recognizing opportunities and threats in the external environment increases in terms of production, import substitution, and export development (Iravani et al., 2012). Determining internal strategic components, including strengths and weaknesses, as well as carefully examining external opportunities and threats for the development of the agricultural sector, is crucial and necessary (Dehghanizadeh and Hosseinpour, 2010). Paying attention to the development of a comprehensive strategy for the agricultural sector's growth while making better use of existing facilities will accelerate the economic development of Afghanistan (Hatef et al., 2016).

Many methods and techniques for strategic analysis can be used in the strategic management process, among which SWOT analysis is the most common and practical method (Mahmoud et al., 2014). SWOT analysis is an important tool for decision-making and is commonly used to systematically analyze the internal and external environment of an ac-

tivity or economic sector (Laroche et al., 2018). SWOT analysis, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, is a widely used technique for assessing the strategic position of any business. The results of a SWOT analysis help determine future objectives and strategies based on strengths and opportunities in the market. It is the best way to identify strong and weak areas, allowing businesses to excel in the marketplace. Numerous studies have been conducted on the use of this method in the field of agriculture and related issues. Karami et al. (2013) designed and analyzed the sustainable development strategies of the agricultural sector using the SWOT model and the Analytical Network Process in the Jam Abroud region. The results indicate that the aggressive models presented have the highest ranking among the strategies for achieving sustainable development, followed by the conservative, competitive, and defensive models. However, it was found that the combination of these patterns and strategies, based on their respective rankings, offers the best opportunity for creating sustainable development in the region. Suy et al. (2018) studied agriculture and rural development to reduce poverty in Cambodia using SWOT analysis. The results of these analyzes, which used government reports and documents from NGOs, provide food for the growing population; Providing suitable raw materials for the growing industrial sector; Major source of employment; Foreign exchange earnings and marketing of products are among the main strategies for developing Cambodia's agricultural sector with an emphasis on reducing poverty. Aghasafari et al. (2020) utilized the SWOT approach-fuzzy analysis process to determine the most effective strategies for the development of organic agriculture. The study incorporated interviews with experts in organic cultivation to identify the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities within this sector. The findings emphasized the significance of implementing consumer awareness programs, establishing a competitive market for organic products, and devising educational initiatives to teach the principles of organic agriculture. These priorities are crucial for the advancement of organic agriculture in the Khorasan region. Sadeghi and Khanzadeh (2018) conducted a study that focused on the catchment area of Lake Urmia and analyzed it strategically in terms of agricultural development. The study utilized the SWOT matrix and employed the QSPM quantitative matrix to determine the main strategy for agricultural development. The findings revealed that a defensive strategy should be prioritized, with a strong emphasis on implementing sustainable development programs. These programs should include water management in agriculture, the development of mechanization, the integration of agricultural land, and the adoption of integrated management practices. Kurmanalina et al. (2020) conducted a study focusing on the rural development strategies of Kazakhstan, specifically using SWOT analysis to ensure food security by identifying internal and external factors. The results highlighted the importance of prioritizing efficient and appropriate agricultural trade policies, including price stabilization measures, as well as the development of programs to foster commercial entrepreneurship within Kazakhstan's agricultural sector. In a separate study, Mansour et al. (2019) employed SWOT analysis to formulate an agricultural development strategy for Egypt's North Sinai province. This analysis involved interviews with over 90 experts. The findings revealed strengths and opportunities in the region, such as the promotional expertise of local workers, high job satisfaction, and the presence of research institutes and collaboration with non-governmental organizations. Weaknesses and threats identified included limited budget and financial resources, reduced investment for development, and security instability. Various studies have been conducted to formulate development strategies for the agricultural sector and related sub-sectors, taking into account different cli-

matic regions, economic and social conditions, and population composition. Examples include the development of bioenergy-based development strategies in Ukraine (Boryshkevych et al., 2020), the Eastern Indonesia Agricultural Trade Strengthening Strategy (Soetriono et al., 2019), the Indonesia Agricultural Marketing Strategic Planning (Juswadi et al., 2020), the Pakistan Agricultural Development Strategies (Akhtar et al., 2014), the Kazakhstan Agricultural Sector Innovation Development Program (Lukhmanova et al., 2019), strategic analysis of Russian agricultural plans (Wegren et al., 2019), and strategies for sustainable development of protected agriculture in Nepal (Atria, 2019). In Iran, several studies have utilized SWOT analysis to examine the development strategies of different agricultural areas. These studies consider the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats facing the agricultural sector. Notable examples of such studies include Mirzaei et al. (2013), Shafieian et al. (2017), Kazemi et al. (2018), Karami and Agahi (2018), Abdul Shah et al. (2018), Faraji et al. (2018), Fal Suleiman and Sadeghi (2015), Shaykh al-Islami et al. (2018), Rezaei et al. (2018), Tohidloo et al. (2016), Manjezi (2020), and Zare Shahabadi et al. (2010).

The results of these studies highlight the agricultural sector's potential to enhance production and foster the expansion of non-oil exports, thus contributing to economic growth. The production structure of the country's economy, particularly within the agricultural sector, possesses ample facilities and capacities that can play a significant role in increasing production, enhancing economic stability, and creating job opportunities. However, realizing the opportunities offered by the agricultural sector necessitates investment in and support for its development. Without such investment and support, it would be challenging to fully capitalize on the potential benefits that the agricultural sector can offer.

Additionally, the involvement of the private sector and the expansion of conversion and complementary industries are crucial factors in advancing the agricultural sector. Furthermore, enhancing public participation in agricultural development projects, decentralizing administrative affairs to local communities, and harnessing the expertise of local professionals can contribute to strengthening the agricultural sector. Addressing the weaknesses within the agricultural sector requires the intelligent intervention of experts and the implementation of appropriate strategies. Optimizing the utilization of water and soil resources by employing new technologies throughout all stages of production is crucial. Strengthening both domestic and foreign consumer markets, leveraging the potential of climate and production diversity to mitigate risks and increase farmers' incomes, conducting applied research to enhance crop yields, managing pesticide and fertilizer consumption, implementing systematic water management practices, and reducing waste are additional outcomes resulting from studies conducted across various agricultural domains. On another note, it is important to consider that the second paragraph seems to belong to a separate context related to the agricultural sector of Afghanistan. If you need assistance with proofreading that specific part, please provide it separately.

