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The proposed model for assessing the organizational and economic mechanism of agricultural producers goals of the agricultural sector, to respond quickly to the emergence of new problems in the economic activity of the subject.

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E-COMMERCE AS ONE OF THE KEY FACTORS ENSURING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF AGRARIAN ENTERPRISES IN UKRAINE

Abstract.

The scientific research examines the use of e-commerce by agricultural producers in Ukraine under conditions of the impact of quarantine restrictions on the functioning of the national, international, world economic systems and individual markets. The influence of e-commerce (EC) on the competitiveness of agrarian enterprises in the country is revealed. The aim of the research is to reveal the importance of e-commerce for ensuring the competitiveness of Ukrainian agricultural producers and to clarify the features of its use for agricultural holdings, large, medium-sized and small enterprises under conditions of a global pandemic and development of the quarantine crisis. The methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, monographic and graphic methods and the method of logical generalization are used in the work. The research methodology is based on the system-functional and historical approaches. Based on the critical analysis of foreign scientific developments by domestic scientists, the essence of the term “e-commerce” was defined at the beginning of the research with the emphasis on the growth of the competitiveness and economic efficiency of business entities and relevant software products in the context of the increase of meeting customer needs in products (jobs, services). The study of statistics on the development of commercial activity and e-commerce in the world during 2014-2020 has revealed that EC grew faster and was the main driver of commercial activity growth in the global markets. At the same time, the use of e-commerce tools by agricultural producers was low.

However, quarantine restrictions of 2020 have significantly accelerated the use of e-commerce by agricultural enterprises throughout the world having defined e-commerce as a key factor ensuring competitiveness of agricultural producers in modern economic conditions. A study of statistics on the development of e-commerce in Ukraine and its use by agricultural producers indicates a lag behind global trends and the growing role of e-commerce in 2020 under the influence of the quarantine crisis and inability to carry out financial and economic activities in the agricultural sector. The importance of intensification of e-commerce by agricultural producers in Ukraine in order to increase their competitiveness is emphasized. The benefits and limitations for the competitiveness of the domestic agrarian enterprises when using e-commerce tools considering the size of business entities

(agricultural holdings, large, medium-sized and small enterprises) are identified. Directions of e-commerce intensification by agricultural producers of Ukraine in the context of the growth of their competitiveness are developed considering the peculiarities of their commercial activity (agricultural holdings, large, medium-sized and small enterprises). Further ways of research within the framework of revealing the relationship between e-commerce and competitiveness of domestic enterprises are outlined.

Keywords: agrarian enterprises, business models of e-commerce, types of e-commerce, e-commerce, competitiveness.

Introduction. Transformational processes taking place in the world, international and national economic systems, including the Ukrainian economy, increase the importance of agriculture. At the same time, the development of agricultural production is accompanied by the processes of digitalization acceleration [1; 2]. Agricultural producers are experiencing much more intensive use of the tools of e-commerce (EC) to ensure, increase or maintain a sufficient level of their competitiveness. Due to electronic tools, commercial activity has become especially important under the conditions of quarantine crisis and sharp change of key aspects of agribusiness management. In order to ensure their competitiveness under these conditions, Ukrainian agricultural producers should pay more attention to the use of tools and opportunities of e-commerce in relations with counterparties, as well as for the increase in sales, e.g. due to entering new markets (local, regional, domestic, international, world).

Analysis of recent research and publications.

There can be observed a significant scientific interest in the study of the peculiarities of e-commerce, including agricultural producers. At the same time, the assessment of scientific achievements of domestic and foreign scientists allows us to identify several areas of research in this area:

1. Clarification of features, trends, advantages and problems of the use of e-commerce tools by business entities without focusing on agricultural producers. We can distinguish the works of the following scientists: O.V. Vynohradova, N.O. Yevtushenko, I.S. Kriuchok [3]; T.V. Orekhova and M.V. Dubel [4]; K.B. Voloshchuk, Y.O. Voloshchuk, V.R. Voloshchuk, S.V. Bohachyk [5] and others.

2. The use of e-commerce under conditions of the global pandemic and quarantine restrictions for doing business, including for agricultural producers. We focus on the scientific works of such scientists as Z. Mustafa [2]; J. Gullickson [6]; H. Guo, Y. Liu, X. Shi and K.Z. Chen [7] and others.

