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India's Experiment with The One District One Product Programme

Pankhuri Gaur

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Promoting Districts as Export Hubs in the Export Policy

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Pankhuri Gaur*

Abstract: The focus on establishing districts as export hubs as a tool of inclusive growth has sharply emerged in India's Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023. With the successful implementation of the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative in Uttar Pradesh, the Centre has initiated the 'Districts as Export Hubs' Programme across the country as an export strategy to meet its target of USD 2 trillion by 2030. The creation of a district-level ecosystem for exports with a decentralised approach with government participation, through financial and non-financial assistance, would help the country in achieving self-reliance. The paper observes that nearly 80 per cent of India's exports in 2021 were concentrated in 70 districts in 19 states. The top 10 districts accounted for 38 per cent of India's exports. The Districts as Export Hubs initiative would help broaden the base by including all districts in India's export performance. It has been observed that different countries have presented different outcomes of the ODOP programme. India can also evolve its strategy to focus on districts which are having export potential. With rising global competition, India's approach should be for specific competitive products for exports, taking into account both the demand and supply aspects of the market.

Keywords: District Exports, ODOP, Inclusive Growth, India, Foreign Trade

1. Introduction

The historical debate between trade and inclusive growth has never been subsided in the literature on international trade. The difference in the factor endowments among countries seems to be the driving force to promote trade among the engaging countries and consequently, net gains

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from trade become instrumental for enhancing economic welfare among the trading nations, characterising trade as a driver of growth. Further, there are shreds of evidence to demonstrate that the rising trade trend corroborates with productivity, innovation, employment and economic growth. Unless managed properly through effective policy instruments, trade is often criticised for perpetuating inequality in society, particularly between the exporting and non-exporting stakeholders. Therefore, the development focus may move away from the inclusive growth strategy. Yet, there has been consensus on trade providing the necessary impetus to economic development.

Countries since the late 70s have been prioritising inclusive growth at the grassroots level through product innovation. In this context, countries have been putting Districts or Villages at the centre of production and trade to balance regional growth with micro-level economic development. One such example is the *One District One Product* (ODOP) scheme where districts are promoted to focus on specific products for development and boosting the country's external sector. India[1], too, has been focusing on the ODOP in states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh before the onset of the global pandemic. However, the focus has been spreading over the entire country with an expanded mandate through the *Districts as Export Hubs* (DEH) initiative in the recent Foreign Trade Policy 2023.

In the case of India, the experience of Uttar Pradesh in the ODOP scheme is said to be a success story which has led to the adoption of the scheme at the national level with a broader mandate. In the DEH initiative of the New Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023, the Government of India aims to develop the districts in each State as exporting hubs with selected products and services. It is expected to foster India's export target of USD 2 trillion by 2030 with the active participation of local economies in export diversification. Development of traditional products and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), formalisation of food processing and expansion of value chains and exports, and employment generation are some of the other underlined objectives of the scheme. Hence, it is important to understand India's approach towards developing DEH.

India, though as a latecomer, had a paradigm shift in its economic policy from an inward and import substitution approach to a strong export-oriented approach in the early 90s. The establishment of Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) for selected sectors, Export Promotion Zones, Export Oriented Units, and Star Trading Houses, Town of Export Excellence, among others, with product-specific and market-specific export promotion schemes have helped India to boost the export sector in the past three decades. However, the recent introduction of the DEH initiative in the current Foreign Trade Policy, 2023 would foster the capacity for the development of globally competitive products in each district to access the world market. The earlier schemes in the export policy framework of India are said to be centre-sponsored and more generic in nature, whereas, the DEH scheme provides a decentralised approach aiming at strengthening the base of exports while creating a district-level ecosystem for export promotion in the country with the active participation of the government at various levels. This scheme is expected to broaden the export base of the country with the participation of all districts and Small and Medium Enterprises to develop themselves as competitive exporters in the global forum with new and existing financial and non-financial support mechanisms from the government.

The rationale behind the introduction of the ODOP scheme/project has been different from one country to another across the region, and the focus can range from social development through sectoral growth to economic development, leading to ambiguous outcomes. Many districts/villages have experienced increased household income, product innovation, rise in exports, increase in business skills, etc., whereas in certain other cases, the outcome has not been up to the general expectation and these regions faced various challenges. This paper tries to analyse the role of district-level exports in India's external sector and the lessons it can draw from the experience of other countries.

The paper has four major sections with Section 2 discussing the genesis of ODOP and the main characteristics of the *One Village One Product* scheme in Japan. Section 3 provides a comprehensive analysis of

the global expansion of the project, exploring its many implementations and highlighting the distinctions seen in comparison to Japan. The next section focuses on India's approach to centralising the role of districts in the export sector. Section 5 analyses the composition of Indian exports in various districts and the last section concludes the major findings of the paper.

2. Evolution of One District One Product Programme: Lessons from Japan

The idea of ODOP has been used in many countries under various names. It was first introduced in Japan in the year 1961 as the New Plum and Chestnut (NPC) movement in the Oyama village of Oita Kyushu. The NPC strategy, developed by the then President of the Oyama Agricultural Cooperative, aimed at shifting production from rice to chestnut and plum for more profits leading to rising household income to boost rural development. The farmers were enticed to go to Hawaii by participating in the NPC movement, which would increase income and living standards from the production of plums and chestnuts with the slogan "Go to Hawaii by cultivating plum and chestnut" (Ndione and Suzuki, 2019). The programme's name was modified to 'Neo-Personality Combination' in 1964 and 'New Paradise Community' in 1970 to emphasise the human dimension and community evolvement, respectively (Fujimoto, 1992). After six years of successful adoption of the strategy, the NPC campaign was regarded as a successful endeavour and it was expanded to the entire Oita prefecture in 1979 under the Japanese government movement of One Village One Product (OVOP) (Son, 2010; Mukai and Fujikura, 2015).