METHODOLOGY

The study area

Afghanistan is a mountainous and landlocked country located in Central Asia. It is situated in the Northern Hemisphere and the Eastern Hemisphere, bordered by Central Asia, East Asia, and West Asia (Middle East). The capital city is Kabul. With an area of 652,225 square kilometers, it is the 41st largest country in the world. The population is approximately 32 million, making Afghanistan the 37th most populous country globally. It shares borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the north, Pakistan to the east and south, China to the

north, and Iran to the west. The agricultural land in Afghanistan covers 7.8 million hectares, which accounts for 12 percent of the country's total land area. However, only around 40 percent of this land is currently under cultivation. Afghanistan experiences an arid and semi-arid climate. Despite an annual production of approximately 75 billion cubic meters of water, only 25percent of it is usable within the country. The remaining water flows to Iran, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan. Wheat is a primary crop, covering about 50 percent of the cultivated area. The country also produces various fruits such as melons, watermelons, apricots, grapes, and pomegranates, both for domestic consumption and export. Saffron, medicinal plants, dried fruits, and nuts, including pistachios and chilgoza, are significant export commodities. However, the expansion of poppy cultivation for narcotics is a particular challenge for Afghanistan's agricultural sector. The government is actively working on creating alternative livelihoods for farmers and promoting the cultivation of products like saffron and other garden crops as a replacement for poppy cultivation. It is important to note that Afghanistan's agricultural sector relies heavily on international support and investment. The FAO (2020), MIAL (2020), and NSIA (2020) provide valuable information on the country's agricultural sector.

SWOT analysis and SPACE matrix

The SWOT framework, developed in the early 1960s, was used as a strategic tool in this study. It draws upon Selznick's concept of aligning an organization's internal factors (capabilities, resources, and limitations) with its external environment as an initial step in the strategy development process (Bower, 2008). The SWOT model analyzes weaknesses and strengths, opportunities and threats, based on the understanding that every phenomenon operates within a competitive environment and is influenced by internal and external conditions. It follows a systematic approach, involving an analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses and an assessment of external opportunities and threats (Wheelen & Hunger, 1995). SWOT is essentially a strategic planning tool (Hom, 2001). Through a comprehensive analysis, it provides a systematic method for identifying factors and selecting the most suitable strategy among them (Elliott, 1997). The resulting matrix enables the comparison of information and the presentation of four strategies. According to this model, an appropriate strategy maximizes strengths and opportunities

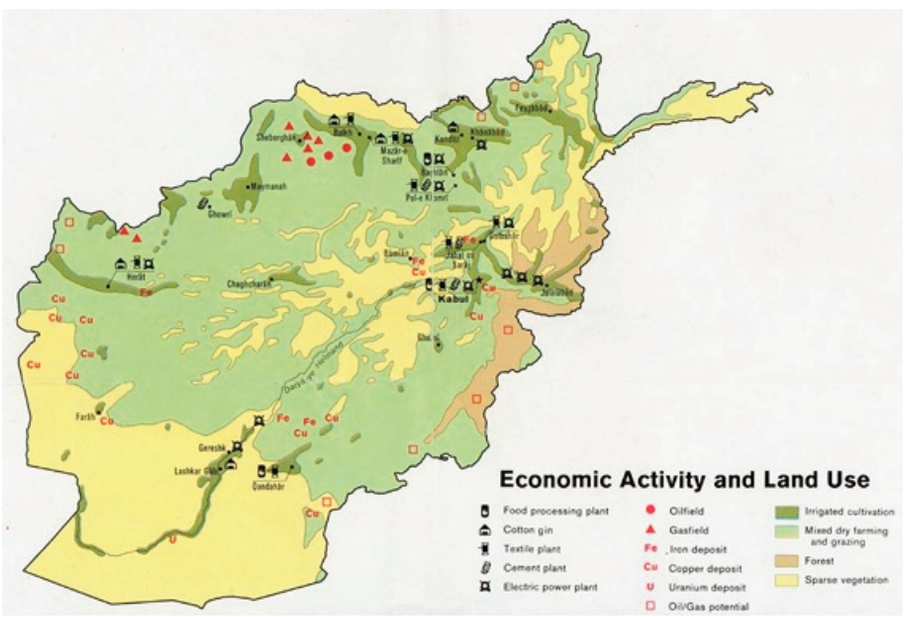

Figure 3. Location of Afghanistan's Agricultural Economic Activities and Land Uses (FAO, 2016)

while minimizing weaknesses and threats. The analysis of these factors systematically considers the external and internal environments, providing decision-making support for location selection (Herrisnon, 2008). These factors form the structural components of the SWOT model. In line with this model, an appropriate strategy should capitalize on opportunities and strengths, while mitigating threats and weaknesses (Movahed & Kohzadi, 2010). The consensus on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats forms a 2x2 matrix known as SWOT, which can be utilized to develop various strategies to achieve objectives (Dyson, 2004). This matrix can provide threats, opportunities, weakness and strengths. SWOT matrix has 8 cells. Four of them are the main cells, the cells that indicate strategy have titles: (SO), (WO), (ST), (WT). Therefore, are provided for choosing 4 strategies. Quad strategy is included: Investing strategy (SO), Review strategy (WO), Competitive strategy (ST), Defensive strategy (WT). so, Through SWOT method, four groups of strategies are identified (Table 4).

a. *Strength-Opportunity strategy*

This is the most appropriate and the most ideal condition for a system which means that the system not only enjoys dependable strengths and capabilities, but it also possesses valuable and dependable opportunities in its interactional environment. Therefore, this kind of strategies demonstrates how to apply the current strengths of the system for the purpose of maximum exploitation of environmental opportunities.

b. *Strength-Threat strategies*

In such a condition, although system has some dependable capabilities, it faces some challenges and threats in its interactional environment and territory. Thus, this type of strategies demonstrates how to make use of the existing strengths effectively to cope with environmental pressures, challenges, and threats.

c. *Weakness-Opportunity strategies*

This state implies that system enjoys several valuable opportunities in the environment but there are weaknesses, inabilities, and serious vulnerabilities that surround the region. Hence, through WO (Weakness-Opportunity) strategies, it is attempted to compensate for weakness through utilizing environmental opportunities.