3. Research of key trends in the development of e-commerce in agribusiness, including in Ukraine, as well as issues of its use by agricultural producers. We pay attention to the studies by D. Strebytskyi [1]; J.R. Henderson, F.J. Dooley, J.T. Acridge [7]; K. Negrao [8]; S. Corneliss [9]; O.P. Kopishynska, A.V. Kalinichenko, V.M. Kalinichenko [10] and other scientists.

Emphasizing a substantial scientific value and practical significance of research in the field of e-commerce use in agribusiness conducted by domestic and foreign scientists, it can be argued that a rapid development of opportunities and tools for doing business through electronic means, as well as insufficient atten-

tion to the role of e-commerce when ensuring the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises requires additional scientific research with the emphasis on Ukrainian agricultural enterprises.

Research objectives. The article aims to examine the importance of e-commerce to ensure the competitiveness of Ukrainian agricultural producers highlighting the features of its use for agricultural holdings, large, medium and small enterprises under conditions of a global pandemic and a quarantine crisis development.

Presentation of the research material. E-commerce is growing in importance for business entities and becoming a key factor ensuring competitiveness. At the same time, agricultural producers, in contrast to other sectors of economic systems, are currently paying less attention to the development of their own business through e-commerce. This fully applies to agribusiness in Ukraine, which reduces the competitive opportunities of both enterprises and the industry as a whole. Despite active development of e-commerce in Ukraine, availability of a developed legal framework for its implementation (Law of Ukraine "On E-Commerce") and critical need to transform business relations with consumers under conditions of quarantine restrictions, agricultural producers rather passively use the opportunities of doing business using Internet tools, relevant information and software products. Under these conditions, it is important to provide theoretical substantiation of e-commerce implementation by agricultural enterprises in the context of increasing their competitiveness, as well as determining the features, benefits and limitations of using electronic tools of commercial activities by agricultural producers of different sizes (agricultural holdings, large, medium-sized, small enterprises).

We draw attention to scientific debates concerning the definition of the term "e-commerce" and the efforts of some scholars to use the term "e-trade" instead of "e-commerce". We consider it appropriate to carry out critical evaluation of the available definitions of the term "e-commerce" in order to clarify its essence in the context of the relationship of this term with the competitiveness of business entities.

The Law of Ukraine "On E-commerce" defines this type of commercial activity as the activity of business entities aimed to make a profit through the use of information and telecommunication systems and having commercial distance relations between contractors [11].

The definition of the term provided by the Law of Ukraine has certain shortcomings, in particular: the definition of profit as a key goal of e-commerce; lack of

relationship between e-commerce and meeting consumer needs and competitiveness of business entities; lack of clear regulation of the processes that can be defined as e-commerce; emphasis on the use of information and telecommunications systems, rather than information technology and relevant software products.

O.O. Syniavska distinguishes two approaches to interpretation of the term, where a narrower interpretation applies only to trade relations between counterparties through the Internet, and a broader one applies to all commercial activities of economic entities through the Internet tools [12, p. 127].

It should be noted that the narrow interpretation of the term is more appropriate to the definition of “e-commerce”. Regarding the broad interpretation of the term, the purpose of business entities is not clear, aspects of competitiveness support are not disclosed and it all comes down to the use of the Internet tools, rather than information and telecommunications systems, information technology and relevant software products.

D. Chaffi emphasizes that e-commerce is any transaction that takes place through electronic communication tools between stakeholders [13, p. 402].

D. Chaffi’s definition is more related to communications between counterparties and does not sufficiently disclose the features of e-commerce, as well as ensuring competitiveness in sales markets for products (jobs, services) through its tools.

B.A. Gardner defines e-commerce as a set of trade and other transactions that accompany the processes of exchange in the economic system [14, p. 269].

Despite a rather broad interpretation of the essence of e-commerce, B.A. Gardner does not disclose the purpose, features and impact of the use of information and telecommunications systems, information technology and relevant software products on business competitiveness.

A. Maievska emphasizes that within the framework of e-commerce the parties to the process conduct business transactions indirectly through electronic technologies [15, p. 112].

Drawing attention to the novelty of the definition of the term “e-commerce” by A. Maievska, we consider it appropriate to note the shortcomings, among which is unclear identification of parties within this type of activity, lack of relationship with competitiveness and insufficient disclosure of electronic technologies.

