



UDC 631.115

DOI: 10.48077/scihor.24(11).2021.92-100

Developing a Marketing Strategy to Improve the Market Activities of Agricultural and Processing Enterprises, Using the Policy of “Goodvalley” as an Example

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Article's History:

Received: 16.10.2021

Revised: 15.11.2021

Accepted: 18.12.2021

Suggested Citation:

Penkova, O., Lementovska, V., Sokovnina, D., Korman, I., & Semenda, O. (2021). Developing a marketing strategy to improve the market activities of agricultural and processing enterprises, using the policy of “Goodvalley” as an example. *Scientific Horizons*, 24(11), 92-100.

Abstract. In the national economies of many countries, especially developing ones, agriculture represents a significant share of GDP. The relevance of the issue stated in the study is due to the fact that the marketing strategy of agricultural enterprises is the most important element of their management system, which contributes to the sustainable development of agriculture and provision of the population with better quality food products. The need to increase the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises among similar ones also contributes to the development of agricultural technologies for obtaining high quality and environmentally friendly products. The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of a modern agricultural company's marketing strategy. The leading method for investigating this issue is the empirical method, namely examining the practice of marketing strategy in agriculture. As a result of the study, it has been established that a marketing strategy in the agricultural sector should make an enterprise stand out from its competitors through non-price methods. This is primarily due to the peculiarity of agricultural products – they are quite homogeneous, standardised and subject to state regulation not only in terms of safety, but also in terms of conformity with their name. It has been revealed that due to current trends in modern society regarding the need for environmentally friendly production and healthy lifestyles, it is desirable to include these elements in an agricultural company's marketing strategy. Serious work needs to be done to improve the brand image and the image of the producer. These marketing techniques enable an agricultural company to stand out from its competitors and keep prices and demand at the required level. The results of this marketing strategy make it possible to turn a standardised, uniform product from an agricultural producer into an exclusive, special, high-end product

Keywords: agricultural marketing, marketing strategy, agricultural production, agri-marketing, agricultural business



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INTRODUCTION

In many developing countries, more than half of the economically active population is engaged in agriculture. Meanwhile, agriculture is a major supplier to trade and a supplier of raw materials to industry. Hence, it can be concluded that agriculture is the main source of economic growth for many developing countries. Half of the average person's income from a developing country is spent on agricultural products – food. To put this in perspective, in a developed country like the US, people spend only about twelve percent of their income on food, while in Western Europe they spend about sixteen – nineteen percent. In developed countries the standard of living is quite high and the percentage of poor people is small, which is why the government has no difficulty in creating social programmes to provide food to the poor, which also supports agriculture. Poverty levels are very high in developing countries, which requires the use of marketing tools for the development of agricultural enterprises [1].

Modern global economic trends aimed at the development of the agricultural sector require a careful approach to developing effective marketing strategies, which are primarily based on an in-depth analysis of the market environment. Under the current economic conditions, it is only possible to increase the volume of demand for agricultural products, and consequently their sales volumes, by applying an effective marketing strategy [2].

Agricultural marketing (agri-marketing) is the activity in the agricultural sector that involves the full cycle of organisation and management of agricultural production in order to meet the needs of the following entities: households; industry; society. Agricultural marketing can be carried out by the economic entities of the following activities: suppliers of raw materials, materials, equipment for agriculture; agricultural producers; market infrastructure enterprises; trade and trade mediation enterprises of wholesale and retail trade; specialised marketers in the field of agriculture and others [3].

The marketing strategy for the development of an agricultural enterprise is a set of directions for its activities on the market and decision-making focused on individual marketing activities, to the fullest possible implementation of the enterprise's main strategy. Global experience shows that marketing is a means for further development of agricultural enterprises. The development of an enterprise's marketing strategy is therefore a process of creating and putting into practice an overall action programme for the enterprise. Its purpose relates to the efficient allocation of resources to reach the target market [4].

The purpose of the study is to examine the best practices for developing and implementing a marketing strategy for agricultural and processing enterprises. In order to fulfil this objective, the tasks to be carried out include a study of the characteristics of agricultural

marketing and a study of the branding of agricultural enterprises.