The OVOP strategy was more of an endogenous strategy driven by the self-motivated community, having no official subsidies to carry out the programme, but the government support was specific to building infrastructure for the long-term development of the region. It is formulated on three major principles: a) Local yet Global, b) Self-reliance and Creativity, and c) Human Resource Development (Hirohata, 2013; Schumann, 2016). The principle of Local yet Global aimed at the development of new products locally, with inherited local

culture, while aiming at sales channels in the national and international market. This principle encouraged rural entrepreneurs to produce at least one commercial product per village through local resources and specialisation. The principle of self-reliance and creativity encouraged local entrepreneurs to take the lead in creating unique products specific to their community. Development of skills and efficient use of natural endowment, which in turn, helps in developing expertise and competitiveness in the production. Lastly, human resource development played an important role in sustaining the benefits of the programme in the long run. Identification and motivation of local leaders, technical training and development of market infrastructure have been supported by the government under the OVOP programme. The OVOP programme in the Oita has been a perfect example of a partnership between the government, private sectors and the local communities.

Japan evolved a successful strategy for a better implementation of the OVOP model in the country. The strong local leadership in the Oyama Village provided the required focus on community dialogue and networking, the formation of local leaders, and the promotion of culture, tourism, and sports, to spur the OVOP movement in the prefecture. The spread of OVOP in the Oita prefecture was initiated by identifying local leaders and publicising the strategy through social media. Nearly 58 cities in the Oita prefecture initiated the OVOP programme through a push from the local community. The private sector has helped in financing the OVOP activities through donations and providing product fairs and antenna shops for marketing outside the prefecture. Under the OVOP administrative structure, formed by the prefecture government, the OVOP Promotion Council was set up to coordinate the overall programme, which was later transferred to the Oita International Exchange Promotion Committee (Clyamone and Jaiborisudhi, 2011). The Oita government has been engaged with various other countries like China, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, etc. for the promotion of the OVOP products through local diplomacy (Matsui, 2006). Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) also opened the OVOP market at various international airports for promoting OVOP

products. For the internationalisation of the products, due importance is given to the quality of the product and sophisticated packaging which is marketed with strategically-oriented analysis of the export destinations.

The OVOP entrepreneurs are provided with technical training and research facilities, guidance facilities such as the Mushrooms Research and Guidance Centre, Agricultural Technology Centre, Livestock Experimental Station and Institute of Marine and Fisheries Sciences at the prefectural institutions based on the specific products along with specialised schools and colleges in agriculture, commerce, etc. (Hirohata, 2013). Some of the famous OVOP products were dried mushrooms, beef, mandarin oranges, etc. The government also helped in setting up special distribution and sales facilities for the OVOP products. Besides the technical and distributional support, the achievers were also incentivised with rewards, such as the case of a trip to Hawaii in Oyama Village. An important point to note is that the training for OVOP entrepreneurs has not been restricted to local/national training. The local producers were sent to different countries, like Israel in the case of Oyama and Germany in the case of Yufuin and Ajimu town, to learn from different cities to develop new ideas for sales/distribution or even opening up ancillary activities such as resort areas, restaurants, local tourism, etc. in their village/town under the OVOP strategy (Mukai and Fujikura, 2015).

More than 700 products, mainly constituting agriculture and handicraft products, and services were developed in the Oita prefecture through the OVOP movement. It has been observed that the sales of the Oita prefecture increased nearly four times during the entire period of OVOP implementation, whereas the number of products increased 2.2 times after the termination of the programme in 2003 (Hiramatsu, 2008) and the per capita income of the prefecture almost doubled (Haraguchi, 2008). The Japanese government has been promoting the OVOP movement on international platforms such as the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in 2005 as Japan's 'New Development Initiative for Trade'. It has been cooperating with other countries, especially in Africa and Asia, for conducting the preliminary study and sending experts to train people on the OVOP programme (Masaki,

2000). The programme has been specifically used as a part of Japanese Official Development Assistance, as a "Development Initiative for Trade" for promoting exports and product development in African countries (Yamazaki, 2010; Mukai and Fujikura, 2015; Dadabaev, 2016).

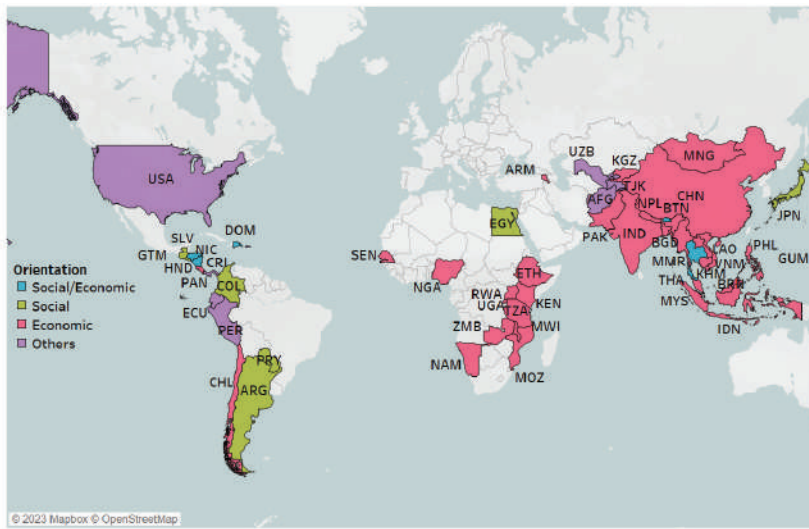
Such kind of bilateral and regional cooperation is being pursued with agencies like the World Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), JETRO, Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), and various other non-government organisations in Japan. Many countries in East Asia such as Cambodia, China, Korea, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, etc., Africa, like Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya, etc. and Latin America, such as El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, etc., have adopted similar programmes for rural development and economic growth with a specific focus on social and economic gains, including an increase in household income, gender parity, and enhancing sales, exports, business practices, etc. in the countries (FAO, 2022). However, the experience of all such countries has not been similar, which vary in many aspects, resulting in varied outcomes. Some of them are discussed in the next section.

3. Spread of OVOP in Other Parts of the World

Following the rousing success of the Japanese OVOP programme, China adopted the strategy of *One Hamlet One Product* in the 1980s. It was first launched in Shanghai City in 1983 followed by many other provinces like Wuhan, Jiangsu, Shaanxi, Jianxi, etc. under different names such as *One Factory One Product, One Village One Treasure Movement, One Community One Product,* and *One Village One Product* Movement. Shanghai further extended the One Hamlet One Product strategy at town and regional levels (Thanh, *et al.,* 2018). Some other examples of countries adopting the OVOP approach are Malawi, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Senegal, etc. in Africa; Argentina, Columbia, and Peru, etc. in Latin America and Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Mongolia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Kyrgyz Republic, Thailand, Vietnam, etc. in Asia. There have been different variations in

implementing and planning the OVOP programme in these countries. Malawi, for instance, introduced the OVOP project in 2003 (Kurokawa, Tembo and Velde, 2010) where the entrepreneurs were given grants from the Malawi Regional Development Fund, technical assistance from JICA and skill development from the national government after a review of the proposals which were monitored by the OVOP Secretariat in Malawi.

