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THE ROLE OF THE GREEN TRANSITION AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN ENHANCING THE TRADE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Lida CUCOȘ
Moldova State University, 60 Alexe Mateevici, Chișinău, Republic of Moldova
lidacucos.md@gmail.com
ORCID iD: 0009-0008-0232-3352

Ioan G. POP
Universitatea Emanuel din Oradea, Romania
ioan.pop@emanuel.ro
ORCID: 0000-0003-4880-1387

Purpose of the article: *The article analyzes the impact of the green transition and technological innovations on the trade competitiveness of the Republic of Moldova. It examines how integrating environmental policies with advanced technologies in production, management, and logistics can strengthen the country's position in international markets. The focus is placed on key sectors driving sustainable growth-renewable energy, organic agriculture, and innovative industrial and service technologies-and their role in supporting economic diversification, resilience, and long-term competitiveness.*

Methodology: *The study employs a qualitative and comparative research design, combining documentary analysis, policy review, and statistical evaluation of trade, energy, and innovation indicators. Case studies of green initiatives and enterprise modernization illustrate how sustainability-oriented practices influence export performance and market adaptability. The analytical framework is based on the principles of the green economy and international competitiveness theory.*

Conclusions: *The results show that the green transition, supported by technological innovation, enhances Moldova's trade competitiveness by improving product quality, reducing energy dependence, and expanding access to EU markets. Integrating renewable energy and ecological standards strengthens economic resilience and supports sustainable growth.*

Originality: *The article's originality lies in its interdisciplinary approach that connects green transition strategies with technological modernization and trade competitiveness, providing policy-oriented insights for Moldova's European integration process.*

Keywords: *Green transition, Technological innovations, International trade, Renewable energy, Organic agriculture, Competitiveness.*

JEL Classifications: Q56, 033, F14

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the concept of the green transition has evolved from an environmental strategy into a fundamental prerequisite for economic development. In the context of climate change, energy crises, and geopolitical pressures, countries are increasingly accelerating the structural transformation of their economies. The Republic of Moldova, despite its small-scale economy and significant dependence on energy and resource imports, is following the same direction.

Moldova's trade competitiveness today depends not only on the quality and price of its products but also on its ability to meet the growing demands for sustainability and innovation. The markets of the European Union—Moldova's main trading partner—require environmentally certified products, with clear traceability and obtained through environmentally friendly processes. At the same time, new generations of consumers place greater emphasis on the origin of products and the social responsibility of companies.

Under these circumstances, the role of the green transition and technological innovation becomes central. They no longer represent complementary measures but decisive factors enabling the Republic of Moldova to diversify its markets, attract foreign investments, and strengthen its international image as a reliable partner.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The study employs documentary analysis of national and international strategies, regulations, and reports concerning the green transition and technological innovations, complemented by a descriptive statistical analysis of official data. The main sources include the National Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova, the National Center for Sustainable Energy, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry. Legislative information was drawn from Law No. 10/2016 on the Promotion of Energy from Renewable Sources and from the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030." The analysis is supported by relevant international reports, including the European Commission's Eco-Innovation Action Plan, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) assessment (2023), and academic studies addressing innovation and competitiveness. The application of the comparative method and descriptive analysis enabled the identification of trends in green indicators for the period 2018–2024, highlighting the structural transformations of the Moldovan economy in relation to European sustainability standards.

The analysis was conducted through the comparison of statistical data series, evaluation of the regulatory framework, and triangulation of results to ensure coherence. The triangulation of information obtained from statistical sources, policy documents, and academic literature reinforced the validity of the findings, while their interpretation was grounded in the principles of the green economy and international competitiveness.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The green transition in the Republic of Moldova manifests itself through three major dimensions—renewable energy, organic agriculture, and technological innovation—identified through the qualitative and comparative analysis applied in the study.

In recent years, renewable energy has experienced accelerated growth in the Republic of Moldova. The installed capacity of wind and solar energy has expanded significantly over the past five years, while the government has launched public tenders for photovoltaic and wind projects, offering long-term price guarantees to investors. This strategy not only reduces energy dependence but also opens opportunities for future exports of green energy. Furthermore, companies that utilize renewable energy in their production processes can benefit from a positive reputation in foreign markets, where consumers are increasingly attentive to the source of the energy used.

Statistical analysis was employed to highlight the pace of growth in installed capacities and to demonstrate the positive correlation between the development of green energy infrastructure and the commercial potential of the Republic of Moldova.