The viewpoint of D.D. Yevtushenko, who tries to distinguish the concepts of e-business and e-commerce and connect e-commerce with the operations of enterprises carried out with the help of information technologies in order to increase business efficiency, seems to be interesting [16, p. 185].

We agree with the definition of the term “e-commerce” by D.D. Yevtushenko and emphasize the need to clarify it through expansion of the list of contractors for such activities, clarification of relationship with competitiveness and greater detailing of EC tools and components.

Given the critical assessment of scientific works defining the essence of the term “e-commerce”, we consider it appropriate to define “e-commerce” as meeting the consumer needs in products (works, services) using information and telecommunications systems, information technology and software to increase the competitiveness and economic efficiency of business entities.

We support the idea of scientists [3; 16] that e-commerce is not identical with e-trade, where the latter is a component of e-commerce and has a narrower scope of use.

We note that e-commerce is becoming increasingly important in the global economic system, which requires a more detailed research (Table 1).

Table 1

The role of e-commerce in the world economy and commercial activity

Indicator	Years							Deviation	
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Absolute	Relative, %
Volumes of the world commercial activity, \$ billion	19,007	16,556	16,043	17,738	19,468	18,889	23,839	4,832	125.42
Volumes of EC, \$ billion	1,336	1,548	1,845	2,382	2,982	3,135	4,280	2,944	320.36
Share of EC in the world commercial activity, %	7.03	9.35	11.50	13.43	15.32	16.60	17.95	10.92	255.33
Number of buyers in EC, billion people	1.21	1.43	1.66	1.72	1.77	1.82	1.98	0.77	163.64

*– Compiled by the author based on references: [17].

There can be observed a rapid growth of e-commerce volumes (+\$2944 billion or 320.36%) against the background of rather slow growth of global commercial activity (+\$4832 billion or 125.42%) during the research period. At the same time, e-commerce provided 60.93% of the total growth of global commercial activity during 2014-2020. This situation indicates that e-commerce was the driver of global commercial activity growth during the research period. This situation has

led to an increase in the share of e-commerce in global commercial activity to 17.95% in 2020 (+ 10.92% during the research period). In addition, we have found out an increase in the number of customers due to e-commerce tools by 0.77 billion people from 2014 to 2020.

We emphasize rapid growth of the role of e-commerce in the world economy and commercial activity in 2018-2020, which is caused by rapid development of information technology in this area. A significant

growth of e-commerce in 2020 was also caused by quarantine restrictions and problems with doing business in traditional ways.

Regarding agribusiness, it should be noted that its share in e-commerce at the level of the world economy was quite insufficient throughout the research period

(Fig. 1). At the same time, quarantine restrictions and difficulties in marketing agricultural products in 2020 have led to a significant increase in their use of information technology and e-commerce tools, especially for micro-, small and medium agribusiness.

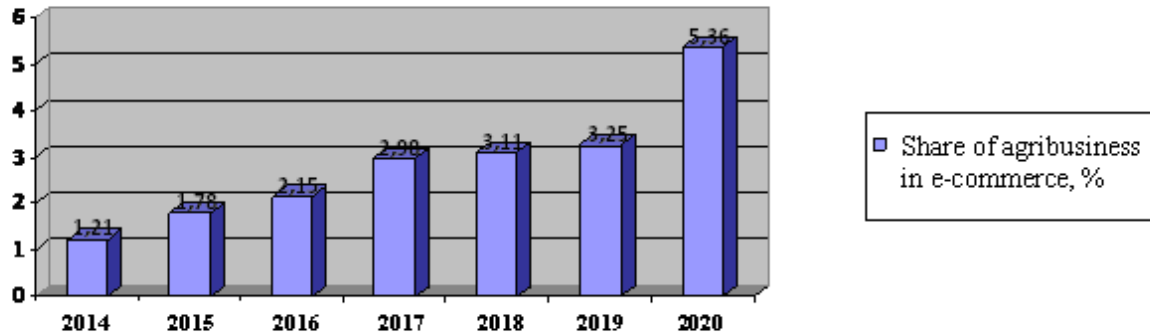


Fig. 1. Share of agribusiness in e-commerce at the level of the world economy in 2014-2020, %

*– Compiled by the author based on references: [17].