Figure 1: Adoption of OVOP Programmes in Different Parts of the World



Source: Author's estimation based on FAO (2022).

FAO (2022) categorises various OVOP and similar programmes based on the orientation behind countries' implementation of the initiative. It divides the orientation of the programme into two categories, one, is social orientation where countries have been focusing on community development and social inclusion with local product development and community-based tourism. And, two, on the economic aspect including boosting SMEs, expanding the export basket, product and industry development, etc. Figure 1 shows the global representation of the OVOP programme in various countries at their varied capacity based

on the orientation. However, it should be noted that a single country may have used the OVOP technique for two separate motives. For example, in the case of Bhutan, the *One Gewog One Product* (OGOP) programme was initiated in 2015 for developing the private sector aimed at economic prosperity. Previously in 2014, it also experimented with the *Decentralized Hands-on Program Exhibition* (D-HOPE), which was introduced for social development in the area. Countries, where OVOP programmes have been motivated by economic and social motives together in different regions, are represented in the graph below under the Social/Economic category.

Geographically, countries in Latin America have predominantly used OVOP and similar programmes for social inclusion and development, whereas African and Asian countries are inclined towards economic benefits through the programmes. Many such OVOP programmes, presented in the graph, have been a part of Japan's "Development Initiative for Trade" and are supported by JICA. Similar to the OVOP programme, FAO introduced a 5-year project on One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) aimed at achieving its Strategic Framework (2022-31) and Sustainable Development Goals under the Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Plan focusing on Special Agricultural Products (SAPs). It aims to promote resilient production systems by establishing technical networks, formulating market access platforms, disseminating technologies, etc. However, at the global level, it is considering a country as a unit in geographical limitation for implementation of the project, dedicated to a product, instead of a village/district/city. This is quite different from the countries using the concept of OVOP as it would be difficult for a country diversified into many agriculture products to choose a single priority. It is easier for a small geographical unit to be selective and conduct strategies like the OVOP/ODOP.

With the assistance of JICA, Laos experimented with the One District One Programme in Savannakhet and Saravanh provinces during the period 2008-11 where new products such as textile handicrafts, rattan

products, shochu, banana brandy, honey products, etc. were developed (Hirohata, 2013). However, consistency in the quality of products has been a major challenge needing government support through technology transfer and innovation in the related areas. Similar to Laos, Vietnam also introduced the One Commune One Product (OCOP) programme in Quang Ninh from 2013-16 based on the bottom-up approach with the three principles of Japan's OVOP, including self-reliance, human resource development and development of new local products for the global market. For restructuring Quang Ninh, the government aimed at producing competitive-traditional products endogenously by the commune for fostering the development and upgradation of new and existing businesses to the commercial level, setting up value chains of the traditional products through the creation of community-based organisations for product promotion system. More than 200 products have attracted a large consumer base, 18 production facilities have been established, and 32 training courses have been implemented in the province resulting in increasing production and consumption, creating job opportunities, and enhancing the income of the villagers making the OCOP a success (Thanh, *et al.*, 2018). The positive results from Quang Ninh Province are attributed to the decision of expanding the OCOP programme at the national level by the government.

Along similar lines to the Japanese OVOP programme, the Royal Thai Government initiated One Tambon One Product (OTOP) in 2000 which aimed to foster the nation's competitiveness by stimulating domestic consumption and community development at the grassroots level. The programme yielded more than 5000 products in a total of 1032 villages participated and the sales increased nearly six times from 2001 to 2004, nearly 1 per cent of Thailand's GDP (Natsudu, *et al.*, 2012). Many provinces like Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima, Ang Thong, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, etc. participated in the OTOP programme. Chiang Mai province also initiated the OTOP Village Champion programme in 2006, promoting tourism with the development of products in the province. The National OTOP Administrative Committee (NOAC) has been responsible for articulating formulating and implementing the OTOP in Thailand with

sub-committees at the national, provincial and district levels. Similar to OVOP, the Thai government organised exhibitions, and offered incentives for marketing activities and other training and promotional activities with the annual budget managed by NOAC. However, the farmers are also given subsidies by the government which was not the case in Japan's OVOP, resulting in low community participation in OTOP.

Claymone and Jaiborisudhi (2011) made a sharp distinction between the OVOP and OTOP strategies where the Japanese aimed at the long-term development of the villages with endogenous support within the villages, in contrast to Thailand's programme rooting for rapid development in the rural community with the support of the government, and are said to be consequences for the failure of the OTOP programme in Thailand. Another difference between OVOP and OTOP is that the former is an endogenous approach by the entrepreneurs/villagers whereas the latter is directed and coordinated by the national government with specific guiding principles for product development and marketing with the assistance of Japan from JETRO and JICA (Denpaiboon and Amatasawatdee, 2012). A similar approach has been undertaken by Indonesia under its Back to Village or *Gerakan Kembali ke Desa* project which is similar to OVOP. Like, in the case of Thailand, Indonesia's OVOP programme embarks on a top-down development style, where community development is driven by the government instead of the local community.

Like many other East and South-East countries, Malaysia also adopted the OVOP concept, however, it focused more on developing industry in a district rather than a product, to boost living standards through entrepreneurship while using naturally available resources to increase competitiveness among entrepreneurs. Drawing inspiration from the successful story of OVOP in Japan, Malaysia implemented *One District One Industry* (ODOI) in 2003 by nurturing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in rural areas under its Integrated Rural Development Policy. Within a year, nearly 78 districts adopted ODOI in Malaysia with 1420 entrepreneurs, where the industries are classified into four categories: food products, craft products, rural industry

products and services (Kader, Mohamad and Ibrahim, 2009). The Malaysian ODOI programme promotes entrepreneurs by inducting growth dynamism through invoking productive activities in MSMEs. Entrepreneurs at the district level are engaged in industrial activities using locally available raw materials and are considered under the ODOI programme for establishing a competitive industry. The government has extended the required infrastructure to promote MSME activities along with entrepreneur leadership, skill and product development. Under the scheme, the government also help business activities with marketing, promotion, monitoring, evaluation, quality control and resource management, training and extension services, etc.