The Republic of Moldova has set ambitious targets in the field of renewable energy, aiming to reduce its dependence on energy imports and create a more sustainable system. In recent years, the installed capacity for green energy production has shown steady growth. According to the National Center for Sustainable Energy, this development is driven both by large-scale projects and by the increasing participation of prosumers—individuals and legal entities that generate green energy for their own consumption and supply the surplus to the grid. Currently, these prosumers account for a significant share of renewable energy production, benefiting from support mechanisms such as net billing, fixed tariffs, and long-term guaranteed prices. These instruments contribute to investment recovery and encourage greater involvement from the private sector.

The Ministry of Energy has established a major goal of increasing the share of renewable energy in the national energy mix to 30% by 2030. To achieve this target, new capacity-building projects have been launched, focusing primarily on solar and wind energy, as well as complementary sources such as biomass, biogas, and small hydropower plants. In parallel, investments are planned for the modernization of the electricity grid to integrate green production and to support the development of local energy communities.

Another key priority is the promotion of electric mobility, through the development of charging infrastructure and the provision of incentives for the purchase of electric vehicles. In this way, the Republic of Moldova aligns its national policies with international standards on energy transition and climate change mitigation.

All these measures have the potential to transform the energy sector by diversifying production sources, reducing emissions, and enhancing energy security. The green transition in the energy sector is not only an environmental objective but also an economic development strategy and a means of integrating Moldova into global trends (Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova. (2025)).

According to data from the National Center for Sustainable Energy, while the total installed capacity was approximately 84 MW in 2018, it reached nearly 360 MW in 2023 and exceeded 520 MW in 2024. The largest increases were recorded in photovoltaic power plants, which almost doubled their capacity between 2023 and 2024, followed by wind farms, which are also on an upward trajectory. This comparison confirms that in less than six years, the Republic of Moldova has increased its green energy capacities more than sixfold, thereby strengthening its energy transition and approaching the European objective of 30% renewable energy by 2030 (National Center for Sustainable Energy. (2025)).

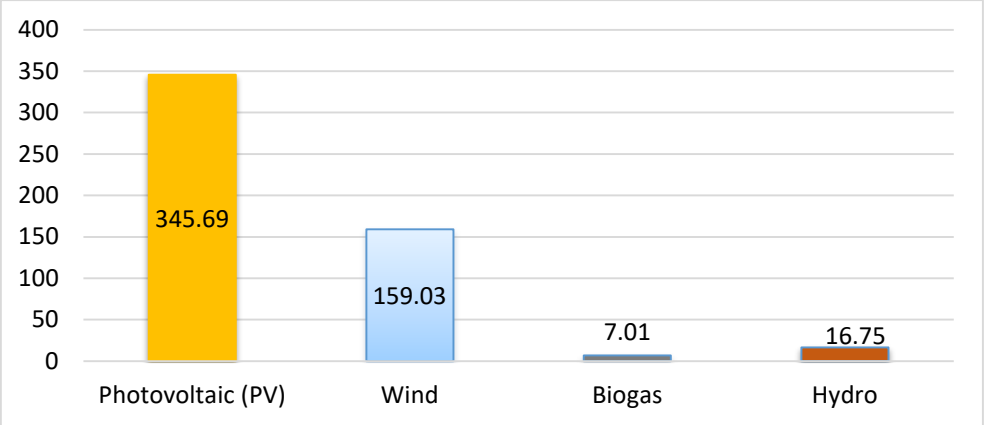


Figure 1. Distribution of Installed Capacities from Renewable Energy Sources by Type, Republic of Moldova (MW, Q3 2024).

Source: *elaborated by the authors based on sources Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova. https://energie.gov.md/ro/content/energie-regenerabila*
National Center for Sustainable Energy. https://cned.gov.md/ro/content/surse-de-energie-regenerabila
National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. https://statistica.gov.md.

Figure 1 illustrates the structure of installed renewable energy production capacities in the Republic of Moldova, confirming the accelerated pace of renewable energy development in the country.