d. *Weakness-Threat strategies*

This situation represents the most challenging and demanding circumstances for a system's operations. Despite having inherent weaknesses and limitations, the system is confronted with various pressures, challenges, and threats within its territory and environment. In response, the system adopts WT (Weakness-Threat) strategies aimed at addressing its weaknesses, reducing vulnerability to environmental threats, minimizing these threats, and, if possible, safeguarding itself against their impacts (Gürel & Tat, 2017). In this study, the vision and mission of the Afghan agricultural sector, as outlined in the previous section's upstream documents on sustainable economic development in Afghanistan, were determined. Furthermore, the main internal and external factors influencing the agricultural sector were identified by reviewing existing reports and documents and consulting with domestic and foreign consultants, experts, and ministries involved in the Afghan agricultural sector. A questionnaire instrument was used to evaluate and weigh these factors. The questionnaires were distributed among professors, specialists, and employees of ministries and foreign organizations in the agricultural sector of Afghanistan. Following the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the study findings were analyzed using the SWOT model, which included the Internal Factors Evaluation Matrix (IFEM) and the External Factors Evaluation Matrix (EFEM), along with a combination of internal and external factors. Ultimately, different strategies based on the various modes of SWOT (including ST, WO, SO, and WT) were adopted to introduce approaches resulting from this analysis as effective strategies for

overcoming the current undesirable situation and achieving a positive development trajectory aligned with sustainable development objectives. The following section elaborates the scoring process:

To evaluate the internal and external factors and determine their normalized coefficients, a weighted scoring approach was employed. Each factor was assigned a weighted score on a five-point Likert scale ranging from zero (unimportant) to one (very important). The total scores for each question were calculated based on the judgment of the respondents, and the mean total scores were derived to obtain the average weights. These average weights were then normalized to a range between zero and one, ensuring that the total weight of all factors equaled one. The normalized ratios reflected the importance of each factor according to respondents' opinions and its impact on current and future success.

To assess the current condition of each factor, a score ranging from 1 to 4 was allocated to the current situation score column using the Delphi technique. In the Internal Factors Evaluation (IFE) and External Factors Evaluation (EFE) matrices, scores of 1 and 2 were assigned to weaknesses and threats, while scores of 3 and 4 were assigned to strengths and opportunities. The weighted scores of each factor, obtained by multiplying the scores from the 3rd and 4th columns of the respective tables, were calculated, along with the total weighted score (final weighted) of the factors.

Following the scoring of factors using the SWOT matrix, the Strategic Position and Action Evaluation (SPACE) method was employed to determine the organization's orientation and select appropriate strategies. The Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) was then utilized to prioritize the strategies.

The SPACE matrix is a management tool used for sector analysis and strategy formulation. It helps determine the type of strategy that a sector should adopt and can be used in conjunction with other analyses such as SWOT analysis and assessing strategic alternatives (e.g., IE matrix). The SPACE matrix consists of four quadrants, each suggesting a different type or nature of strategy. The final weights obtained for each factor in the previous steps are used to determine the strategic position and type of strategy.

In this research, various tools and approaches were employed, including the Internal Factors Evaluation (IFE) matrix, External Factors Evaluation (EFE) matrix, SPACE matrix, SWOT matrix, and QSPM approach, as illustrated in Figure 4. The percentage share and allocated area for each internal and external factor were utilized in the SPACE analysis (Table 3).

QSPM approach

The Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) is a tool that employs simple calculations to select the best strategies. It is designed to address both internal and external changes and can be effective in decision-making processes (Zowain & Ismail, 2015). The QSPM follows a three-step approach to decision-making. First, the main factors relevant to the organization or sector are identified. These factors serve as the basis for strategy selection. In the next step, the most significant factors and the most desirable strategies are chosen (Nouri et al., 2008). The QSPM involves listing the internal and external strategic factors along with their weight scores for each strategic element. These weight scores are assigned based on the analysis of the SWOT matrix. The SWOT matrix identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the organization or sector. To rank the strategies, the attractiveness coefficient of each strategy is multiplied by the weight scores of the corresponding factors. The attractiveness of each strategy is determined by comparing it to other strategies based on the relevant factor. The scale for attractiveness assessment typically ranges from "not attractive" (1) to "very attractive" (4). In the third step, the sum of weight attractiveness scores is calculated for each

strategy. This sum indicates the relative attractiveness of each strategy, taking into account the influence of both internal and external factors. Higher values of weight attractiveness scores suggest a greater attractiveness of the strategy (Ghorbani et al., 2015). Table 5 shows the total and average weight attractiveness scores for each strategy. Information required for this section using Delphi technique including face-to-face interviews and questionnaire tools from government experts and consultants in the agricultural sector of Afghanistan, as well as employees of the Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Ministry and Deputy Directorate of Counter Narcotics (MCN & MOI- Deputy Ministry of Counter Narcotics) and FAO Representation in Afghanistan Assembled.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main vision for Afghanistan's agricultural sector, as mentioned in the upstream documents (referenced in the previous section), is to achieve sustainable economic growth and increase the welfare of its people. Afghanistan's GDP is closely tied to the performance of its agriculture. The mission of Afghanistan's agricultural sector encompasses several key elements, including increasing cultivation and production levels, managing water resources and improving productivity, enhancing employment and income opportunities, and promoting the growth of agricultural exports while reducing reliance on imports. This section aims to identify the capabilities of Afghanistan's agricultural sector and explore how they can be utilized for the country's economic development. To achieve this, the section begins by determining and ranking the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the agricultural sector based on reports from national and international institutions. The methodology employed in this assessment follows the approach presented in the previous section (Tables 1 & 2).