The diverse experiences in different countries of the OVOP programme have raised questions about the factors responsible for a positive outcome of the programme. Many countries have faced difficulties in terms of marketing products from the OVOP programme, and lack of domestic cooperation in terms of private investment and community participation (Kurokawa, Tembo and Velde, 2010). Based on Japan's experiment with OVOP, Issa and Lawal (2014) identified nine factors for determining the success of the programme in a village. Some of these include factors of production like land, capital, labour, natural environment and technology with government assistance for commercialization with adequate infrastructure, international exchange, local diplomacy mass media and others. Access to finance and information, especially for small and medium enterprises plays a vital role in determining the success of OVOP (Ndione and Suzuki, 2019). However, one of the three principles of the Japanese OVOP programme, i.e. self-reliance is found to be essential for the determination of success and is the main cause for the unsuccessfulness of OTOP (Nguyem, 2013). Additionally, the motives behind the introduction of programmes like OVOP/ODOP have been different for different countries (FAO, 2022). Some countries, like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China (in Shanghai), Ecuador, etc. have focused on empowering rural economies through such programmes whereas some countries like Malaysia have targeted their industrial sector. Cambodia and Japan focused on export diversification

with innovation in goods. India, additionally, has focused on creating export hubs in the districts based on the district specialization and export potential, details of which are discussed in the following sections.

4. India's Experiment with Districts as Export Hubs

In a major policy decision in 2019, India emphasised boosting external sector performance from the grassroots level by increasing the role of individual districts in contributing to the exports of goods and services to the international market. This policy decision is further reinforced in India's Foreign Trade Policy 2023 giving due importance to districts to participate as active stakeholders. It has proposed to create 'Export Hubs' with appropriate institutional mechanisms in collaboration with exporters, States, Centre and Indian Missions (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2023). The responsibility of export promotion, which was earlier under the Central government, has now been decentralised and requires active involvement from the state and district-level bodies in the government to enhance trade for sustained growth. The government aims at identifying specific goods and services per district which have export potential and can be promoted at an international forum to reach India's export target of USD 2 trillion by 2030 (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2023). This would, in the process, empower farmers, artisanal and small-scale industries and SMEs to competitively grow and serve the global platform along with the domestic market. This district-led export growth for India would be a step towards achieving *Atmanirbhar*, *Make in India* and *Vocal for Local* initiatives.

The idea of *Districts as Export Hubs* (DEH) is to identify and produce those goods and services where the district has competitiveness with existing levels of exports and the potential to expand trade in the overseas market in a phased manner. For the first phase, goods and services related to GI products, toy clusters, agricultural clusters, etc. have been identified which would receive support from the government through District Export Promotion Committees (DEPCs), State Export Promotion Committees (SEPCs) and the Centre government to mitigate the bottlenecks for the producers/exporters. To reach the desired export

target, the district would be provided with specific support in terms of branding and outreach activities, infrastructure and logistical support, etc. to increase investment and manufacturing activities with scale economies. The DEPCs have been assigned to develop District-Specific Export Action Plans for all the districts which would provide the identified products, potential export markets, and quantifiable targets for short-term and medium-term to boost production, employment and trade. The DEH initiative is expected to increase the growth of exports by double digits from at least 350 Districts of the country in the next five years. The DEH initiative has been under the government's priority since 2018 when the One District One Product (ODOP) programme was mooted to boost local economic empowerment. Consequently, the ODOP initiative was merged with the DEH, introduced by the States as well as by the Centre.

Uttar Pradesh was the first state to launch the ODOP initiative in India in January 2018 in 75 districts. The state government encouraged farmers/producers to focus on indigenous craft-based or agriculture products specific to individual districts to foster balanced regional development through productivity increase, employment generation and income enhancement, especially in the traditional industries and MSMEs sectors. The ODOP scheme is supported by four sub-schemes in the state where the State government provides incentives to boost the production and export of products (Yadav, Tripathi and Tripathi, 2022). Through the *Common Facility Centre Scheme,* various actors like Self-help groups, NGOs, and private companies are provided necessary support by the State government to develop research and development centres, processing centres, testing labs, etc. related to district-specific products, to provide adequate infrastructure support. The *Marketing Development Assistance Scheme* helps the producers by providing exposure to the destination markets through national and international trade fairs, exhibitions, and other promotion and marketing activities. The government would also provide a certain amount of subsidy under the *Margin Money Scheme,* depending on the project cost and provide training to human resources under the *Skill Development Scheme* for developing a set of skilled workforces with desired toolkits in the entire value chain.

Nearly 80 per cent of the goods exported by Uttar Pradesh in 2019 were categorised as ODOP products exported to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal. More than 11000 ODOP products are available online in India (Tripathi and Agrawal, 2021). The ODOP scheme in Uttar Pradesh has increased employment by 42.1 per cent with an increase in financial assistance of around 38.9 per cent from 2018-19 to 2019-20 (ANI, 2020). The State aims to become a USD 1 trillion economy by 2027 for which ODOP would provide the necessary impetus to export, employment and Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). The success of the ODOP scheme in Uttar Pradesh has induced many to adopt the scheme at the national level, where the Ministry of Food Processing Industries promotes the food processing industries in the rural economy through various benefits to the districts like branding and marketing support, grants, subsidies, seed capital, training and capital investment. Similar schemes have been adopted by other states like Madhya Pradesh to boost district exports (Madhya Pradesh State Policy and Planning Commission, 2022).

Though there is a huge potential in the ODOP scheme, there have been shreds of evidence in the literature marking some challenges that Uttar Pradesh is facing in promoting districts as export hubs. The State Government initiatives and sub-schemes in Uttar Pradesh are providing the necessary impetus to the supply-side measures for promoting the ODOP scheme. However, there has been little focus on the demand-side measures (Misra, Maurya and Tewari, 2021). But with the DEH initiative, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with DEPCs and SEPCs, has focused on identifying and evaluating product destination markets with appropriate promotional activities under the district-specific Export Action Plans to enable districts to grow into export hubs, which is not limited to a single product in the district, as discussed in the following sections.