The external environment of modern agricultural enterprises is characterised by a high level of competition, complexity and uncertainty, which necessitates the use of various marketing tools in order to strengthen their competitive position, both in the national and international markets. A marketing strategy is an essential tool for achieving a high level of competitiveness in an agricultural enterprise. It should be based on a strategic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the enterprise, prospective goals and long-term development programmes, and have a tactical action plan [5]. Thus, under current conditions, the development of a marketing strategy for agricultural enterprises has become a prerequisite for their activities, both in national and international markets.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Today's economy requires innovative solutions when developing a marketing strategy to improve the market activity of agricultural and processing enterprises. Agricultural products, on a global scale, are quite homogeneous; it is this feature of agricultural commodities that has made it possible to sell them on agricultural commodity exchanges. However, in such a case, when the price is formed solely under the influence of supply and demand and the factors associated with them, the agricultural producer faces a high risk of non-return of the invested funds, losses. The marketing strategy of an agricultural enterprise can help to avoid such risks by transforming homogeneous standard products into special, exclusive ones. As practice shows, an agricultural producer should pay great attention to creating a positive image of his or her brands and his or her production. This approach enables the agricultural enterprise to create its own circle of consumers committed to that particular agricultural brand. In the modern market model, economic entities that position themselves as companies with a high level of social responsibility to society have a better chance of increasing their sales without lowering the price. The following research methods were used in the course of the study:

- theoretical (analysis, synthesis, concretisation, generalisation, comparison);
- empirical (study of the marketing strategy of an operating international agricultural company; the individual elements of its marketing strategy; the positive effects that this strategy produces; the use of brand image and producer image improvement techniques in marketing strategy; the role of brand image and producer image in agricultural enterprises).

The study is based on the practical experience of a real agricultural company and on research by scientists and practitioners on the issues of agricultural marketing.

The study of the issue was carried out in three stages:

1. The first stage involved identifying the essence of agricultural marketing, its role in the activities of agricultural companies and the specifics of the marketing strategy. The elements and stages of marketing strategy development and its application in agricultural production are studied. The importance of a marketing strategy for an agricultural company under today's complex, rapidly changing market conditions is explored.

2. The second stage analysed the marketing strategy of the international agricultural company Goodvalley, which has its own production and market outlets in Eastern European countries: Ukraine, Poland and Russia. An assessment of the state of the company is given in order to ascertain its condition. The tools and techniques of a company's marketing strategy are examined. The basic principle of marketing strategy is studied. It has been established that the main efforts of an agricultural company's marketing strategy are aimed at positioning it as a socially responsible enterprise that cares about the environment and produces high quality premium products. Thanks to this kind of marketing strategy, the company was able to make its products more exclusive and set higher prices. This strategy also reduces the company's dependence on market fluctuations, as it operates in a more stable segment – the premium segment.

3. The third stage involved refining the theoretical and practical conclusions, as well as summarising and systematising the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Agricultural marketing is an activity that accompanies the entire cycle of agricultural production, starting with the decision to create a product and ending with its sale to the final consumer, and sometimes also with the after-sales service. It is based on the results of technical and economic analysis and should take into account market, functional and institutional aspects [6]. The marketing strategy of any enterprise should be developed in a comprehensive way. When one element of the marketing strategy is changed, the possible impact on the other elements must be taken into account. Sometimes it seems that the solution to a particular marketing problem may lie in one specific element of the marketing mix. But a deeper analysis will reveal that the problem has a different cause. Thus, it is important to integrate all elements of a marketing strategy.

Firstly, the marketing mix cannot be static. The marketing mix is a dynamic entity. An enterprise cannot stop marketing activities once it has assembled and implemented its marketing mix. At the same time, a company cannot afford to constantly change its marketing strategy every other day. In fact, strategy should be understood and used as the opposite of "special reaction" to changes in the environment, competition, consumer tastes and technologies. Basically, a company's marketing

decisions are strategic decisions with long-term objectives and a long-term framework. Nevertheless, they need to be modified and manipulated based on short-term requirements. After all, quite often short-term events do represent vital changes from a marketing perspective, and these changes must be taken into account by appropriate changes in marketing strategy if the enterprise is to achieve its goals on the market. Since the main task of marketing is to successfully anticipate and respond to the changes on the market, the marketing strategy should be flexible and dynamic. In other words, the marketing mix has both long-term and short-term implications. The overall strategy usually remains unchanged over time, but within this framework adjustments and tactical manoeuvres will occur continuously [7].