As for Ukraine (Fig. 2), it can be stated that the development of e-commerce lags far behind global dynamics, but there is a clear tendency towards the in-

crease in growth rates, especially in 2020, under the influence of quarantine restrictions and problems with doing business in traditional ways.

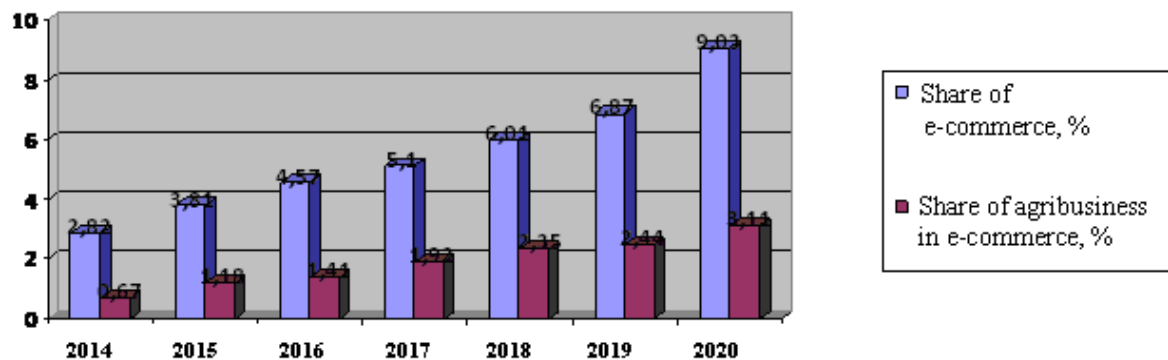


Fig. 2. Share of e-commerce and agribusiness in e-commerce at the level of Ukraine's economy in 2014-2020, %

*– Compiled by the author based on references: [17; 18].

It is also appropriate to note critically low figures on the use of e-commerce tools by agribusiness. The situation somewhat improved only in 2020 due to sales problems, mainly among micro-, small and medium-sized agricultural producers.

The above-mentioned indicates insufficient use of e-commerce by Ukrainian agricultural enterprises, which reduces their competitiveness and sales opportunities. This situation needs to be improved considering the size of agricultural producers (agricultural holdings, large, medium-sized and small enterprises).

Nowadays, in Ukraine agricultural holdings mostly use e-commerce tools. At the same time, such agricultural producers focus on the use of intermediary and advertising business models when using e-commerce tools, and they also mainly use B2B and B2G e-

commerce. This situation has its advantages and limitations in terms of ensuring the competitiveness of agricultural holdings. The advantages include:

- acceleration of the processes of interaction with business partners and government agencies and the opportunity to improve the quality of communication with such counterparties;
- reduction of the load on sales and other commercial divisions of the enterprise due to prior informing of contractors through the developed websites of the companies;
- reduction of costs for conducting commercial operations through the use of information tools, Internet tools and software products;
- enhancement of the efficiency of trade relations of the agricultural holding and its business partners

through the formation of a single information and communication space;

- increasing opportunities to find new counterparties, especially with regard to foreign economic activity;
- additional opportunities to reduce the risk of interaction with new counterparties.

However, e-commerce is currently having additional risks and restrictions for the competitiveness of agricultural holdings. They are as follows:

- additional risks of information security and the possibility to lose a part of the confidential commercial information due to the errors of staff and imperfection of software products;
- possibility to increase reputational losses and use information products by competitors for the reduction of the competitiveness of agricultural holdings;
- the need to incur additional costs for the support of commercial transactions with e-commerce tools and appropriate staff training;
- increasing competition through the entry of new competitors, including foreign ones, in the market and intensification of SMEs.

Given the above-mentioned, we consider it appropriate to make recommendations concerning the changes in the use of e-commerce tools by agricultural holdings in Ukraine in order to meet the needs of consumers of their products and increase competitiveness. They are as follows:

1. The use of the whole set of business models of e-commerce to stimulate various aspects of sales activities. Thus, the use of an intermediary model will reduce delivery terms and expand the geography of deliveries. Instead, an advertising model, especially with the use of the company's website and social networks, will increase the loyalty of end consumers to the products of agricultural holdings. A direct model will enable to transform a part of B2B relations into B2C relations, which acquires special importance during the period of quarantine restrictions. A trade model will enable to obtain new sales channels and attract new intermediaries to promote products, especially in the new, foreign markets. A subscription model will provide an opportunity to expand communications and increase the objectivity of feedback with the end users of products, as well as the intermediaries and other counterparties, including government agencies.