5. Role of Districts in India's Exports

The importance of international trade for the Indian economy has been extensively discussed in the literature. According to India's latest

Trade Policy Review (WTO, 2015) in the WTO, the country focuses on increasing growth and investment by enhancing exports, developing infrastructure, and creating a competitive and transparent trading and investment environment with a simple taxing system. India's trade openness increased from 7.7 per cent in the early 1970s to 45.3 per cent in 2021. In the first phase of the recessionary period, i.e. 2008-12, when the world had been grappling with an economic crisis, India's trade openness reached more than 50 per cent, except in 2009 and 2010. The country's foreign trade policy is based on the dual element of market and product diversification. It boosted three types of goods: one, agriculture and manufacturing-related exports; two, high value-added exports and three, products included in the global value chains. In its recent Foreign Trade Policy (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2023) the government has focused on promoting exports of the country to integrate India with the world and projecting it as a trusted global trading partner. The role of districts, in India's export promotion, has been given priority in the current foreign trade policy.

The resurgence of India's export sector despite repeated occurrences of exogenous shocks confirms its resilience. The sector expanded more than twice from USD 185.3 billion in 2008 to USD 421.9 billion in 2021. Though the export growth was affected by the prolonged recession in the global economy, it is now experiencing an upward trend. The exports of the country experienced a growth of 6.5 per cent for the entire period of 2008-21, where during the 1st phase of the recession exports grew at nearly 12.8 per cent, and the export sector was severely affected in the following period. It recorded a de-growth of -0.9 per cent in the 2nd phase of the recession (i.e., 2013-17), adding to the misery of the global slowdown because of the tariff war between the US and China in 2019 and COVID-19 in 2020. The fall in the export level was recorded at 5.1 per cent and 6.9 per cent in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Though affected by various COVID-19 waves and disruptions in supply chains in 2021, the performance of India's export sector was tremendous with exports growing at 44.6 per cent in 2021. The exports continued to grow at a rate

of nearly 7 per cent in 2022. However, the pattern of export growth is not similar to that of India when we disaggregate India's overall exports to the state level.

Different states have had different experiences while recording their export performance in recent years which is not based on their geographical location or their GDP levels. We may divide the states into five categories based on their export growth in 2021. The first category is one where the states experience a de-growth, out of 37 States/UTs contributing to exports, only five recorded a de-growth in exports during 2021. The second category comprises states, such as Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Ladakh, Mizoram, and Sikkim, having export growth of more than 100 per cent for the same year. Some of these states have low levels of exports with high growth rates. The next set of states falls under the category where the export growth is between 50 to 100 per cent. There are six such states, such as Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Odisha, and West Bengal, irrespective of their GDP share in the country's GDP. The last two categories, comprising states having export growth between 25 to 50 per cent and 0 to 25 per cent, account for the majority of states in the categories, i.e. 11 and 10 states, respectively. The classification is based on the export performance of the states in the post-pandemic year of 2021. However, it has been observed that many states which have not performed well in the post-pandemic year have recorded exceptional growth in the pandemic year. One such example is Andaman and Nicobar where the exports grew at 45.4 per cent in 2020 leading to a fall in the post-COVID year at a rate of -39.5 per cent.

The diversity presented by the states in their export performance is reflective of their heterogeneity in producing and exporting different products at the district level. A total of 683 districts of the Indian federal system have contributed to the export sector and many of them could not participate in the export activities in 2021. However, the variations in the share of the districts in India's total exports vary significantly as shown in Table 1.

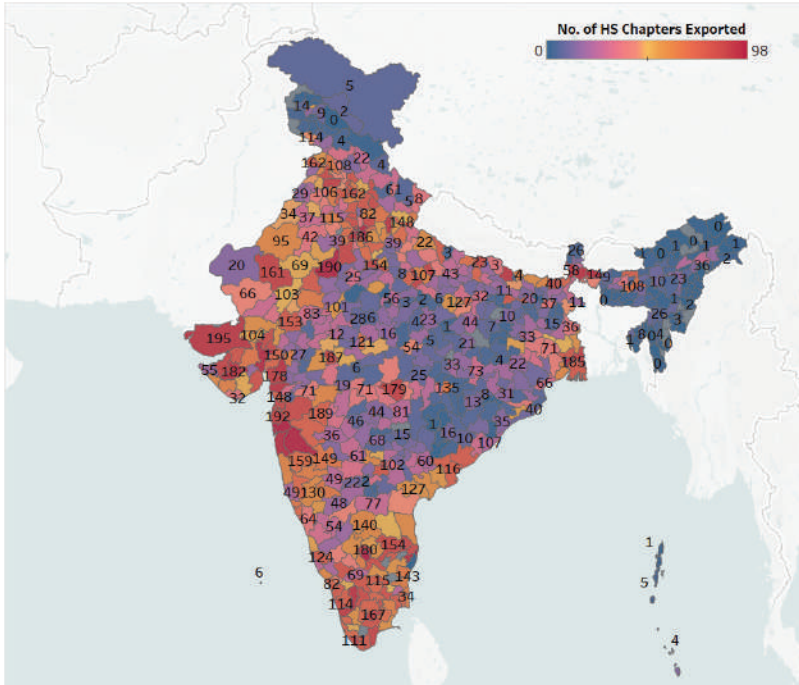
Table 1: Share of Various District Brackets in India's Exports 2021

District Brackets	Share
1-10	38.0
11-20	14.1
21-30	8.9
31-40	6.5
41-50	5.1
51-60	4.1
61-70	3.4
71-80	2.9
81-90	2.3
91-100	1.9
101-150	6.0
151-300	5.7
301-683	1.1

Source: Author's estimation based on DGCIS, 2022.

The top 10 exporting districts, which are spanning over five states, accounted for 38 per cent of India's exports in 2021. The number has been reduced drastically by nearly 24 per cent for the next 10 exporting districts, which are contributing only 14.1 per cent of India's exports in the same year. Similar is the case with the next 10 districts. The top 100 districts contribute the majority of exports (87.2 per cent), whereas the same for the remaining districts is quite poor. The districts falling under the brackets 101-150 and 151-300 accounted for nearly 6 per cent of total exports each. Moreover, the districts under the 301-683 bracket, more than half of the total districts, contributed merely 1.08 per cent in 2021. The variations in export performances in these districts need to be reduced with the active participation of the manufacturers and exporters in government schemes like '*District as Export Hub*'. The diversity of districts in India is also vividly visible in Figure 2, representing the number of HS chapters that the districts are exporting with variation in the colour and the number denoted inside the graph depicts the number of countries the corresponding district has exported to in 2021.