Secondly, the company's resources are an important factor when deciding on a marketing strategy. It is also clear that decisions about marketing strategy depend largely on the resources available to the company and the resources allocated to a particular business unit. Mere ambition or desire will not lead to the creation of an effective marketing strategy, only resources in the form of money, materials and people can do this. Thus, the form that a marketing strategy will take and the intensity with which each of its elements can be engaged will depend on the resources, the resources of the whole corporation and the resources allocated to each of its business units.

Thirdly, decisions regarding marketing strategy are becoming increasingly complex in multi-business companies. In a multi-business company, although a separate marketing mix is usually developed for each brand / product, it does not work in isolation. After all, the strategy underlying a specific marketing mix for a particular brand plays a much larger role. The strategy as a whole works at four different levels: corporate level, business unit level, product line level and brand level. This link exists not only because of the interrelated nature of resource allocation, but also because of the interconnected nature of the objectives of the enterprise and its constituent business units. Although individual marketing strategy decisions are made by marketers responsible for individual brands/product lines, each comprehensive marketing decision is ultimately aimed at achieving the company's overall business goals. Furthermore, in the case of a multi-industry corporation, the influence of resources on the marketing strategy decision is also of additional importance, since a multi-industry corporation needs to carefully decide how to reallocate its resources to its business, products and markets.

Fourthly, improving competitiveness is the goal and essence of marketing strategy. The main objective of a marketing strategy is to cope with competition. Undoubtedly, it is competition that requires strategy, or, more precisely, fighting competition is the main goal of strategy. Similarly, in a marketing environment devoid of competition, the scale and need for marketing strategies will be much smaller. It is the presence of competition that

makes the marketing task strategic in the first place. In a competitive market alone, a company should definitely study its competitors and promote its policies, people and products in action, i.e. in a strategic way. Strategic actions will help the company gain a clear competitive consciousness. A marketing strategy is basically a competitive position of a company on the market [8]. The following stages of marketing strategy development can be distinguished [9]:

1. Defining business goals and budget.
2. Analysing the external environment of the enterprise.
3. Identifying the target audience.
4. Defining the marketing objectives.
5. Positioning the brand, the products.
6. Drawing up an action plan.
7. Implementation and monitoring of the strategy.

The marketing strategy of an agricultural enterprise, based on the example of Goodvalley, a major international company in Eastern Europe, will be examined. The company Goodvalley positions itself as a manufacturer of quality products and a company that cares about the environment. The company's founder, the Danish Tom Axelgaard, questioned the efficiency and environmental impact of agriculture back in 1980. He began to develop an idea that has evolved into a proven model for sustainable farming. The date of the company's foundation is considered 1994, when Tom Axelgaard bought the first farm in Poland, with the infrastructure concentrated in the middle of a large maize field to minimise the transportation of fodder. This corresponds to his vision that all major areas of activity should be brought together

in one place in order to increase sustainability and minimise the impact on the environment. The company has been operating in Ukraine since 2004 and in Russia since 2013. The company is registered in Denmark. Goodvalley specialises in pork production. The company emphasises that it has a full cycle of safe production. The distribution of business revenues by country in 2020 is as follows [10]:

- Poland – 59%;
- Ukraine – 32%;
- Russia – 9%.

The structure of Goodvalley is vertically integrated. Its core activity is the production of pork. The products are produced under its own brand. The basic principle of the company's organisation is to organise sustainable, zero-carbon agricultural production. The company has facilities in three countries: Ukraine, Poland and Russia, and uses Danish technology. The main activities of the company's enterprises [10]:

- crop production;
- production of mixed fodder (own factories);
- pig breeding;
- slaughtering of animals (own slaughterhouse);
- selling live pigs to external slaughterhouses;
- meat processing, production of pork products;
- biogas production.

The company Goodvalley positions its products as premium, made from meat from pigs raised without antibiotics, also positioning its production as environmentally friendly. The company's key performance indicators are presented in Table 1. Figure 1 illustrates the dynamics of the company's assets.