Seventeen strengths and twenty-three weaknesses have been identified for Afghanistan's agricultural sector, comprising a total of forty internal factors. In the strengths section, the factors of water resources, agricultural product development

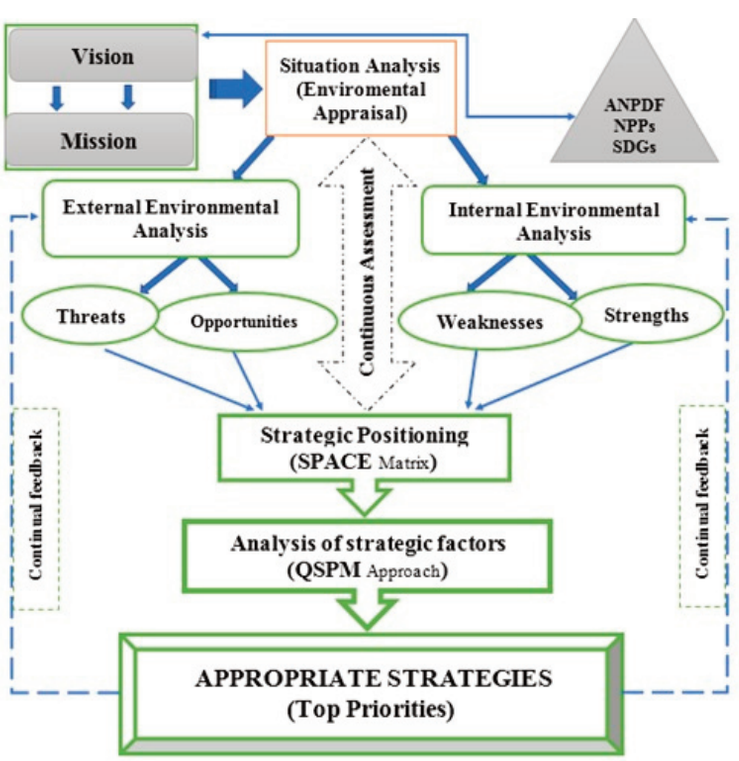

Figure 4. Conceptual Framework and Stages of Methodology

Table 1

Analysis and Evaluation of Internal Factors in the Agricultural Sector (Strengths & Weaknesses)

Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix					
Symbol	**Priority internal factors**	**Coefficient of Importance**	**Score (Intensity)**	**Rating (final weight)**	**Rank**
Strengths:					
S1	Climatic diversity, suitable for various products (including 10 agro-ecological climates)	0.0196	3.23	0.063	5
S2	Existence of fertile lands for development of activities	0.0195	3.84	0.075	2
S3	Surface water resources with suitable seasonal flow and groundwater resources with suitable water potential	0.0216	3.94	0.085	1
S4	Access to cheap and young labor due to large households and the presence of more than 70% of the population in agricultural and rural areas	0.0173	3.70	0.064	4
S5	Establish three independent ministries for agricultural affairs with provincial representations	0.0205	3.00	0.062	6
S6	Production of organic products and no need for high levels of fertilizer and chemical toxins	0.0119	3.94	0.047	10
S7	High potential in the field of medicinal plants with high added value	0.0130	3.60	0.047	11
S8	Ability to attract extensive international support through the implementation of various projects and direct foreign assistance	0.0195	3.41	0.067	3
S9	Access to agricultural specialists trained from other countries	0.0105	3.33	0.035	15
S10	Ability to control and manage surface water resources (access to the main source)	0.0151	3.20	0.048	9
S11	Promote entrepreneurial spirit among farmers, including the construction of greenhouses and commercial gardens	0.0131	3.00	0.039	13
S12	Existence of pastures and fertile substrates for the development of livestock and horticultural activities	0.0085	3.67	0.031	16
S13	National and international consensus on the need to develop the agricultural sector as the main sector	0.0111	3.51	0.039	14
S14	Traditional experience of Afghan farmers and good decision-making power	0.0091	3.16	0.029	17
S15	Establishment of agricultural cooperatives at the provincial and village levels and the possibility of providing joint services	0.0122	3.36	0.041	12
S16	The government's top priorities for economic growth, increasing food security and reducing poverty	0.0141	3.87	0.054	8
S17	Establishment of export corridors for Afghan agricultural products	0.0184	3.30	0.061	7
	The sum of strengths	**0.2549**	**-**	**0.886**	
weaknesses:					
W1	Lack of domestic capital for the reconstruction of irrigation and agricultural infrastructure	0.0462	1.80	0.083	1
W2	Lack of education level and technical abilities of agricultural labor force	0.0324	1.97	0.064	7
W3	Low productivity compared to international standards (traditional agriculture and smallholder system)	0.0394	1.92	0.076	2
W4	Severe restrictions on access to agricultural mechanization equipment	0.0301	1.61	0.048	13
W5	Lack of access to suitable and low-interest loans for farmers(High level of poverty rate among farmers)	0.0370	2.00	0.074	3
W6	Poor system of water supply canals and irrigation equipment (low irrigation efficiency)	0.0432	1.59	0.069	4
W7	Lack of access to inputs such as fertilizer, modified seeds and standard livestock diets	0.0280	1.67	0.047	14
W8	Seasonal outflow of water resources due to lack of canals, dams and water management systems	0.0440	1.41	0.062	9
W9	High casualties due to lack of access to a veterinarian, lack of proper training and common outbreaks of diseases	0.0336	1.22	0.041	18
W10	Risk of destruction of natural gardens and resources of medicinal plants due to lack of protection and improper harvest	0.0182	1.96	0.036	21
W11	Lack of access of farmers to storage facilities such as cold storage for crops and horticulture (high volume of waste)	0.0264	1.84	0.049	12
W12	Lack of farmers' access to product markets (problems related to lack of proper transportation routes and transportation facilities)	0.0419	1.62	0.068	5

Table 1
Countinued

Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix					
Symbol	**Priority internal factors**	**Coefficient of importance**	**Score (Intensity)**	**Rating (Final weight)**	**Rank**
W12	Lack of farmers' access to product markets (problems related to lack of proper transportation routes and transportation facilities)	0.0419	1.62	0.068	5
W13	Lack of development of value chain of products and conversion and complementary industries in order to process, package and produce various products	0.0408	1.11	0.045	15
W14	Weaknesses in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, operation and maintenance of national and international projects and proper policy-making in line with sectoral objectives	0.0384	1.61	0.062	10
W15	Cultivation of narcotics (poppy & cannabis) in different provinces and regions of Afghanistan	0.0225	1.77	0.040	20
W16	Lack of sufficient agricultural and horticultural diversity (increased production and income risk)	0.0168	1.07	0.018	23
W17	Weak backward and forward linkages and Lack of coordination between economic sectors	0.0261	1.65	0.043	16
W18	Lack of attention and investment in research, statistical monitoring and evaluation of agriculture from various aspects of agricultural sciences	0.0238	1.68	0.040	19
W19	High level of corruption in the agricultural sector and budget allocation without evaluation and monitoring	0.0417	1.50	0.063	8
W20	War and insecurity in rural areas and far from urban centers (lack of complete government control) and ethnic and religious conflicts	0.0418	1.55	0.065	6
W21	Lack of control over the southern borders and the entry of agricultural goods in competition with domestic production	0.0225	1.77	0.040	20
W22	Inadequate policies in the field of tariff and non-tariff barriers to support the agricultural sector	0.0255	1.69	0.043	17
W23	Existence of political obstacles, disputes and transportation problems in order to export products	0.0261	1.65	0.043	16
The sum of weaknesses		**0.7450**	**-**	**1.216**	
	Total	**(1) 100%**	**-**	**IEF = 2.1021≥x ≥4**	