Figure 2: Concentration of District Exports in HS Chapters and Destinations



Source: Author's estimation based on DGCIS, 2022.

Note: Variation in the colour represents the number of individual HS chapters the district is exporting and the number denoted in the represents the number of export destinations targeted by the district.

Concerning the products, the majority of the Northern (except in Jammu and Kashmir), Western and Southern districts in India are quite diversified as opposed to districts in the Central, Eastern and North-Easter parts of the country. Similar is the case with export destinations. There are many districts in the Northeast part of the country which did not have any record exports in 2021. Hence, one can see that merely 19 districts, located in eight states, have accounted for 51 per cent of the total exports of the country. The same share rises to 80 per cent with 70 districts in 19 states. Appendix 1 presents the largest exporting product in the top exporting district of the Indian state/UT with their share in

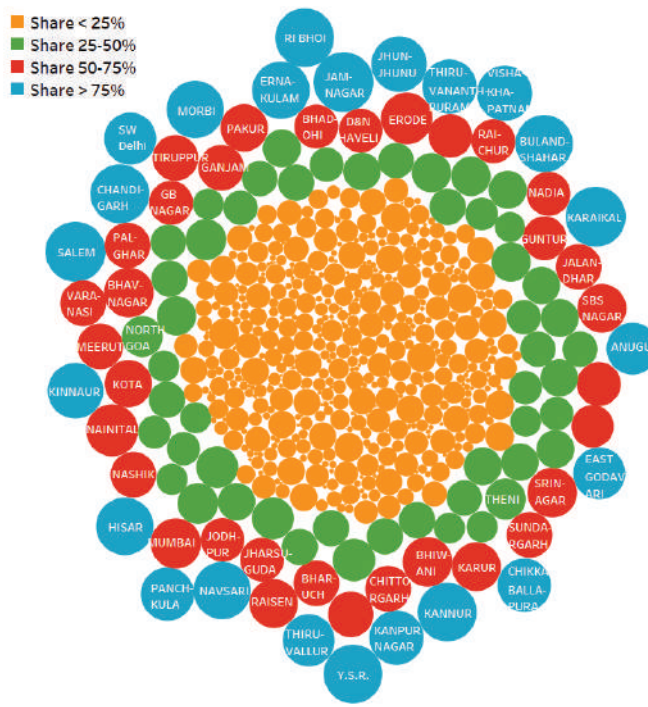
total district exports, total state exports and commodity exports at the national level in 2021. An interesting point to note from the Appendix is that states which are not recognised as top exporting states have district exporting major share of a particular commodity in India's total export. Small states, such as Meghalaya, can have a leading export sector if the district strategy is well-developed leading to Ri Boi becoming a District Export Hub for Agarwood.

There are 23 districts where the value of the top exporting commodity contributes more than 75 per cent of India's total export of the commodity, as indicated by blue bubbles in Figure 3. Similarly, there are a set of 33 districts (denoted with red bubbles) and 51 districts (represented with green-coloured bubbles) where the top exporting commodity accounts for 50-75 per cent and 25-50 per cent of India's overall export of the commodity to the world in 2021, respectively. Such variations in districts and export commodities require specific and targeted policy interventions. Low-hanging fruits such as specific commodities in these districts, some of them mentioned in Appendix 1, can be prioritised as they would need a relatively small push to boost exports in diversified markets.

A district may not be producing a single product competitively in the world economy to be considered under the ODOP programme, but it can produce multiple competitive commodities as seen from the experiences of other countries. There are many districts where more than one commodity can be focused under India's District as Export Hub initiative. The paper uses district-wise exports of India at 8-digit HS classification for the year 2021 to identify dominating products in a district. A district is said to be dominated by two products if the difference between the share of the first two most exported commodities by the district is more than 10 per cent. Table 2 provides an overview of different states where districts can have more than one commodity and work towards the *One District Two Product* programme which was adopted by Zambia in 2014 (Muchima and Mwanza, 2023) or focusing on more than two products as in the case of India's new initiative of

District as Export Hubs. Union Territories like Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli are the two exceptions where a single product dominates the export sector. States and UTs like Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand have more districts which can be developed as export hubs for a single commodity since they are endowed with more than one competitive commodity. Additionally, Daman and Diu, Kerala, Punjab and Tripura have districts equally divided between a single product and a double product, whereas the rest of the states have a high probability of focusing on more than a single commodity under their *Districts as Export Hub* initiative.

Figure 3: Contribution of Top Export Commodity by District in India's Total Commodity Export



Source: Author's estimate based on DGCIS Database, 2022.

Table 2: Domination of Double Product in Indian States

	No. of Districts having	
States	**Single Product**	**Double Product**
Andaman & Nicobar	2	1
Andhra Pradesh	5	8
Arunachal Pradesh	5	6
Assam	15	18
Bihar	11	26
Chandigarh	1	0
Chhattisgarh	5	20
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	0
Daman & Diu	1	1
Delhi	7	4
Goa	0	2
Gujarat	19	14
Haryana	9	13
Himachal Pradesh	5	7
Jammu & Kashmir	6	12
Jharkhand	4	20
Karnataka	13	17
Kerala	7	7
Ladakh	0	2
Lakshadweep	0	1
Madhya Pradesh	14	38
Maharashtra	21	15
Manipur	3	4
Meghalaya	2	7
Mizoram	1	2
Nagaland	5	1
Odisha	8	22
Puducherry	1	3
Punjab	11	11

Table 2 continued...

Table 2 continued...

Rajasthan	18	15
Sikkim	0	4
Tamil Nadu	21	11
Telangana	10	23
Tripura	3	3
Uttar Pradesh	23	52
Uttarakhand	8	5
West Bengal	10	13
Grand Total	**275**	**408**

Source: Author's estimate based on DGCIS Database, 2022.