Table 1. Random Forest cross-verification results

Indicator	Value
Number of staff	2304 people
Amount of land in use	42,000 hectares
Number of farms	35 units
Number of branded products	15 units

Source: [10]

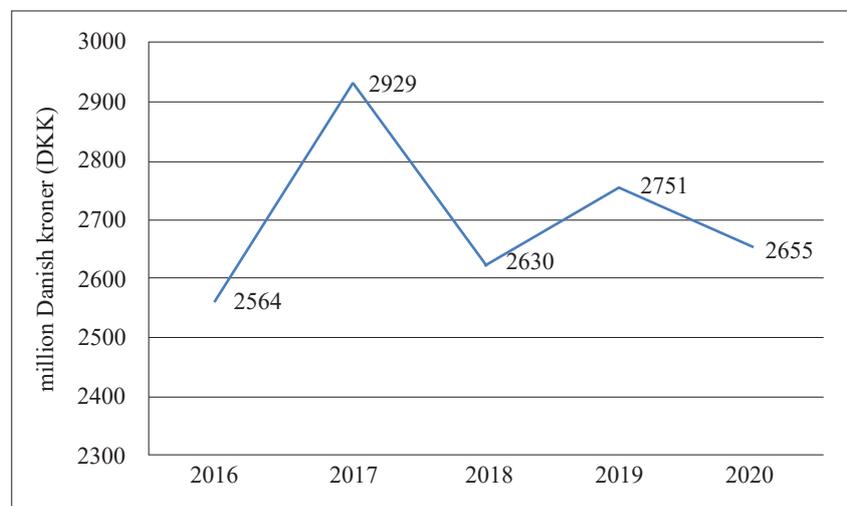


Figure 1. Dynamics of Goodvalley's revenue and gross profit

Source: created on the basis of [10]

Thus, as for an agricultural company, the enterprise is quite large. Figure 2 presents the dynamics of the company's revenue and gross profit.

As can be seen from Figure 2, the enterprise is highly successful and generates significant profits. However, the company reports that COVID-19 has severely

impacted markets in 2020 and Goodvalley's business has also been affected. Market participants reacted sharply and governments enforced quarantine and closed hotels, restaurants and cafes, causing a drop in demand from slaughterhouses [10]. The key features of Goodvalley's marketing strategy are discussed below.

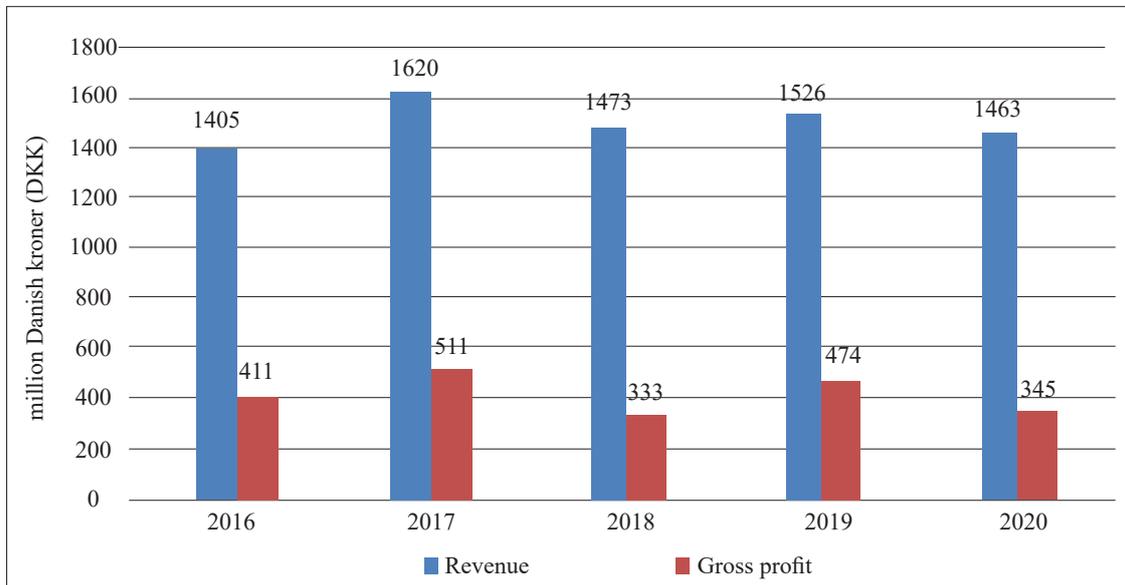


Figure 2. Dynamics of Goodvalley's revenue and gross profit

Source: created on the basis of [10]

Firstly, the company is spreading the idea of caring for the climate. In 2005, the company began using its first biogas plant in Poland, which is positioned in line with the company's ambition to create an integrated, fully sustainable model of farming. The company reports that with this proprietary biogas plant integrated into their production, the company's facilities can now produce environmentally friendly energy from manure and crop waste. This has enabled Goodvalley to get even closer to its goal of being a zero-carbon company. In 2011, the company had already created a full cycle of environmentally friendly production in Poland, and is transferring its unique farming model to other Eastern European countries. In 2011, Goodvalley integrates its first biogas plant into its Ukrainian division. Goodvalley opens a division in Russia in 2013 and introduces its sustainable way of farming there in 2014. The same year, the company is awarded the Transformational Business Award by The Financial Times and the World Bank for being a pioneer in environmentally friendly, carbon-neutral manufacturing. In 2018, the company received a carbon-neutral company certificate for the entire enterprise. In 2019, the company switches to a recycled and recyclable plastic for its products [10].