2. Expansion of interaction with end users (legal entities and individuals) within e-commerce, including the one in the context of intensification of foreign trade activities through the introduction of B2C commercial relations. It is clear that given the size of trade agreements and the peculiarities of financial and economic activities of agricultural holdings, this type of EC will be of supplementary nature, mainly advertising, and it will be a source of communication with consumers.

Large agrarian enterprises in Ukraine will also pay some attention to e-commerce tools, however, unlike agricultural holdings, the development of EC in these enterprises is insufficient due to financial, organizational, technical constraints, as well as labor shortages. Large agricultural enterprises in the country mainly use an intermediary business model of e-commerce, as well

as B2B and B2G e-commerce. We consider it appropriate to disclose, as in the case of agricultural holdings, the advantages and limitations concerning the competitiveness of large agricultural producers in Ukraine experienced by them when using e-commerce tools.

The main advantages of using EC to ensure competitiveness of large agricultural enterprises of Ukraine are as follows: improvement of the quality and efficiency of interaction and communication with business partners and government agencies, as well as the formation of an effective information environment for contractors; additional opportunities to enter foreign markets, as well as expansion of the number of suppliers through domestic and foreign business partners; saving of costs for part of commercial operations and reduction of the number of operational errors; additional opportunities to promote products to end consumers, especially in the food segments.

Significant limitations for the competitiveness of large Ukrainian agricultural producers within the use of e-commerce tools are as follows: additional costs for the development, purchase and use of information technology and software products within their individual commercial activities; unwillingness to significant openness and transparency, both for contractors, including state institutions of government, and for end consumers; difficulties in training and retraining of personnel in the context of e-commerce intensification, as well as the lack of necessary specialists in the labor market of Ukraine; the possibility of reputational losses due to operational errors and actions of competitors, as well as counterparties, including government institutions.

We emphasize the need to increase the use of e-commerce by large agricultural producers in Ukraine and make changes in existing practices in order to ensure the appropriate level of their competitiveness. Attention should be paid to:

- the use of advertising and trade business models, in addition to the intermediary one, and, if necessary, a direct business model, which will increase both competitiveness and efficiency of communication with counterparties, including end customers;
- as well as for agricultural holdings, the use of B2C type of e-commerce, in addition to B2B and B2G, especially for food producers and enterprises trying to enter new markets, including foreign ones;
- improvement of the organizational structure, staffing and training of personnel in order to increase the efficiency and use of e-commerce at the enterprise.

We note a critical importance of e-commerce development for medium-sized agricultural enterprises in Ukraine, because they are not able to fully realize the development potential through the use of EC tools under modern conditions due to the lack of resources, staff and strategic miscalculations. With almost no use of e-commerce, medium-sized agricultural producers lose their opportunity to gain a foothold in the national market, have insufficient representation in regional markets and do not work under direct contracts with foreign counterparties. Thus, e-commerce, as well as its development, is a key factor of increasing the competitiveness of medium-sized agricultural producers in

Ukraine. It should be separately noted that domestic medium-sized agricultural producers almost do not use business models for the use of EC and its types, only some of them work with either intermediary, or advertising, or trade models. Regarding the types of e-commerce, a small number of domestic medium-sized agricultural producers use either B2B, or B2G, or B2C e-commerce.

We have found out significant advantages in terms of the competitiveness enhancement for medium-sized agricultural producers in Ukraine within e-commerce intensification, namely: access to new markets and new counterparties at the regional, domestic, international and global levels; additional opportunities to inform customers about the company's products and formation of a wider base of contractors, including foreign ones; optimization of relations with buyers and other contractors, including the state government institutions, through the acceleration and increase of clarity of communications; the ability to promptly answer the questions of contractors and get advice from them on sales, financial and economic issues; additional opportunities for the promotion of one's own products, both directly and through trade intermediaries, including sales networks.