Recently, as many as 683 districts have exported 500 unique products, at HS 8-digit classification, which may be developed for a single commodity export hub or two commodity export hubs. The composition of products is highly skewed towards manufacturing products, constituting 69 per cent, followed by agriculture commodities (22.8 per cent) and mineral products (8.2 per cent). Five major sectors, namely Fruits and Vegetables, Chemicals, Textile and Clothing, Base Metal and Machinery, are dominant among the list of products. Moreover, while looking into specific chapters, chapter 9 relating to coffee and tea, chapter 29 to organic chemicals, chapters 52 and 62 to cotton and apparel, chapters 72 and 73 to iron and articles of iron and chapter 84 to nuclear reactors, boilers and machinery, are the leading chapters in the set of identified products in different districts. Among the states, 12 out of 37 states and UTs are focusing on primary products as their top exporting commodity and the rest are accounting for manufacturing products. In the agriculture sector, the majority of the commodities are accounted in the fruits and vegetables sector (69.3 per cent), followed by prepared food (19.9 per cent), live animals and plants (10.1 per cent). The share of the fats and oil sector is negligible, where only districts, i.e., Banas Kantha, Junagarh and Patan in Gujarat, are exporting castor oil.

The government planning with DEPCs and SEPCs of the District-Specific Export Action Plan for the identification of potential goods and

services has been progressing. The DEH initiative is being spread over various states in India where nearly 462 District Export Action Plans have been worked out with the identification of 706 district-focused products (Directorate General of Foreign Trade, 2023). The Ministry of Commerce and & Industry, Government of India has provided the list of goods and services which have export potential from 733 districts (Directorate General of Foreign Trade, 2023). However, there are instances from the list where the products do not match with the top 5 official exported products from the district or these products are described in a broader[2] sense. For instance, in the case of Andaman and Nicobar Island, the government has identified certain marine products with a thrust on Tuna, Coconut and Coconut-based products, Tourism, and IT Services as the major export hubs for all three districts in the state. However, Nicobar is also exporting imitation jewellery (HS Heading 7117), trunks (HS Heading 4202), aluminium bars (HS Heading 7604), etc. in 2021 and they are listed as the top exports of the district. Similarly, products such as cotton yarn (HS Heading 5205 and 5206), portland cement (HS Heading 2523) and oil seed (HS Heading 1207) are not included as potential products in Amrelli district in Gujarat. There are also many examples where the list of identified products is consistent with the top-five products exported (based on the description at the HS heading level) from Mumbai and a few other districts. However, the use of trade classification of products may be left to the government for the identification of products for regular monitoring of trade trends and identification of tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers at the international level. This could also help in evaluating the impact of the DEH initiative on India's trade.

The government has been supporting the efforts of developing Districts as Export Hubs with various schemes and other support activities for promoting exports at the district level. These schemes can be classified into various heads relating to market access[3], duty-free benefits[4], infrastructure and technology development[5] with a special focus on product development programmes and initiatives like the National

Handloom Development Programme, MSME cluster development, and capacity building and awareness with initiatives like *Niryat Bandhu Scheme*, development of a database on district-exports, DEH mobile app web portal, etc. to increase the competitiveness of the products exported. Government, at various national and international levels, creating awareness of Indian products under DEH initiatives like the display of products through Indian Missions and at forums like the World Economic Forum, Dubai World Expo, India-Japan Mango Festivals, treating G20 delegates with different state-specific traditional and indigenous goods and services with the promotion of millets, celebration of International Yoga Day in various countries, etc. With such kind of push from the government, district-level participation in trade would be getting the required boost and may be enhanced with the active participation of the private and local players.

6. Conclusion

The introduction of the One District One Programme scheme across the world has presented varied outcomes while implementing these schemes with different objectives. The global experience has shown that several countries have been engaged in micro-level spatial initiatives at the village, district, and industry levels, but operating in a limited number of sectors under the ODOP programme. Japan, being the first one to evolve the micro-spatial strategy successfully, has provided development assistance to many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America through capacity building, pilot projects, expert consultations, etc. on OVOP, to regain social and economic benefits in various villages/districts. However, there are no stylized facts on the success or outcome of the scheme. Countries have approached the idea of developing small units, like districts, with alternative strategies to focus on commodity-specific hubs in production or trade, etc. Some countries have used a bottom-up approach where districts were made the major players in implementing the scheme, and the decisions, motivation and leadership have been pushed from the community level. On the other hand, others have relied on the central government for the execution of the scheme in addition

to promoting technology and infrastructure development, capacity building, etc.

In the case of India's ODOP scheme, imprints of broad Japanese principles of the OVOP initiative are reflected in domestic policies in the form of several programmes such as Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self Reliance), Local to Global and human resources development, 'Make in India', 'Skill India', etc. These broad objectives are supposed to provide the required push to the local economies for establishing districts as export hubs while providing special impetus to SMEs, artisanal and traditional industries for increasing India's reach in the global economy through diversification of exports and participation in value chains. With the limited availability of data on the district-wise trade in goods export for a year, it has been observed that the exports are highly concentrated in a small number of districts, and these districts have better access to the world market. It is also observed that many districts are lead exporters of India in specific products, not in value terms but in terms of their share in India's exports, and these districts may graduate to become large global players in the medium term.

Some districts are endowed with more than one product which may be incentivised through the DEH initiative for exports. In certain cases, the products identified by the government under the DEH scheme do not coincide with the top-five products exported by the districts. Therefore, efforts are to be made to choose an appropriate set of products based on production and trade information available for a district to improve the efficiency of the DEH initiatives. Identification of products with trade classification may help in linking local production with exports which would foster the monitoring mechanism of trade and production in the Export Hub districts.

With rising competition in the international market, India should focus on product-specific exports, not only from the demand side where country-specific exports should be targeted but also from the supply

side where the specific districts are to be focused for the production of the specific commodities. Before the introduction of ODOP, the participation of districts was not directly linked to the external sector. There were initiatives like the Town of Export Excellence where dynamic industrial clusters were assisted in becoming globally competitive producers. However, the DEH initiative provides a broad base with financial inclusion, logistical and infrastructural support to engage all districts of the country in developing at least a commodity for the global market and thus promoting exports. With the New FTP 2023, India needs to meet its export targets by connecting with district export and production hubs which are located at State/UTs. The bottom-up approach would help India establish a direct link between production units with meeting national export obligations.