All of these activities create an image of the company as environmentally conscious and highly socially responsible. Public announcements of this kind on the company's website, in the media, constitute prestige (image) advertising, that is, advertising aimed at creating a positive image of the company, which will give it a competitive advantage over other similar businesses.

It is absolutely clear that the company is positioning its brand as "green", concerned with ecology and the environment. Indeed, the modern consumer is more likely to buy the products of a socially responsible business that cares about the environment than a company that does not follow environmental regulations. The products of a company that violates environmental regulations and does not care about the environment in the production of its products may be deliberately ignored by today's consumers.

The company can be said to be using a marketing strategy of greening agricultural production. This type of strategy links the agricultural enterprise, the market and society, and promotes a positive image of the company [11]. The objective of prestige advertising is to create a consumer image of a commercial organisation that is not just positive, but as necessary. In this case, consumer behaviour can be programmed. Tasks to be undertaken to create the necessary image:

- increasing brand awareness;
- creating consumer attitudes;
- an aura of public usefulness for the company;
- product is associated with the brand;
- brand evocative events.

Image advertising affects the emotional level of the consumer, as it is emotion that motivates people to buy the most. Emotional attachment to a brand is created through associations that come from the values a person has formed.

Secondly, the company Goodvalley positions its products as being of high quality and safe for consumption.

Thus, for example, in 2016, the company delivered the first pork products from pigs raised without antibiotics to its markets of presence. Since 2021, the company is also placing QR codes on its products in Poland within the framework of its sustainability philosophy, so that consumers can scan each of them and see its specific path from the field to the customer's table [10]. If people can see how much labour has been put into producing agricultural products, under what conditions the products have been produced, they trust that agricultural enterprise more [12].

A healthy lifestyle and the use of high-quality food products are extremely popular these days. Companies that emphasise the health and safety of their products are able through this trend to increase sales volumes while keeping their prices relatively high. In other words, positioning a product as beneficial and safe for health becomes a significant positive competitive factor. Consumers want to know the origin of the food they have on their table, as this increases their confidence in the quality and safety of the products. The use of QR codes, which provide information on the movement of raw materials and their transformation into finished products, is a good example of addressing this problem.

After the crisis year of 2020, the company updated its marketing strategy. In its accounts for 2020, the company reports a positive trend for its premium branded products in the 2020 crisis year. Due to this market signal, it was decided to strengthen Goodvalley's own brand promotion strategy in Poland. On top of this, the challenge is to sustainably improve efficiency in the main markets where the company operates. It has been found that pork consumption is stable in Western European markets, while it is increasing in Eastern European markets. The reasons for the growth of the market are an increase in the number and income of the population. The company expects the global pork market to grow at a prospective annual rate of 1%, with higher growth rates in its markets of operation. Society, nowadays, pays a great deal of attention to the impact of human activity on the environment, including agricultural production and meat production in particular. The company continues to position itself as environmentally friendly. It will also continue to operate in the premium segment. Certain consumer groups wish to use only higher-quality products in their diet, including premium meat. According to the company, producing high-quality products aimed at these consumers will be a great competitive advantage over traditional manufacturers [10].

The company's next strategic objective is to optimise operations and improve competitiveness, in the current complex and volatile external environment, in order to achieve growth in financial and operational performance through increased volumes of selling both live pigs and processed products. Optimisation work is

carried out in the following strategic directions: continuous training of ordinary employees and managers; exchange of experience between the enterprises in the company's three markets of operation; continuous performance monitoring; benchmarking between the company's enterprises; benchmarking between the company's enterprises and the best enterprises in Denmark [10].