At the same time, intensification of commercial activity through appropriate digital tools and technologies has certain limitations for the competitiveness of domestic medium-sized agricultural enterprises, including:

- the need to accumulate relevant resources and distract them from other components of financial and economic activities in situations of severe shortage of resources at the enterprises of this type, which can lead to their irrational use and reduce competitiveness due to insufficient opportunities for traditional commercial and marketing activities;

- shortage of staff and the need to retrain staff and attract outside specialists under conditions of lack of well-trained personnel;

- difficulties of integration of e-commerce tools into the structure of commercial activity;

- untrained employees and management for the use of e-commerce tools and high probability of operational and strategic errors;

- high risks of losing some commercial information and the complexity of the cybercrime control.

Under such conditions, Ukraine's medium-sized agricultural producers should pay attention to the following aspects of e-commerce: training of staff to use e-commerce tools, including the use of social networks when each employee is its advertising and sales representative in cyberspace; transition to the active use of e-commerce business models with the emphasis on intermediary, advertising, "direct" and trade models, which will be based on the peculiarities of financial and economic activities of enterprises; active use of B2B, B2G and B2C e-commerce with the emphasis on B2C while attracting the opportunities of relevant marketplaces and designing a customer-oriented website of the company.

Small (micro-) agricultural producers in Ukraine have significant opportunities to increase their competitiveness when using e-commerce tools. It should be noted that quarantine restrictions have had the most negative impact on small businesses in the country, including agribusiness. However, considering high flexibility of small businesses, this has become a new incentive for the development of e-commerce for such businesses and has provided new competitive advantages for them, especially in local and regional markets.

Small (micro-) agricultural producers have received the following competitive advantages due to the use of e-commerce tools: the ability to actively inform and promote products, especially using the capabilities of marketplaces and social networks; access to intermediaries, including international and trade networks; opportunities to attract additional funding for the development of production and promotion of products in the new markets through the use of Fintech; optimization of relations with contractors, including state government institutions; the ability to build information environment for individual customers and formation of an inclusive approach through communication in social networks; increase in the responsiveness to customer needs and implementation of new approaches to product sales, including product delivery to consumers' houses.

The use of e-commerce tools has significant limitations for the competitiveness of small (micro-) agricultural producers in Ukraine, including the increase in the probability of errors, operational and strategic risks; possibility of losing reputation because of the actions of competitors and haters in social networks; diversion of scarce resources to the development of e-commerce, which negatively affects business growth; growth of the transparency and business awareness, which can lead to problems with government institutions.

We consider it appropriate for Ukraine's small (micro-) agricultural producers in the context of increasing their competitiveness through the use of e-commerce tools to pay attention to the following aspects: implementation of one or a set of EC business models taking into account the peculiarities of financial and economic activities; active use of B2B, B2G and B2C e-commerce along with the transition to C2C e-commerce, especially for micro-producers; intensification of personnel training and use of employees of the enterprise as its representatives in social networks; transition to attracting financial resources through alternative sources using Fintech, especially crowdfunding; formation of an inclusive information environment in social networks for contractors and consumers of products; increase in the flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of product buyers as well as the establishment of effective feedback.

We have found out the need to intensify the use of e-commerce tools by Ukrainian agricultural producers within the growth of their competitiveness and gaining additional competitive advantages. At the same time, agricultural enterprises, depending on their size and markets where they carry out sales activities (local, regional, domestic, international, global), must use different combinations of both business models and types of

e-commerce. We pay special attention to the importance of intensification of e-commerce as a key factor for overcoming the consequences of quarantine restrictions in business activity and increasing the flexibility of domestic agricultural producers, especially small (micro-) and medium-sized businesses.

Conclusions. The research has revealed a significance of e-commerce as a key factor ensuring the competitiveness and its substantial growth potential, both in the national and international (global) markets. At the same time, the problems of implementation of e-commerce tools by agricultural producers in the world and in Ukraine are emphasized. The importance of EC intensification by agricultural enterprises in the country is noted and the advantages and limitations of this process in terms of ensuring the competitiveness of certain types of agricultural producers (agricultural holdings, large, medium-sized and small businesses) are revealed. There have been developed the proposals on the increase of e-commerce volumes by the producers of agricultural products in Ukraine considering the peculiarities of their commercial activities based on their size.

We consider that further research should be focused on revealing the features of intensification of the use of e-commerce tools by domestic small agricultural producers considering their competitiveness under conditions of the post-quarantine development of domestic economy.

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