

## THE ROLE OF TERRITORIAL CLUSTERS IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**Annotation:** This thesis scientifically and theoretically analyzes the role and importance of territorial clusters in regional economic development. The essence of the cluster concept, their formation mechanisms, and their impact on regional competitiveness are examined. The role of clusters in economic diversification is considered using Uzbekistan as an example. Based on the results obtained, recommendations for improving cluster policy have been developed.

**Keywords:** territorial cluster, regional economy, competitiveness, innovation, industrial cluster, economic development, cluster policy.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu tezisdagi hududiy klasterlarning mintaqaviy iqtisodiy rivojlanishdagi o'ri va ahamiyati ilmiy-nazariy jihatdan tahlil qilingan. Klaster tushunchasining mohiyati, ularning shakllanish mexanizmlari va mintaqaviy raqobatbardoshlikka ta'siri o'rganilgan. O'zbekiston misolida klasterlarning iqtisodiyotni diversifikatsiya qilishdagi roli ko'rib chiqilgan. Olingan natijalar asosida klaster siyosatini takomillashtirishga doir tavsiyalar ishlab chiqilgan.

**Аннотация:** В данном тезисе научно-теоретически проанализированы место и значение территориальных кластеров в региональном экономическом развитии. Изучены сущность понятия кластера, механизмы их формирования и влияние на региональную конкурентоспособность. На примере Узбекистана рассмотрена роль кластеров в диверсификации экономики. На основе полученных результатов разработаны рекомендации по совершенствованию кластерной

ПОЛИТИКИ.

**Kalit so'zlar:** hududiy klaster, mintaqaviy iqtisodiyot, raqobatbardoshlik, innovatsiya, sanoat klasteri, iqtisodiy rivojlanish, klaster siyosati.

**Ключевые слова:** территориальный кластер, региональная экономика, конкурентоспособность, инновации, промышленный кластер, экономическое развитие, кластерная политика.

In the context of the ongoing globalization of the world economy, identifying and implementing effective models for ensuring regional economic development has become one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Within this process, territorial clusters are gaining exceptional importance as one of the primary instruments for enhancing regional competitiveness and securing sustainable economic growth. A cluster is an integrated system of geographically proximate, interconnected enterprises, suppliers, service organizations, research institutions, and government bodies that together generate a high synergistic effect [1]. The theoretical foundations of cluster theory were established by Harvard University Professor Michael Porter, who characterized clusters as a fundamental factor of competitiveness and was the first to systematically substantiate their role in national and regional economies [3]. According to the Porter model, clusters strengthen the interaction among four key factors — factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and firm strategy — thereby enhancing the global competitiveness of a region. World practice demonstrates that the impact of clusters on regional economies is multidimensional in nature. First, clusters play an important role in job creation and in raising the income levels of the population: in clustered regions, average wage levels have been observed to be 6–10 percent higher [5]. Second, clusters significantly stimulate innovative activity — cluster members are 2–3 times more active in research and development compared to enterprises outside the cluster [3, p. 245]. Third, geographic concentration and

specialization reduce transaction costs, improve logistics efficiency, and optimize the use of resources [6]. Fourth, clusters manifest themselves as a powerful factor in attracting foreign direct investment — according to UNIDO data, the flow of investment into regions where clusters are present is on average 35 percent higher [7].

An analysis of foreign experience clearly confirms the role of clusters in regional development. The automotive cluster in Bavaria, Germany, uniting more than 1,500 enterprises, provides over 300,000 jobs [5]. The textile cluster in Italy's Emilia-Romagna region generates 40 percent of the region's GDP and has been recognized as the foundation of the so-called "Italian economic miracle" [4, p. 112]. South Korea's electronics industry clusters and China's Shenzhen technology cluster vividly demonstrate that enormous economic achievements can be attained through a targeted state cluster policy [6, 7]. The general conclusion from these experiences is that the success of clusters is directly linked to active state support, the integration of science and production, and a high-quality institutional environment.

In Uzbekistan, cluster development began to advance rapidly from 2019 onward, initially in the agro-industrial sector in the form of cotton and textile clusters. As of 2023, more than 1,000 cotton and textile clusters are operating in the republic [2]. The textile clusters in the Fergana Valley increased the number of jobs in the region by 30 percent and doubled local budget revenues. In the Samarkand region, a tourism cluster is currently in the formation stage. At the same time, a number of systemic problems persist within the existing clusters: insufficient infrastructure, weak linkages with research institutions, a shortage of qualified personnel, and limited financial resources [2, p. 89]. Based on the research findings, the following scientific and practical conclusions were formulated. Territorial clusters are a strategic structural element of the regional economy, and their introduction can increase GDP growth rates by an average of 12–18 percent. Clustering makes it possible to reduce poverty rates by 8–15 percent

and improves the overall quality of life of the population. For Uzbekistan, it is advisable to improve cluster policy in the following directions: strengthening the legal and regulatory framework; establishing strategic partnerships between higher education institutions and clusters; introducing targeted financing mechanisms such as cluster grants, concessional loans, and venture capital funds; developing digital infrastructure based on the concept of "smart clusters"; and integrating into international cluster networks. The cluster development model holds priority strategic significance for Uzbekistan as the principal pathway toward enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy and ensuring sustainable, inclusive growth.

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