capacities, and national and international support rank first, second, and third, respectively. Conversely, in the weaknesses section, infrastructure constraints, low productivity, and high poverty rates among farmers rank first, second, and third, respectively. The total weight for strengths is 0.88, while for weaknesses, it is 1.21. Additionally, the total final weight of the internal factors matrix is 2.10, indicating a predominance of weaknesses over strengths in Afghanistan's agricultural sector.

In the matrix of external factors, 11 opportunities and 19 threats have been identified for Afghanistan's agricultural sector, encompassing a total of thirty external factors. In terms of opportunities, the field of attracting international development support, the country's favorable geographical location for exports, and the attractiveness and demand for organic products in Afghanistan rank first, second, and third, respectively. Regarding threats, the possibility of foreign support being cut off, war and insecurity, and natural disasters rank first, second, and third, respectively. The total weight for opportunities is 2.61, while for threats, it is 0.46. Moreover, the total final weight of the external factors matrix is 3.08, indicating a predominance of opportunities over external threats in Afghanistan's agricultural sector. Weaknesses have a higher share in the internal space, while opportunities dominate the external space. Furthermore, in a positive environment, opportunities outweigh strengths, and in a negative environment, weaknesses out-

Table 2
Analysis and Evaluation of Internal Factors in the Agricultural Sector (Strengths & Weaknesses)

External factors evaluation matrix					
Symbol	**Priority external factors**	**Coefficient of importance**	**Score (Intensity)**	**Rating (Final weight)**	**Rank**
Opportunities:					
O1	Central geopolitical position and proximity to major consumer markets and demand for agricultural products (including India, China, Pakistan & Iran)	0.0881	3.85	0.339	2
O2	Demand for organic and natural quality products in Afghanistan from European and American countries	0.0832	3.94	0.328	3
O3	Special attention of countries and international centers supporting the development of Afghanistan to the agricultural sector and the ability to attract maximum financial support for its development projects	0.0929	3.95	0.367	1
O4	Access to foreign consultants and experts from developed countries in the field of agriculture	0.0503	3.11	0.156	10
O5	Possibility to benefit from the experience and technical knowledge (new technologies) of developed and developing neighboring countries	0.0480	3.67	0.176	9
O6	Non-membership of Afghanistan in the Convention on Border Waters and no restrictions on the use of its water resources	0.0587	3.42	0.201	7
O7	Vision of trade development considering the reputation of natural quality of agricultural products in the world and the untapped capacities of the country in this sector	0.0783	3.51	0.275	4
O8	High potential for diversification in the type and quality of products (including new areas in the production of honey, dates, bananas, etc.)	0.0685	3.81	0.261	5
O9	High potential of the agricultural sector and its conversion industries to attract domestic and foreign private sector	0.0580	3.57	0.207	6
O10	Floating exchange rates and encouraging the export of agricultural products	0.0384	3.07	0.118	11
O11	Afghanistan's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and creating a favorable environment for preferential large-scale trade with different countries	0.0538	3.56	0.192	8
	The sum of opportunities	**0.7181**	**-**	**2.619**	
Threats:					
T1	Interruption of international aid due to the ineffectiveness of past expenditures in the agricultural sector(Temporary & conditional foreign support)	0.0433	1.96	0.085	1
T2	Growth in demand for narcotics cultivation and increase in related price levels (increase in cultivation incentive)	0.0234	1.58	0.037	7
T3	Invasion of non-native plant pests and diseases from other countries and crop decline	0.0241	1.15	0.028	8
T4	Natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods(Afghanistan is a mountainous country prone to natural disasters)	0.0410	1.75	0.072	3
T5	Climate change and climatic adversity with different temporal and spatial distribution	0.0319	1.85	0.059	4
T6	Loss of commercial position in target markets due to the inability to continuously supply products in demand and weakness in trade policies and principles of marketing and competition	0.0179	1.29	0.023	9
T7	Economic instability due to political and security problems in the country	0.0251	1.88	0.047	5
T8	Expanding the scope of political disputes with neighboring countries and severing trade and economic cooperation	0.0365	1.24	0.045	6
T9	Expanding the scope of war and disputes of other countries in Afghanistan	0.0387	1.89	0.073	2
The sum of threats		**0.2820**	**-**	**0.469**	
	Total	**(1) 100%**	**-**	**EFE = 3.0881≥x ≥4**	

weigh threats (Figure 5). Figure 6 provides an overall assessment of the state of internal and external factors in forming the SWOT matrix. This chart clearly demonstrates that Afghanistan's agricultural sector has significant potential for growth through foreign opportunities. Overcoming weaknesses is crucial by leveraging these opportunities, affirming the sector's high capacity for Afghanistan's economic development.

The analysis and evaluation of strategic spaces indicate the need for reorientation or revision of strategies, with the first priority being given to WO (Weaknesses-Opportunities) strategies. Among the allocated strategic spaces for each type of strategy, WO strategies occupy a total area of 3.18 units, accounting for 49 percent of the share. Consequently, WO strategies will take precedence as the top strategic priorities for the agricultural sector in the country. Aggressive, defensive, and diversification strategies follow in the subsequent categories of strategic priorities for this sector (Table 3).

The internal-external (IEM) matrix is established, and SWOT strategies are derived based on the information provided in Table 4. Subsequently, four types of strategies for the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector are presented. These strategies are documented in Tables 4-1 to 4-4.

In order to determine the position of Afghanistan's agricultural sector in the strategic space; Internal and external matrices are used. Figure 7 shows the final weights of the internal-external matrix of Afghanistan's agricultural sector in order to determine its strategic position.