To stimulate the growth of renewable energy, the Republic of Moldova applies several support mechanisms established by the Law on the Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources (Law No. 10/2016). Among these are net billing, intended for prosumers who generate energy for self-consumption and deliver the surplus to the grid; the fixed tariff, through which small producers benefit from a guaranteed price for the green energy supplied; and the fixed price obtained through auctions, applicable to large investors. These schemes aim to facilitate investment recovery, attract new projects, and encourage both industrial production and the participation of households and enterprises in the energy transition (Law No. 10 of February 26, 2016, on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. (2016). Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova. Accessed on September 12, 2025, from https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=140841&lang=ro).

Organic agriculture represents a valuable resource for Moldova's international trade. Currently, organically cultivated areas exceed twenty thousand hectares, with a growing number of certified

producers. Products such as nuts, fruits, honey, and organic wines have entered European markets and demonstrate significant growth potential in the medium term. These goods benefit from steady demand and higher prices compared to conventional products. Moreover, they contribute to strengthening the image of the Republic of Moldova as a supplier of safe and healthy products.

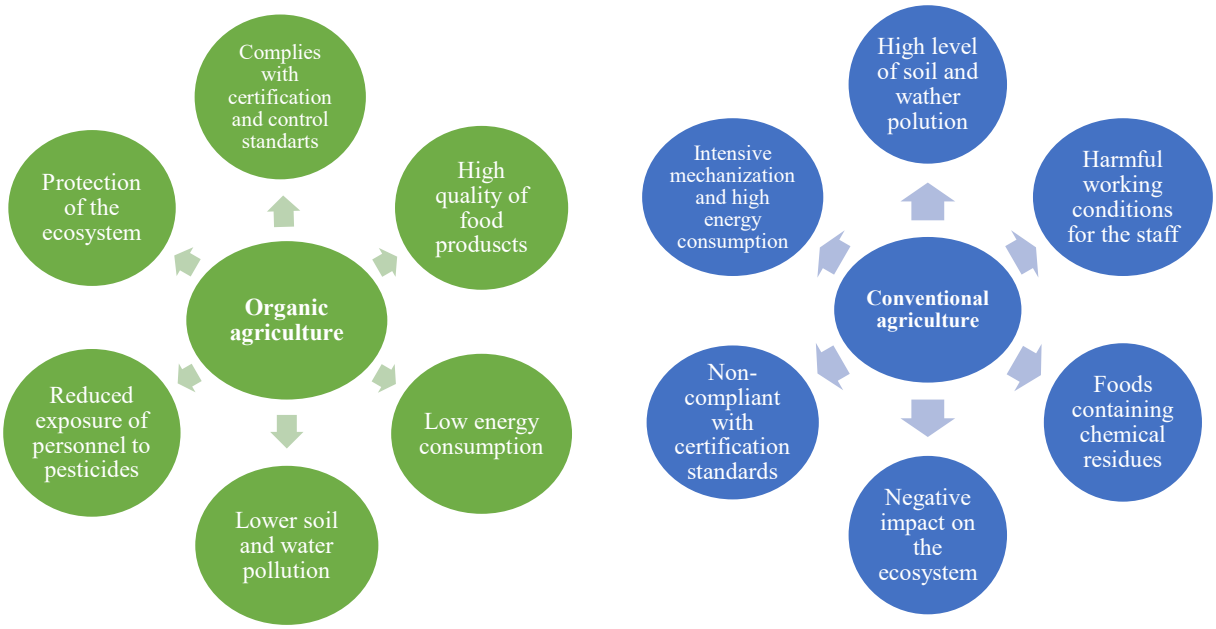


Figure 2. Comparison between Conventional and Organic Agriculture in the Republic of Moldova According to Sustainability Indicators.

Source: *elaborated by the authors based on sources Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry. (2019). Organic agriculture. https://maia.gov.md/sites/default/files/Agricultura_ecologica_FiBL_Ro_2019.pdf Government of the Republic of Moldova. (2023). National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030". https://mediu.gov.md/ro/content/4119.*

Figure 2 illustrates the structural differences between conventional and organic agriculture in the context of the Republic of Moldova, highlighting the economic and environmental implications of each model. It is observed that organic agriculture ensures a more efficient use of natural resources, a lower level of soil and water pollution, and superior food quality, owing to the elimination of synthetic chemical substances and the application of ecologically balanced methods. At the same time, it contributes to biodiversity protection, soil fertility improvement, and the safety of agricultural workers, thereby strengthening the long-term sustainability of the rural sector.

