



THE ROLE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN ENHANCING TRADE FACILITATION AND EXPORT POTENTIAL OF UZBEKISTAN

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 10.07.2025 Accepted: 03.09.2025	Digital platforms are reshaping trade facilitation worldwide by streamlining documentary compliance, reducing logistics frictions, and broadening market access for firms—especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This article assesses how such platforms can enhance Uzbekistan's export potential. Drawing on comparative evidence (World Bank Logistics Performance Index, WTO trade outlook), policy documents (UNECE, WCO), and country-specific initiatives (Single Window, Uzbekistan Trade Info, e-phytosanitary certification), we analyze where Uzbekistan stands and what additional gains are feasible. We adopt a comparative-analytical methodology, triangulating international benchmarks with case-based illustrations (e-certificates of origin, e-phyto, B2B marketplaces, and commodity e-trading). Our results indicate tangible progress: the national Single Window and step-by-step trade portal reduce information and compliance costs; the adoption of IPPC ePhyto advances paperless trade; and curated access to major global platforms (e.g., Alibaba) expands commercial reach. Remaining constraints include uneven systems interoperability, gaps in cross-border data exchange, logistics bottlenecks, and SME capabilities. We propose a sequenced reform package: (i) full end-to-end digitization of priority certificates; (ii) interoperability via international standards (UN/CEFACT, WCO Data Model); (iii)

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targeted SME e-export support; and (iv) data-driven performance management tied to the 2025–2030 national trade facilitation roadmap. These measures can accelerate export diversification and reduce time and cost to trade.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, digital platforms, trade facilitation, e-commerce, Single Window, export potential, logistics performance, ePhyto, paperless trade, international trade integration.

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Introduction

Digitalization has become a primary driver of trade competitiveness. Platforms that automate documentary requirements, enable secure data exchange, and match buyers and sellers reduce frictions across the trade cycle—from pre-shipment compliance to last-mile delivery. According to the World Bank's 2023 *Logistics Performance Index* (LPI), countries that digitize customs and logistics processes achieve faster, more reliable trade flows.

Uzbekistan, a land-linked economy seeking deeper integration into regional and global markets, has launched multiple digital reforms. However, questions remain about their systemic impact: to what extent do current platforms reduce time/cost to trade, expand export markets for SMEs, and align with international standards?

This article evaluates the role of digital platforms in Uzbekistan's trade facilitation and export potential, situating national initiatives within global and regional benchmarks. It identifies gaps that constrain impact and proposes actionable policy recommendations for government, industry, and international partners.

We synthesize recent country developments—UNECE's 2025–2030 National Trade Facilitation Roadmap, adoption of ePhyto, and curated participation in global marketplaces—into a coherent analytical framework linking platform functions to measurable export outcomes.

Literature Review

Studies of trade digitalization emphasize the efficiency gains from paperless trade, Single Windows, and electronic certification (e.g., e-certificates of origin, ePhyto). The WCO and UNCTAD highlight how the WCO Data Model, the UN/CEFACT standards, and the ASYCUDA program underpin data harmonization and interoperable processing. The WTO's *Global Trade Outlook 2024* further links diffusion of digitally delivered services and trade growth to resilient, tech-enabled supply chains.

The LPI 2023 shows that countries with modern, digital customs and logistics infrastructure (tracking, timeliness, streamlined border compliance) outperform peers, underscoring the complementarity between platform adoption and hard infrastructure.

In Central Asia and the CAREC region, development partners (ADB, UNESCAP)

document customs digitalization, Single Window rollouts, and cross-border e-commerce pilots as priority reforms to cut clearance times and enhance transparency. CAREC highlights e-customs, e-certification, cross-border e-commerce, and Single Windows as regional focus areas.

UNCTAD's eTrade Readiness work, WCO workshops, and FAO/IPPC analyses on ePhyto present concrete evidence that electronic documentation reduces processing time, enhances integrity, and lowers costs. Country case material suggests that digitized permits and certificates deliver especially strong benefits for perishable agri-food exports, where delays are costly.

Methodology

We employ a comparative and analytical approach combining (i) desk-based review of international indices (LPI), (ii) analysis of official platforms and policy documents (Single Window, Uzbekistan Trade Info, UNECE roadmap), and (iii) illustrative case studies/statistics (e-phyto adoption; e-certificates of origin; marketplace integration). Data points on trade volumes and structures draw from WITS/COMTRADE, Trading Economics (COMTRADE mirror), OEC profiles, and selected bilateral factsheets. This triangulation enables cross-validation of trends and avoids reliance on a single source.

Analysis & Results

Single Window and e-services. Uzbekistan operates an online Single Window (singlewindow.uz) for electronic declarations, contract registration, and pre-arrival information. The WCO supported Uzbekistan's enhancement of its Single Window and data model alignment through a 2022 workshop under the Global Trade Facilitation Programme. These measures support risk-based controls and reduced documentary compliance.

Trade procedures portal. The *Uzbekistan Trade Info* portal offers a WTO-TFA-compliant, step-by-step guide to import/export/transit procedures, developed by the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade with ITC and UNCTAD support (EU-funded). Such portals reduce information asymmetry and compliance errors for traders, particularly SMEs.

Electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto). Uzbekistan's NPPO adopted the IPPC ePhyto Solution, enabling digital exchange of phytosanitary certificates via a national system (ephyto.uz) integrated with the IPPC Hub. This is critical for time-sensitive agri-food exports.

Certificates of origin (CO) digitalization. Globally, chambers and governments are moving to electronic COs (eCOs) using platforms such as essCert and ICC frameworks; Uzbekistan's rules of origin and CO issuance are formalized in government guidance, and expanding eCO uptake would complement other paperless initiatives.

Market-access platforms. The government has partnered with Alibaba to curate a "Made in Uzbekistan" section, subsidizing firm onboarding to expand B2B reach. In addition, domestic B2B/e-trading channels (e.g., the Uzbek Commodity Exchange's electronic platforms; the UzTrade initiative for SME exports) can help aggregate and signal supply to

foreign buyers.



Figure 1. Export Growth Trend (2015-2024)¹

Recent statistics show sizable trade growth and continued diversification (**Figure 1**). WITS/COMTRADE and other trackers report merchandise exports above USD 15 billion in 2022 (latest harmonized data), with more recent estimates at around USD 31–32 billion in 2024. Top export destinations include China, Russia, and Turkey (**Figure 2**), while exports remain concentrated in gold, textiles, and agricultural goods (**Figure 3**), reflecting both commodity dependence and ongoing diversification.

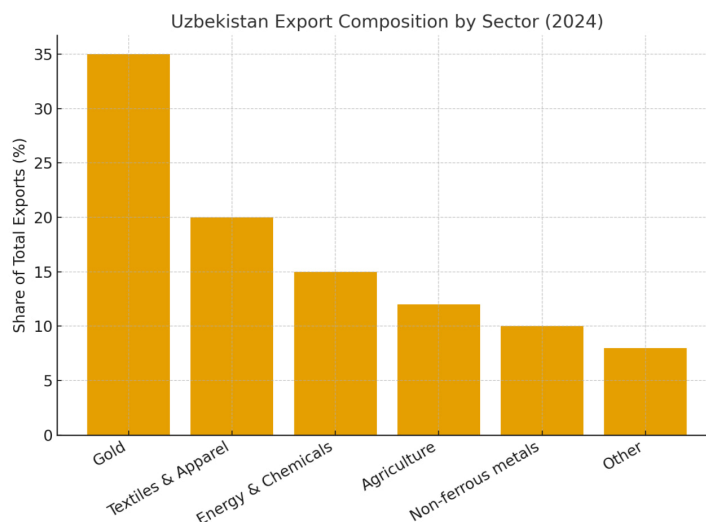


Figure 2: Uzbekistan's top export partners (2024)²

Figure 3: Export composition by sector (2024)³

Platform-integration examples and effects:

1. **Pre-arrival processing through Single Window** reduces manual touchpoints and enables earlier risk assessment. The Doing Business 2020 round (latest vintage) recorded Uzbekistan's reforms on risk-based inspections and simplified import documentation, consistent with digitalization aims.

2. **E-phyto adoption** shortens clearance for perishables and mitigates fraud and loss, with FAO/IPPC evidence associating e-certificates with faster delivery and lower costs—thus improving margins and reducing spoilage risk.

3. **eCO expansion** via standardized, verifiable formats (ICC accreditation) can close a remaining paper bottleneck and align with foreign customs' acceptance of electronic documents.

4. **Trade information transparency** via the step-by-step portal (Uzbekistan Trade Info) reduces compliance errors and search costs—an especially binding constraint for SMEs new to exporting.

5. **Marketplace access** (Alibaba) addresses demand-side constraints by matching Uzbek suppliers with global buyers, complemented by export promotion subsidies and services.

Discussion

Global trade's cyclical recovery—projected by the WTO for 2024–2025—means that countries able to execute end-to-end paperless trade and integrate supply-chain data will capture disproportionate gains. Uzbekistan's 2025–2030 National Trade Facilitation Roadmap provides a strategic anchor to coordinate agencies, sequence reforms, and align with planned WTO accession. This creates an opportunity to (i) close remaining digitization gaps, (ii) embed international data standards, and (iii) institutionalize performance management (KPIs on time, cost, variability).

Challenges and risks

Uzbekistan's **Logistics Performance Index (LPI)** scores show gradual improvement from 2015 to 2023 (**Figure 4**), but they remain below global benchmarks. This signals the need for targeted interventions in tracking, logistics competence, and border efficiency to complement digital platform gains.