Afghanistan's agricultural sector primarily requires conservative strategies such as reorientation and policy revision. The findings underscore the necessity of implementing supportive policies for the agricultural sector in Afghanistan. Additionally, it is recom-

Table 3
Strategic Space Analysis (Types & Area of Strategic Spaces)

Row	Type of strategy	Description of the strategy	Area	Percentage (weight)	Rank
1	SO	Aggressive or developmental strategies	2.3218	35.76%	2
2	ST	Diversification or competitive strategies	0.4159	6.41%	4
3	WO	Reorientation or Revision Strategies	3.1844	49.05%	1
4	WT	Defensive or reduction strategies	0.5704	8.79%	3
-	Total	6.4924	1	-	

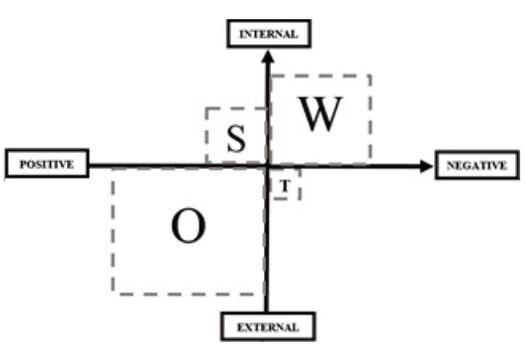

Figure 5. Status of General Space Analysis (Internal and External Space and Positive and Negative Space)

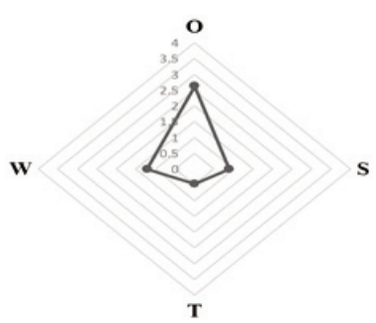

Figure 6. General Assessment of The Situation of Internal and External Points (SWOT)

Table 4
The Structure of IEM Internal-External Matrix Formation and Extraction of SWOT Strategies

Internal factors (Agricultural Sector)IFEE xternal factors Environmental)EFE	Strengths - S(List of strengths) S1, S2,..., Sn	Weaknesses - W(List of weaknesses) W1, W2..., Wn
Opportunities - O (List of opportunities) O1, O2,..., On	**Strategies – SO (Table 4-1)**Maxi-Maxi strategy to be in a position where it can maximize both strengths and opportunities.(Selection of strategies for the best use of opportunities and strengths)	**Strategies – WO (Table 4-3)**Mini-Maxi strategyto minimize the weaknesses and to maximize the opportunities.(Selecting strategies to make the most of opportunities and improve weaknesses)
Threats - T (List of threats) T1, T2, ..., Tn	**Strategies – ST (Table 4-2)**Maxi-Mini strategy to maximize the strengths while minimizing the threats through these strengths.(Selection of strategies to find solutions to eliminate threats and use of strengths)	**Strategies – WT (Table 4-4)**Mini-Mini strategy to minimize both weaknesses and threats.(Selection of strategies to find solutions to eliminate threats and reduce or eliminate weaknesses)

Table 4-1
Aggressive or Developmental Strategies (SO)

Symbol	Type of Strategy	Combination of Desired Factors		Time schedule
	Strategy SO	**Opportunities O**	**Strengths S**	
SO1	Expanding the level of cultivation and utilization of water resources in order to increase added value and export products to available and potential export target markets	O1	S2, S3, S4	Medium term and long term
SO2	Development of production of organic products with natural quality in order to establish the national brand and market position of agricultural export products in order to develop the market	O2	S5	Medium term
SO3	Efforts to diversify production and use all agricultural, livestock and horticultural production capacities in different climatic and ecological areas of the country	O1	S1	Medium term
SO4	Management and application of organizational infrastructure for regional planning and recognition of the needs of each region in order to purposefully direct international support and assistance to sustainable cases	O3, O4	S5	short term
SO5	Development of transmission and water supply infrastructure as well as irrigation systems by attracting international support and the plans of foreign specialist consultants	O3, O5	S10	long term
SO6	Facilitate the transfer of technical knowledge, extension training and entrepreneurship to farmers in coordination with ministries and with the support of international organizations including the FAO, WFP and the Asia Development Foundation (ADF)	O9, O10	S11	short term and Medium term
SO7	Attracting domestic and foreign private sector to invest in complementary industries and complete the value chain of agricultural products	O10	S11	Medium term
SO8	Planning to maximize financial and incentive support of WTO and provide trade facilities for Afghanistan's agricultural sector	O10, O11	S17, S16	long term

Table 4-2
Diversification or Competitive Strategies (ST)

Symbol	Type of strategy	Combination of desired factors		Time schedule
	Strategy ST	Threats T	Strengths S	
ST1	Expanding the diversity of crop areas and water resources management through the implementation of national and international projects with the participation of farmers	T1	S2, S8, S13, S17	Medium term and long term
ST2	Creating alternative and diverse cultivation and livelihoods for poppy (narcotics) farmers with products such as saffron, Pistachio and other garden products in accordance with the climatic-agricultural conditions of each region	T2	S6, S7, S11, S12	short term
ST3	Utilizing geopolitical position and supportive relations of other countries in order to create various air and ground export corridors for Afghan agricultural products with preferential and incentive tariffs	T6, T8	S2, S17	Medium term
ST4	Creating access to normal and necessary agricultural loans in appropriate seasons and times of risks of crop failure or reduced agricultural production	T5, T7, T9	S8, S17	short term and Medium term
ST5	Preparation of risk management and forecasting system for agricultural production and comprehensive production and income insurance program for farmers	T3, T4	S8, S17	long term
ST6	Cultivation of diverse crops with comparative advantage in each area to reduce the effects of drought and climate change	T5, T7, T9	S8, S17	Medium term

mended to adopt research policies to evaluate and assess the impact of existing policies and programs within the sector. This approach aims to address the structural and infrastructural weaknesses of the agricultural sector and capitalize on external opportunities. By following this path, the agricultural sector can transition to an offensive position, as indicated by the dotted line. In this position, Afghanistan's agricultural sector will progress by leveraging its strengths and maximizing foreign opportunities, ultimately paving the way for the country's economic development.