In contrast, conventional agriculture—still dominant in the Republic of Moldova—provides higher short-term productivity and profitability but generates significant ecological and social costs, such as soil degradation, water pollution, and dependence on imported inputs. This discrepancy underscores the need for a strategic orientation toward the expansion of organic agriculture, supported by innovation, digitalization, and green public policies.

Overall, the analysis confirms that the transition from the conventional to the organic model is not merely an environmental requirement but also an economic opportunity for the Republic of Moldova, as it aligns agricultural production with European standards of sustainability and trade competitiveness.

Naturally, the transition from conventional to organic agriculture cannot be achieved without the support of technological innovations. The digitalization of agricultural processes, the use of sensors for soil and irrigation monitoring, as well as mobile applications that facilitate direct connections between farmers and consumers, represent modern tools that can strengthen the competitiveness of Moldovan

products. Thus, organic agriculture is no longer merely a traditional practice adapted to market demands but is becoming an integral component of the digital and green economy.

The documentary analysis of agricultural strategies and European regulations has enabled the comparison of national objectives with the targets set by the European Union, highlighting existing gaps and identifying opportunities for strategic alignment.

At present, organic agriculture holds a limited share in the Republic of Moldova, accounting for only 1.4% of the total agricultural land area, equivalent to approximately 28,000 hectares. Among organically cultivated crops, corn occupies a dominant position, with more than 5,500 hectares, followed by other key crops that show potential for both domestic and export markets. These data indicate that the sector remains in an early stage, far from the European Union's target of at least 10% organic farmland by 2030, yet they also reveal an emerging interest in diversifying agricultural practices.

The transition to organic agriculture, however, is challenging, as shifting from conventional to ecological methods involves high costs, a conversion period of up to three years, and rigorous inspections by authorized agencies. During this period, farmers must comply with strict conditions for pest control and soil fertilization, using only certified organic substances, such as biological preparations based on fungi or bacteria. Although the process is demanding, it enables producers to obtain recognized organic certificates that grant access to more profitable external markets.

To encourage the development of this sector, the state provides various forms of financial support, including subsidies for the conversion period, for maintaining organic practices, and for cultivating nitrogen-fixing crops. Nevertheless, the number of certified producers remains modest—around 140—and for export purposes, they often need to cooperate in associations or clusters to ensure sufficient production volumes (Agrotv.md. (2025). Why we should invest in organic agriculture.

Innovation in green technologies is reflected in the emergence of start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises developing solutions for energy efficiency, recycling, and natural resource management. Acceleration programs and international funding have supported initiatives in fields such as agricultural digitalization, sustainable packaging, and solar energy for the HoReCa sector. These businesses generate employment opportunities and create products and services suitable for export, thereby contributing to the diversification of the country's trade structure.

A novel aspect of the green transition process is digitalization, which has become a catalyst for economic competitiveness. In the Republic of Moldova, digital solutions are being developed for the traceability of organic products, e-commerce platforms dedicated to green exports, and pilot projects using blockchain technology for the certification of agricultural product origins. These technologies not only increase transparency and trust in foreign markets but also reduce transaction costs. The integration of digitalization within the green economy creates an additional competitive advantage and strengthens Moldova's position as a responsible and innovative partner. The concept of "green" is associated with sustainability, the circular economy (reduce, reuse, recycle), and measures aimed at conserving and restoring ecosystems. This domain encompasses a wide range of solutions—from the production of clean energy and healthy food to the manufacturing of everyday products that reduce pollution.

Sustainable development entails meeting the needs of present and future generations by ensuring a balance between economic progress, social equity, and environmental protection, without compromising their mutual interests. It reflects the recognition of the planet's limited resources and the universal right of access to them. In this context, the concept of green finance plays an essential role, as it harmonizes economic objectives with ecological ones.

Green finance represents the set of financial mechanisms aimed at environmental protection and the responsible use of capital, contributing directly to the achievement of sustainability goals. As emphasized by Wang and Zhi (2016), green finance integrates economic and financial practices with

ecological principles, ensuring the allocation of resources to projects that support sustainable development (Wang, Y., & Zhi, Q., 2027, p. 310–315).

Economic literature emphasizes that innovation is closely linked to economic openness and to processes of international economic integration. An open economy, based on active trade exchanges, creates strong incentives for innovation and investment in new technologies, as enterprises are exposed to external competition and new flows of ideas while also benefiting from the technological transfer associated with imports and foreign investments. At the same time, such enterprises can take advantage of access to larger external markets, which offer additional opportunities for growth and diversification (Cassiman, B., Golovko, E., & Martínez-Ros, E., 2010, p. 370–375).