Strengthening the company's own brand of premium food products is another crucial area of strategic marketing for the company. The advantage for the company here is the high added value of such products. High quality for the consumer is also determined by product characteristics such as adaptation to the local market and consideration of consumer preferences. Brand name products, widely distributed in retail chains on the Polish market, are characterised by the following, brand characteristics that provide competitive advantages: food security; animal protection; environmentally friendly production. All this enables the company to apply its own sustainable business model to an expensive and growing market segment. Through a diversification strategy, a stable market for premium products enables the company to reduce its dependence on fluctuations in the live pig market and wholesale pork markets [10].

The company is constantly working to optimise production. The company's production capacity is constantly being increased across all stages of production, which contributes to making it more fully utilised. At the same time, territorially, the capacity is built up as close to the markets as possible, which also enables premium products to be produced. As can be seen from the above, the company is constantly improving its brand image. The image of a business organisation represents people's perceptions of it, arising for a variety of reasons. Image affects, and is a significant factor in, others' assessment of a subject's actions. A positive image is essential for a commercial organisation, otherwise it will be very difficult to operate and find contractors and qualified staff. A brand's image has a direct impact on its value.

The objectives of building a commercial organisation's image are as follows: to gain people's trust in the commercial organisation and its products; to create an aura of high quality around the products; to convince the public that the enterprise is unique; and to create a cohesive team of employees. Brand image represents people's perception of the brand, or what they think of the brand. The brand image in people's minds is formed over a period of time. The brand image among people is shaped by their interaction and experience with the brand's products, as well as by the manufacturer itself. Meanwhile, interactions may not necessarily involve purchase and use, but can also take place in a variety of forms [13]. A brand is an intangible asset of a company, and its value is manifested in an indicator such as goodwill. Goodwill is an intangible asset and is measured as the amount that exceeds the net fair value

of all assets and liabilities of the company. Causes of goodwill [14]:

- the value of a brand (trademark) linked to its positive image;
- large number of customers;

- consumer loyalty to the brand;
- company reputation as a good employer;
- availability of intellectual property rights.

Figure 3 illustrates Goodvalley's goodwill data over time.

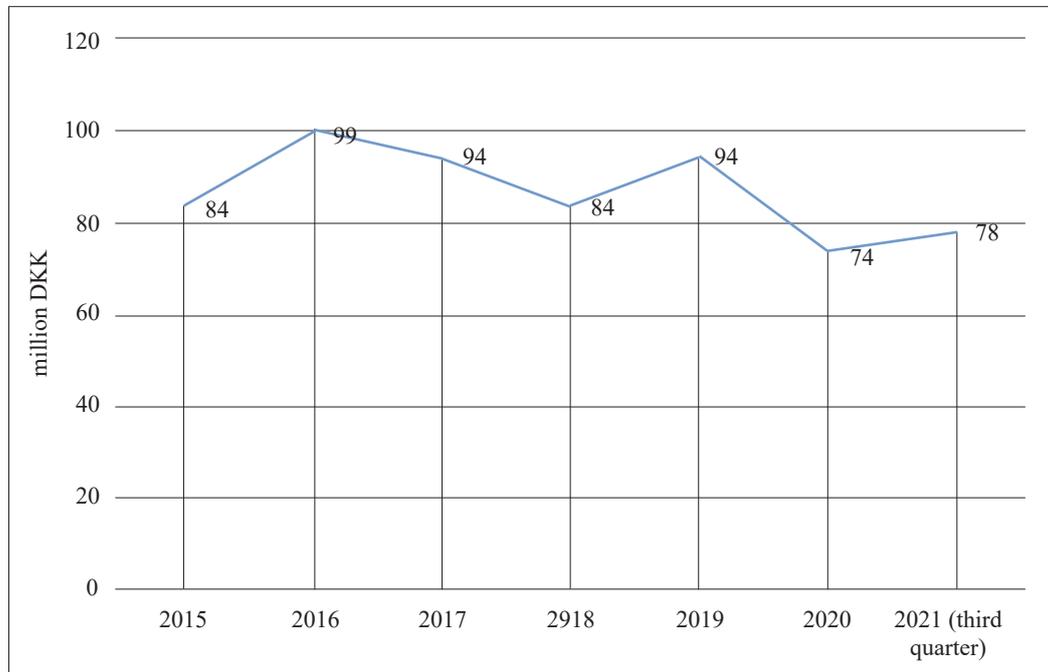


Figure 3. Goodvalley's goodwill

Source: created on the basis of [10; 15; 16]

As can be seen in Figure 3, the company's goodwill is at a relatively high level, despite falling in the 2020 crisis year, then starting to grow in 2021. Thus, it is obvious that the value of a company's intangible assets increases its market value.