In the final section of this study, the quantitative QSPM (Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix) method is utilized to prioritize the strategies identified for the executive strategy in the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, as outlined in the research methodology section. The outcomes of this section are presented in Table 5, which displays the ranking of the top 15 strategies for the sector's development. The results of this section, based on the calculations and investigations conducted in previous stages, highlight the significance of conservative strategies compared to other types of strategies. The columns related to the evaluation of internal and external factors assess the importance of each factor group in formulating the relevant strategy. It is evident that for conservative strategies, leveraging external opportunities to overcome the structural and infrastructural weaknesses of Afghanistan's agricultural sector is of utmost importance. Offensive strategies, with four priorities, are ranked next, followed by Diversification and Defensive strategies, each with two priorities, in the subsequent categories of executive

Table 4-3
Reorientation or Revision Strategies (WO)

Symbol	Type of Strategy	Combination of Desired Factors		Time schedule
	Strategy WO	Opportunities O	Weaknesses W	
WO1	Review and focus international support on water management projects and improve irrigation systems appropriate to each region	O3, O6	W1, W3, W8	Medium term and long term
WO2	Transfer of technical and scientific knowledge of foreign consultants and directing sponsoring international organizations to develop capacity building programs and specialized training in agricultural sciences and industries	O3, O4	W2, W3	Medium term
WO3	Review and modification of cultivation methods and patterns to increase the productivity of production factors and reduce waste (increase the volume and quality of the product)	O2, O3	W3, W4, W5	Medium term and long term
WO4	Review and focus on improving agricultural infrastructure and facilities and rural access roads to eliminate geographical isolation and move farmers towards commercial agriculture	O3	W2, W3	long term
WO5	Establishment of agricultural service centers with the cooperation of neighboring countries in each region to transfer the required technical equipment and facilities along with providing various financial services, marketing, maintenance (cold stores), processing and packaging of specialized products in each region as a production hub	O3, O5	W4, W5, W6, W7	Medium term
WO6	Review and draw the attention of international organizations to the financial support of projects that have been developed in line with the National Plan for the Development of the Agricultural Sector and taking into account all aspects and indigenous needs of the regions (In all stages of implementation, operation, monitoring and protection with the sustainable participation of the people of the region).	O3, O6, O8	W19, W15, W14	short term and Medium term
WO7	Coordination of the Ministry of Agriculture with other governmental organizations in order to implement programs for the preservation and care of gardens, fruit forests, environment, pastures and built-up areas, including bridges, transportation routes and dams	O2, O3, O5	W10, W14, W20	Medium term
WO8	Implementation of joint projects of ministries to provide veterinary services, rehabilitation of forests and natural gardens and plant protection, along with training on the proper use of these resources in a sustainable manner.	O3, O4, O7	W9, W10	Medium term
WO9	Directing government investment programs to rehabilitate rural transportation routes, canals and small dams, directing water and creating local markets for agricultural products in rural and urban centers	O3, O6	W12	long term
WO10	Attracting domestic and foreign private sector in complementary industries, production of strategic and high value-added products, diversity of activities in greenhouses and production of medicinal plants	O7, O8, O9	W15, W16	Medium term
WO11	Use of local specialized personnel and experienced farmers along with foreign consultants to develop projects in accordance with the local realities and priorities of each region	O4, O5	W14, W20	short term
WO12	Application of research, evaluation and monitoring to review the effects of policies and projects to reduce the level of corruption, reform policies and measure its effects in order to move towards optimal policies	O3, O5, O8	W17, W18, W19, W22, W23, W24	short term and Medium term

Table 4-4
Defensive or Reduction Strategies (WT)

Symbol	Type of strategy	Combination of desired factors		Time schedule
	Strategy WT	Threats T	Weaknesses W	
WT1	Preparation of statistical information from different sub-sectors of agriculture and different levels of cultivation, production and marketing in order to measure the effects of policies and programs (review of policies and programs)	T1, T6, T7	W3, W9, W10, W14, W12, W22, W23	Medium term and long term
WT2	Increase irrigation efficiency, manage surface water resources and reduce farmers' production costs by providing inputs and marketing facilities by monitoring the optimal allocation of support resources and reducing corruption and economic rents	T3, T4	W1, W2, W4, W5, W6, W7, W11, W19	Medium term
WT3	Expand coordination among government agencies for reform Smallholder system and traditional farming practices. also reviewing and adapting the structure and goals of agricultural development to the local and national conditions of the country	T2, T8	W13, W15, W18, W20, W21	long term
WT4	Preventive and precautionary measures against natural disasters by creating a suitable platform for attracting agricultural experts, informing farmers and involving them in development programs by delegating part of the executive and research affairs to stakeholders and the private sector.	T3, T4, T2, T8	W16, W20, W21	Medium term and long term