The objectives of ecological technologies are multifaceted. First and foremost, they aim at sustainability, meaning the fulfillment of present needs without compromising the resources of future generations. Secondly, they take into account the entire life cycle of products, ensuring that these can be reused or fully recovered.

Moreover, green technologies seek to reduce energy consumption, pollution, and waste by introducing cleaner and more efficient processes. Another fundamental direction is innovation, which involves either the development of entirely new solutions or the adaptation and alternative use of existing resources to generate benefits for both human communities and the environment. Finally, they must also meet the criterion of economic viability, being integrated into the market in ways that make them both accessible and applicable on a large scale.

Table 1. Benefits of Green Technologies and Areas of Application

Field	Exemples	Benefits
Renewable Energy	Photovoltaic panels, wind turbines, biomass, biogas	Reduction of dependence on fossil fuels, decrease in CO_2 emissions
Sustainable Agriculture	Organic farming, smart irrigation, biofertilizers	Healthier products, protection of soil and water, access to premium markets
Resources and Waste	Recycling, reuse, waste reduction, circular economy	Pollution reduction, conservation of natural resources, cost savings
Transport	Electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, green public transport	Reduction of air pollution, promotion of clean mobility

Source: *elaborated by the author based on sources Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry. (2019). Organic agriculture. https://maia.gov.md/sites/default/files/Agricultura_ecologica_FiBL_Ro_2019.pdf Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova. (n.d.). Renewable energy. https://energie.gov.md/ro/content/energie-regenerabila.*

Table 1 highlights the main areas in which green technologies find practical application—energy, agriculture, construction, resource management, and transport. In each of these sectors, there are concrete examples and direct benefits, such as emission reduction, more efficient use of resources, the creation of healthier products, and the development of clean mobility. This diversity demonstrates that the green transition is not confined to a single sector but represents a complex process with far-reaching effects on the entire economic and social system.

Beyond these areas of application, it is important to understand how different types of innovation influence both the labor market and economic competitiveness, as their effects are not always uniform.

Product innovations, through the introduction of new or improved goods and services, tend to stimulate demand, create additional markets, and generate employment opportunities. In contrast, process innovations focus on efficiency and cost reduction, which may temporarily decrease employment levels. However, when the resources saved are reinvested in expansion and diversification, the overall effects become positive, contributing to the adaptability of the economy and the long-term enhancement of competitiveness (Antonucci, T., & Pianta, M., 2002, p.291–307).

The Republic of Moldova possesses real potential to increase the share of its eco-friendly and innovative exports. However, significant challenges remain. One of the main obstacles is the lack of adequate logistical infrastructure for transporting perishable goods and the need for internationally recognized certification centers. Additionally, investments in green technologies are costly, and small enterprises still face limited access to financing. For this reason, governmental support and collaboration with international institutions are essential.

Although visible progress has been made in recent years, the green transition process in the Republic of Moldova still faces a series of difficulties that constrain the pace and scale of transformation. A key challenge lies in the high level of investment required for developing renewable energy, modernizing infrastructure, and adopting environmentally friendly technologies—investments that often exceed the financial capacity of both the state and the domestic private sector.

At the same time, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)—which form the backbone of the national economy—have limited access to green financing, either due to high credit costs or the absence of mechanisms tailored to their specific needs. Another challenge is the underdeveloped logistics infrastructure for organic products, which hampers efficient transportation, storage, and distribution on foreign markets. Furthermore, the national certification system for organic products, though functional, requires strengthening and broader international recognition to ensure that Moldovan products remain competitive and can access developed markets more easily.

Nevertheless, all these challenges can be overcome through coherent public policies, attraction of foreign investment, strengthening of public–private partnerships, and the effective use of European and international funds dedicated to the green economy—thereby transforming the green transition from a constraint into a genuine opportunity for modernization and economic growth.

In commercial terms, the green transition represents not only access to new markets but also the strengthening of internal resilience. Producers who align with European ecological standards are more likely to penetrate Western markets, while companies that reduce their energy and resource consumption become more competitive through lower operational costs.