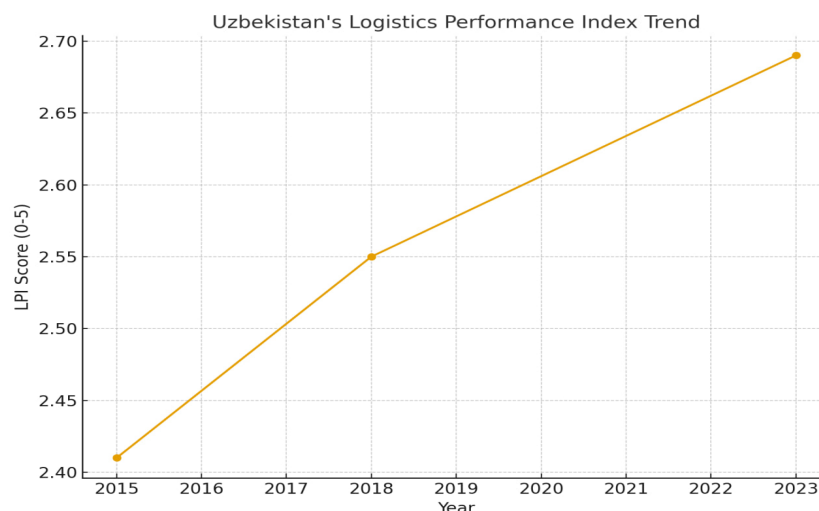


Figure 4: Uzbekistan's Logistics Performance Index trend (2015–2023)⁴

1. **Interoperability and standards.** Multiple systems (customs, SPS, chambers, logistics) must exchange data securely using common models (WCO, UN/CEFACT). Piecemeal digitization risks “digital islands” and redundant data entry.
2. **Cross-border data exchange.** While ePhyto is live, other border certificates (origin, veterinary, conformity) require reciprocal acceptance and trusted exchange mechanisms. UNECE/CAREC fora stress the need for regional trust frameworks.
3. **Logistics performance.** Uzbekistan’s LPI results signal progress potential in tracking/tracing, logistics competence, and timeliness; without improvements in first-/last-mile logistics and corridor management, digital gains may not fully translate.
4. **SME capabilities.** Onboarding SMEs to e-export platforms requires skills (content, pricing, fulfillment) and services (payments, returns) to convert listings into sustained sales. Evidence from trade-promotion programs suggests targeted coaching and co-financing are decisive.
5. **Governance and cybersecurity.** As data volumes grow, cyber risk and data protection become systemic. Alignment with international best practices and audit trails (e.g., for eCOs) is necessary to maintain trust.

Policy gaps:

- **End-to-end paperless chains** are not yet universal (e.g., electronic CO acceptance at scale, veterinary/e-health certificates, preferential proof of origin workflows).
- **Real-time logistics visibility** (track-and-trace; API integrations with carriers, terminals) remains limited.
- **Outcome-based monitoring** for trade facilitation is nascent; linking the Roadmap’s actions to quantifiable KPIs would enable iterative course correction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Uzbekistan has established core digital foundations—Single Window services, a comprehensive trade procedures portal, ePhyto integration, and curated access to major e-marketplaces. Comparative evidence suggests these tools can materially cut time and cost to trade, raise transparency, and expand export opportunities. Yet the full benefits require interoperability, cross-border acceptance of electronic documents, logistics upgrades, and SME enablement.

For Government (central agencies and regulators):

1. **Complete end-to-end digitization of priority certificates** (origin, veterinary, conformity, halal where relevant) with legal recognition of electronic documents and cross-border mutual acceptance, building on ePhyto.
2. **Interoperability by design:** adopt WCO Data Model/UN-CEFACT standards across agencies; expand Single Window to a true data exchange layer (APIs), minimizing rekeying and enabling pre-arrival risk assessment.
3. **Roadmap implementation and KPI governance:** operationalize the UNECE 2025–2030 Roadmap with a dashboard of time/cost indicators, corridor performance metrics, and service-level targets.

4. **Corridor logistics and LPI levers:** invest in tracking/tracing interfaces, authorized economic operator (AEO) expansion, and time-release studies linked to digital reforms to improve LPI dimensions.

5. **Cybersecurity and data protection:** institute risk-based audits, public-key infrastructure strengthening, and secure archiving for e-documents, aligned with ICC verification practices for COs.

For Business (exporters, logistics providers, chambers):

1. **Adopt e-documentation early** (eCOs, e-invoices, e-SPS) and integrate with the Single Window; chambers should scale accredited eCO issuance and digital verification.

2. **Exploit B2B platforms strategically** (e.g., Alibaba) with professionalized product content, pricing, and fulfillment; leverage export-promotion support for onboarding and marketing.

3. **Data-driven operations:** integrate ERP/WMS with customs and logistics APIs to automate status updates and improve predictability.

For International Partners (UNECE, WCO, UNCTAD, development banks):

1. **Technical assistance for interoperability** (WCO DM, UN/CEFACT), legal frameworks for e-document recognition, and cross-border pilots (mutual acceptance of eCOs, veterinary e-certificates).

2. **Regional projects** under CAREC/UNESCAP for paperless transit and real-time data exchange across borders.

3. **SME e-export programs** combining training, analytics, and co-financed digital marketing to convert online presence into recurring orders.

If pursued in a coordinated manner, these steps can accelerate export diversification, deepen regional integration, and raise Uzbekistan's standing on international logistics and trade facilitation benchmarks.

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