Micro-level management of district exports would lead to a better understanding of export competitiveness where one should also aim at the active participation of districts and states in future Free Trade Agreements for focused markets with specialised product exports. Similar attempts have been made by countries like Canada, where provinces play an active role in trade negotiations with partner countries in various FTA negotiations. Adopting a more focused export strategy, China has been engaged in trade negotiations with the provincial governments in other countries. Though the Government of India has recently developed a detailed database on district-specific goods, a time series analysis would identify the trends and make corrective actions in due course. Such a database for trade in services is required to supplement trade in goods initiatives. Micromanagement is vital in the external sector, considering India's ambitious export target of USD 2 trillion by 2030. The new initiatives like ODOP and District as Export Hubs have become a step towards India's export strategy achieving its medium-term export target.

Appendix 1: Largest exporting district in Indian States/UTs in 2021

DISTRICT	STATE/UT	HS CODE	Commodity Description	Exp Val ($Mn)	Share in District (%)	Share in State (%)
South Andamans	Andaman & Nicobar	03035910	Indian mackerels (rastrelliger spp.)	0.9	81.5	77.50
East Godavari	Andhra Pradesh	89059090	Vessels; light, fire-floats, floating cranes and other vessels, other under heading 8905	1597.7	39.2	8.27
West Kameng	Arunachal Pradesh	72022100	Ferro-silicon containing >55% of silicon	1.3	99.8	79.16
Golaghat	Assam	27101944	Automotive diesel fuel, not containing biodiesel, conforming	40.4	68.9	8.97
Begusarai	Bihar	27101949	High flash high-speed diesel fuel conforming to standard	766.8	64.0	33.22
Chandigarh	Chandigarh	84485190	Sinkers, needles etc. of other textile machinery	11.0	11.1	11.10
Korba	Chhattisgarh	76011010	Aluminium ingots-not alloyed	800.3	98.6	23.62
Daman	Daman & Diu	30049099	Other medicines put up for retail sale n.e.s	67.3	9.4	9.29
South West	Delhi	84111200	Turbo-jets of a thrust >25 kn	2148.2	71.6	26.01
Dadra And Nagar Haveli	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	54023300	Textured yarn of polyesters	421.7	11.0	10.99
South Goa	Goa	30049099	Other medicines put up for retail sale n.e.s	314.9	22.3	12.94
Jamnagar	Gujarat	27101944	Automotive diesel fuel, not containing biodiesel, conforming	23862.7	47.1	18.82

Appendix 1 continued...

Appendix 1 continued...

Solan	Himachal Pradesh	30049099	Other medicines put up for retail sale n.e.s	449.3	24.9	20.92
Karnal	Haryana	10063020	Basmati rice	1387.5	76.4	8.92
East Singhbum	Jharkhand	72083930	Sheets of flat road products in coils of a thickness <3 mm	512.1	42.6	20.91
Srinagar	Jammu & Kashmir	62142010	Shawls of wool	20.5	44.3	8.33
Dakshina Kannada	Karnataka	27101949	High flash high-speed diesel fuel conforming to standard	2266.9	35.4	8.76
Ernakulam	Kerala	27101941	Gas oil	337.9	12.5	7.38
Leh Ladakh	Ladakh	82041110	Hand-operated spanners non-adjustable	0.0	59.3	26.44
Lakshadweep District	Lakshadweep	62052090	Shirts; men's or boys', of cotton (not knitted or crocheted) of cotton: other	0.1	61.6	61.64
Mumbai Suburban	Maharashtra	71023910	Diamond (other than industrial diamond) cut or otherwise worked	12069.1	77.3	16.51
Ri Bhoi	Meghalaya	12119080	Agarwood (including chips and dust)	2.8	64.1	32.17
Tamenglong	Manipur	63025190	Other table linen: of cotton, other than handloom	0.2	37.7	25.41
Indore	Madhya Pradesh	30049099	Other medicines put up for retail sale n.e.s	629.9	26.2	8.04
Aizawl	Mizoram	05010010	Human hair, unworked; whether or not washed or scoured	3.8	100.0	99.09
Dimapur	Nagaland	67030010	Human hair dressed or otherwise worked	0.3	25.7	25.12

Appendix 1 continued...

Appendix 1 continued...

Jharsuguda	Odisha	76011010	Aluminium ingots-not alloyed	3144.4	61.7	18.43
Amritsar	Punjab	10063020	Basmati rice	184.4	46.8	2.60
Pondicherry	Puducherry	30049099	Other medicines put up for retail sale n.e.s	52.1	10.7	10.59
Chittorgarh	Rajasthan	79011100	Zinc, not alloyed, containing by wt>=99.99% zinc	544.9	73.1	5.64
East District	Sikkim	30049099	Other medicines put up for retail sale n.e.s	4.4	29.0	23.14
Medchal Malkajgiri	Telangana	30049099	Other medicines put up for retail sale n.e.s	946.7	33.9	8.61
Kanchipuram	Tamil Nadu	87032291	Motor car with cylinder capacity>=1000cc but <1500cc with spark	1198.1	12.2	3.41
Gomati	Tripura	84119900	Parts of other gas turbines	10.6	100.0	86.86
Udam Singh Nagar	Uttarakhand	79011100	Zinc, not alloyed, containing by wt>=99.99% zinc	372.9	35.7	19.28
Gautam Buddha Nagar	Uttar Pradesh	85171211	Mobile phones, other than push button type	2091.0	23.1	9.94
Kolkata	West Bengal	71131910	Jewellery of gold unset	1105.5	22.6	7.96

Source: Author's estimate based on DGCIS Database, 2022

Endnotes

[1] According to International One Village One Product (IOVOP) Alliance, India started the OVOP programme in 2013 (https://iovop.org/mdl/content/action/postdetail/postid/291), however, no concrete evidence was found related to it.

[2] For instance, in the case of Haryana, districts such as Bhiwani, Charkhi Dadri, Jind, Kaithal, Mahendragarh, Nuh, etc. are been categorised under the broad category of agricultural produce.

[3] Government is providing market access through Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) schemes, Market Access Initiatives, buyer-seller meets and trade fairs, etc.

[4] Such as Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme, Advance Authorization Scheme, Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme.

[5] Ensuring technology and infrastructure development through schemes like Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES), Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme, National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) Scheme for Technology Upgradation of SC (TUSC).

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