The brand is an important factor for consumers when buying goods. This guarantees the quality of the product and allows consumers to experience the added value of the product. Therefore, when consumers buy products, they usually choose to buy from companies with a good brand image. A brand is built through a company's marketing strategy, through repeated promotion, implementation and improvement, as well as consumer feedback. Furthermore, brand improvement is influenced by whether the company implements a marketing strategy for the product. When a company implements marketing strategies, consumer satisfaction depends largely on the company's brand image [17].

The most important principle for a brand to succeed is to consistently and continuously provide consumers with appealing, distinctive offers from its competitors [18]. Thus, Goodvalley's marketing strategy aims to create a highly positive image of a brand that produces quality products while taking care of the environment. This approach gives the company the advantage of competing on non-price factors and selling its goods at higher prices as premium products.

CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural marketing plays an important role in the market activities of modern enterprises in the agricultural sector. The marketing strategy of an agricultural company is essentially the principle of its market activity according to which it promotes its products and acquires consumers. The marketing strategy of agricultural and processing enterprises needs to be original if the enterprise wishes to stand out from the competition. This is primarily due to the characteristics of agricultural products, which for the most part are standardised. Therefore, for the most part, agricultural producers' products may differ only in quality level and brand. As practice shows, consumers are often willing to pay extra for these two components. Product packaging, appearance – all of these play an important role in promotion.

Building a brand image is a complex, time-consuming process that involves not only positioning products as high quality or premium, but also shaping a company's image in the public perception. Nowadays, the concept of the social responsibility of business, which implies that business, among other things, takes care of the environment, has become widespread. An agricultural enterprise the marketing strategy of which involves improving its brand image as environmentally friendly has a much better chance of success than an enterprise that does not do so.

Also popular in modern society is the trend towards a healthy lifestyle, where the choice of quality food products is of utmost importance. Agricultural producers can also exploit this tendency in their marketing strategy by offering higher quality products and positioning them as such. Using these two elements of product and

company positioning in a marketing strategy enables it to increase sales while setting relatively high prices for its products. The factors mentioned transform agricultural products from typical, standardised goods into exclusive products that encourage certain groups of consumers to purchase that particular brand and that particular producer.

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Розробка маркетингової стратегії щодо вдосконалення ринкової діяльності сільськогосподарських та переробних підприємств на прикладі політики компанії «Goodvalley»

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Анотація. У національному господарстві багатьох країн, особливо тих, що розвиваються, сільське господарство становить суттєву частку ВВП. Актуальність заявленої у статті проблеми зумовлена тим, що маркетингова стратегія сільськогосподарських підприємств є одним з найважливіших елементів їхньої системи управління, яка сприяє сталому розвитку сільського господарства та забезпеченню населення більш якісними продуктами харчування. Необхідність підвищення конкурентоспроможності сільськогосподарських підприємств серед подібних сприяє також розвитку сільськогосподарських технологій для отримання продукції високої якості та з відсутністю шкоди для екології. Мета статті полягає у дослідженні сутності маркетингової стратегії сучасної сільськогосподарської компанії. Провідним методом для дослідження даної проблеми є емпіричний метод, а саме вивчення практики застосування маркетингової стратегії в сільському господарстві. В результаті дослідження встановлено, що маркетингова стратегія в аграрному секторі має виділяти підприємство серед конкурентів у вигляді нецінових методів. Це пов'язано насамперед із особливістю сільськогосподарської продукції – вона досить однорідна, стандартизована і підлягає державному регулюванню не лише з безпеки, а й відповідно до найменування. Виявлено, що у зв'язку з існуючими в суспільстві тенденціями необхідності екологічно безпечного виробництва та здорового способу життя, дані елементи бажано включати до маркетингової стратегії сільськогосподарської компанії. Необхідно здійснювати серйозну роботу з покращення іміджу бренду та іміджу виробника. Вказані маркетингові прийоми дозволяють виділятися сільськогосподарській компанії серед конкурентів і тримати ціни та обсяг попиту на необхідному рівні. Результати застосування такої маркетингової стратегії дозволяють зробити із стандартизованої, однакової продукції сільськогосподарського виробника – ексклюзивну, особливу продукцію високого класу

Ключові слова: сільськогосподарський маркетинг, маркетингова стратегія, сільськогосподарське виробництво, агромаркетинг, сільськогосподарський бізнес