The results of the study show that the green transition and technological innovations contribute to the trade competitiveness of the Republic of Moldova through several key dimensions:

- Broader access to foreign markets, particularly within the European Union, where sustainability standards are mandatory for exporters;
- Creation of competitive advantages through the differentiation of eco-friendly and innovative products, which can be sold at higher prices within niche market segments;
- Reduction of dependence on external resources by using renewable energy and improving production efficiency, thereby lowering long-term costs;
- Attraction of foreign investments in sectors such as green energy, organic agriculture, and sustainable infrastructure, which enhance export potential;
- Improvement of Moldova's international image as a responsible partner capable of meeting environmental and quality-related requirements.

In this context, the promotion of eco-innovation becomes an indispensable element in the process of Moldova's economic modernization. The concept of eco-innovation goes beyond the sphere of environmental technologies, encompassing non-technological forms of innovation—from sustainable management processes and circular business models to logistical and marketing solutions that reduce the ecological footprint of economic activities.

Within the European Union, the concept of eco-innovation is integrated into the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, which is oriented toward enhancing competitiveness and sustainable development. According to the European Commission's Eco-Innovation Action Plan (EcoAP), eco-innovation involves the creation, adoption, or utilization of new technological, organizational, or managerial solutions that, throughout their entire life cycle, contribute to the prevention or reduction of negative environmental impacts, pollution, and resource consumption, including energy (European Commission. (2024). Eco-innovation Action Plan, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoap/).

This strategic orientation serves as a reference model for the Republic of Moldova, where the implementation of eco-innovation can support the achievement of external competitiveness and internal sustainability objectives. The country is gradually aligning its environmental and innovation policies with European standards, and this approach provides a strategic framework essential for stimulating competitiveness and economic modernization. The integration of eco-innovation principles into national policies supports the transition toward a green economy, encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices and the attraction of green investments.

However, the implementation of eco-innovations in the Republic of Moldova is often hindered by structural factors such as insufficient financial resources, the absence of an adapted legislative framework, and a low level of awareness regarding the economic advantages of sustainability. Moreover, the limited cooperation between institutions, academia, and the private sector constrains the country's capacity to adopt green innovative practices, thereby reducing the potential for Moldova's integration into international green value chains.

According to the assessment conducted by the Stockholm Environment Institute, Moldova's green transition is progressing toward alignment with European standards but requires the acceleration of digitalization, green financing, and structural transformation in order to translate into sustainable competitiveness growth (Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). (2023). Moldova's green transition. https://www.sei.org).

As stated in the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030", one of the strategic objectives is to accelerate the transition toward a green and circular economy, as well as to adapt all sectors to the effects of climate change, with the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 (Government of the Republic of Moldova. (2023). National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030". https://mediu.gov.md/ro/content/4119).

CONCLUSIONS

The study demonstrates that innovation and the green transition can become decisive factors in the commercial expansion of the Republic of Moldova. The development of renewable energy, the expansion of organic agriculture, and the emergence of green start-ups strengthen the country's image in foreign markets and enable it to compete in an international context where sustainability is increasingly significant.

The promotion of eco-innovation constitutes an essential condition for achieving the objectives of Agenda 2030 and for strengthening Moldova's process of association with the European Union. It contributes to aligning economic policies with environmental ones, fostering sustainable growth based on efficiency and competitiveness (Păduraru, T., 2022, p. 74–86).

To fully harness this potential, a combination of coherent public policies, financial support for investments, and capacity building for producers is required. Moldova's integration into green value chains will enhance not only external competitiveness but also internal economic security. In perspective, the green transition is not merely an option but an inevitable development path that can ensure long-term stability and prosperity.

The results obtained confirm the initial research hypothesis, according to which the application of green transition principles and the integration of technological innovations determine the growth of Moldova's trade competitiveness within the context of the European integration process.

If the process of green transition and technological innovation adoption is not accelerated, the Republic of Moldova risks losing access to important market segments and remaining dependent on external technologies and resources. The failure to adapt to international sustainability requirements could diminish the attractiveness of Moldovan products and limit the country's ability to compete regionally. Therefore, the green transition should not be regarded solely as an opportunity but also as a prerequisite to avoid economic and commercial marginalization, since it serves not only an internal role in modernizing the economy but also directly influences the Republic of Moldova's position in external markets.

Products obtained through ecological practices and renewable energy use become more competitive as they meet the sustainability standards required by European and international trading partners. Thus, the green transition emerges not only as a tool for economic modernization but also as an essential condition for strengthening the Republic of Moldova's position in international markets and enhancing its credibility as a sustainable trading partner.

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