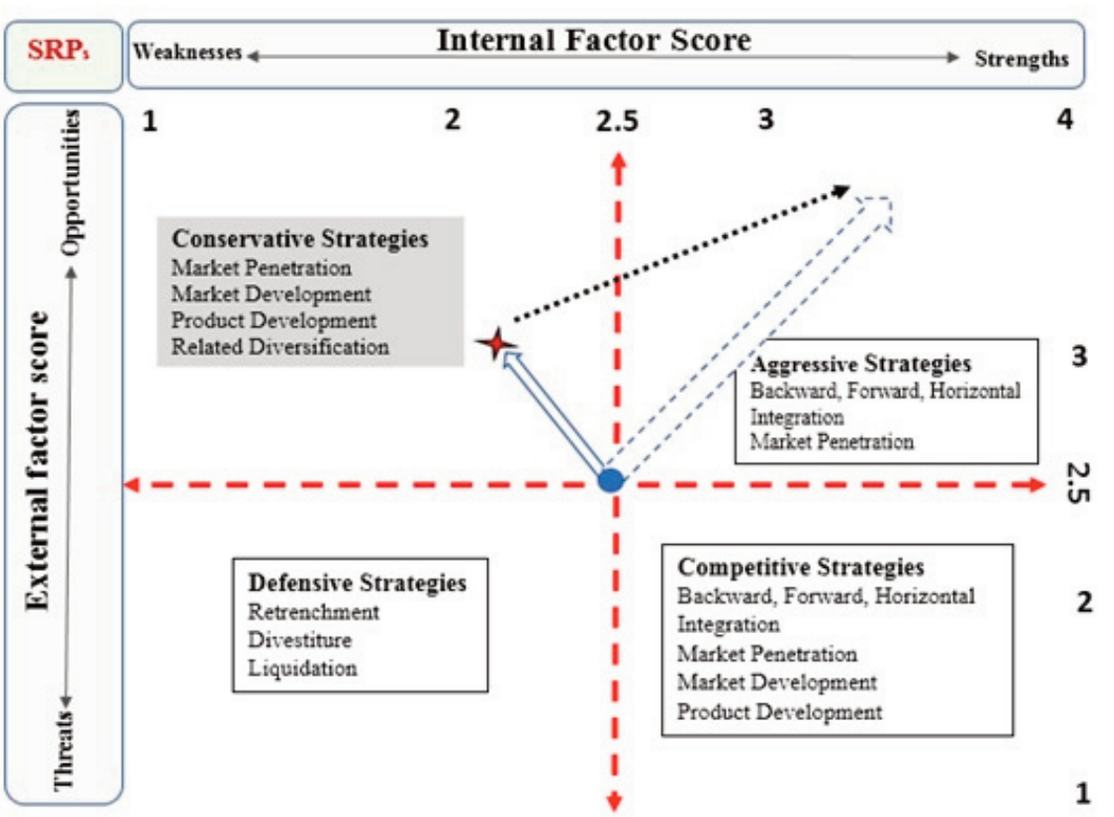

Figure 7. SPACE matrix: Final Weights of the Internal-External Matrix of Afghanistan's Agricultural Sector (Strategic Position)

Table 5
Prioritization of Afghanistan Agricultural Sector Development Strategies under QSPM Approach

Type of strategies based on priority	Effective factors (Weighted attraction)		Average weighted attraction	Final weighted (Total weighted attraction)	rank
	Internal factors	External factors			
WO1	5.023	3.878	4.450	8.901	1
WO9	4.783	3.692	4.237	8.474	2
WO3	4.778	3.688	4.233	8.466	3
WO5	4.758	3.673	4.216	8.432	4
WO6	4.484	3.461	3.973	7.945	5
WO4	4.477	3.456	3.967	7.933	6
WO12	4.189	3.234	3.712	7.423	7
SO1	3.251	3.680	3.466	6.931	8
SO7	3.145	3.230	3.187	6.374	9
WT1	3.218	3.053	3.136	6.271	10
SO8	2.525	3.137	2.831	5.661	11
SO3	3.028	2.588	2.808	5.616	12
WT2	3.239	2.353	2.796	5.592	13
ST1	2.883	1.359	1.359	4.242	14
ST2	2.807	1.323	1.323	4.130	15

strategic priorities for Afghanistan's agricultural sector.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In this article, the focus is on determining and formulating comprehensive and appropriate strategies for the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, with the aim of achieving the goals outlined in the upstream documents for sustainable economic development in the country. To achieve this, the ideals and missions of Afghanistan's agricultural sector were determined using the Delphi technique and questionnaire instrument, considering all the components and various factors of the internal and external environments. The SWOT analytical framework was then employed to identify suitable strategies. Subsequently, the situational assessment and strategic actions were evaluated using the SPACE matrix, applying the QSPM strategic approach. The strategies were then sorted based on their importance and priority. The findings reveal that Afghanistan's agricultural sector is currently in an unfavorable position concerning domestic factors and exhibits numerous weaknesses. As a result, the sector requires conservative strategies to improve its standing. Based on the prioritization of selected strategies, the focus should be on directing international support towards improving water infrastructure and water resources management, enhancing marketing infrastructure and transportation routes, establishing local markets, and providing marketing services. Additionally, increasing production productivity, implementing policies tailored to the local and climatic conditions of each agricultural area, shifting the agricultural sector towards commercial production, and conducting research to measure the effects of policies are crucial priorities. Furthermore, increasing production, expanding the cultivated area, maximizing the utilization of water resources, attracting private sector investments in conversion and complementary industries within the agricultural sector, providing high-quality inputs, offering financial support to farmers, and promoting market development are also of high priority.

Diversifying production and cultivation pat-

terns and creating alternative livelihoods within Afghanistan's agricultural sector are crucial in addressing threats such as the proliferation of poppy cultivation for narcotics. Another key requirement for the agricultural sector is the continuous collection of statistical information from different sub-sectors, cultivation levels, production levels, and marketing activities. This data is essential for evaluating the impact of policies and programs. Furthermore, it is recommended that the role of the agricultural sector in Afghanistan's economic development be assessed through extensive research and studies, taking into account national and international consensus on its development. By presenting the sector's perspectives and potential, it becomes possible to attract greater support and investment. Additionally, organizing seminars, exhibitions, providing marketing services, and establishing export facilities for agricultural products can foster increased support and demand for the sector.

Enhancing interactions between farmers and the government can significantly improve the effectiveness of strategies, policies, and the long-term sustainability of outcomes, all while promoting public participation. Another essential requirement for the agricultural sector is to provide extension training and enhance the technical skills of farmers to increase agricultural productivity. Therefore, the establishment of cooperatives and non-governmental support organizations plays a crucial role in promoting and facilitating the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector.

Additionally, the research suggests several policy recommendations for the sector's development, including:

Protection, rehabilitation, and sustainable development of water and soil resources, along with the management and prevention of damage caused by natural disasters and climate change, are essential for supporting farmers in such situations. Providing financing and insurance coverage to reduce production risks for farmers is crucial. Implementing income support schemes and guaranteeing prices for agricultural products can provide stability and security to farmers. Undertaking mechanization projects and adopting new technologies to improve efficiency and reduce waste are important steps. Organizing the smallholding system can support project development and increase production per unit area. These policy suggestions aim to foster the growth and development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector.

To effectively implement the proposed strategies, it is recommended to first determine the participation and contributions of public, private, and international institutions in implementing each strategy. Additionally, a detailed implementation schedule should be developed for each strategy based on their priority, taking into account the existing conditions and potentials. This will ensure a systematic and coordinated approach to realizing the potential benefits of each strategy.

It is important to note that as the selected strategies for agricultural sector development are implemented, it is necessary to continuously review and re-evaluate the policies at each stage of the program. This allows for improvements to be made to the defined strategies based on the results obtained.

In conclusion, this study offers a valuable and important method and technique for reviewing the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector. The findings demonstrate that tools like SWOT analysis can be useful in identifying positive and negative factors, and in providing strategies for sector development. These results can assist managers and ministries involved in the agricultural sector in implementing appropriate strategies for its growth and advancement.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Each of the authors contributed to the development of the paper.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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