

## ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the export competitiveness of Indonesian areca nut to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The objective of the research is to evaluate the comparative advantage of Indonesian areca nut exports compared to other exporting countries such as India, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand from 2013 to 2023 using the Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) method. The study uses secondary data collected from Trademap and UN Comtrade, focusing on the value and volume of areca nut exports. The results indicate that Indonesia has a relatively strong export competitiveness, as shown by RCA values consistently above 1 in several years. However, Indonesia faces competition from Myanmar and Thailand, which also demonstrate significant comparative advantages. The findings suggest that the Indonesian government should focus on improving export policies, ensuring product quality, and expanding market access to sustain and improve the competitiveness of Indonesian areca nut in the UAE market.

**Keywords :** *export competitiveness, areca nut, revealed comparative advantage, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia*

### INTRODUCTION

Economic growth in a country is heavily influenced by its international trade sector, particularly exports. Indonesia, as a developing country with abundant natural resources, has significant potential to enhance its export sector. In agriculture, Indonesia boasts an extensive range of commodities such as coffee, cocoa, palm oil, rubber, and other products (Mustaruddin and Mirnawati, 2023). As population growth and purchasing power increase, domestic demand for agricultural products has surged, making exports a strategic pathway for Indonesia to bolster its economy. To address these challenges, the government has focused on the development of non-oil and gas exports, aiming to strengthen the global competitiveness of Indonesian products and accelerate economic growth (Haryadi and Nopriyandi, 2017). International trade plays a crucial role in supporting Indonesia's agricultural and plantation sectors. The diversity of Indonesia's agricultural commodities, which are highly sought after in global markets, positions exports as a key driver for foreign exchange earnings and national economic development (Ratnasari et al., 2020). Exports stimulate economic growth by increasing domestic consumption, production, and equitable income distribution. However, the fluctuation in export value, as observed between 2019 and 2023, highlights challenges such as declining international prices, even when export volumes have shown consistent growth (BPS, 2024).

Among Indonesia's agricultural exports, areca nuts have emerged as a notable commodity. Despite not being as dominant as mangosteen, salak, or mango, areca nuts have made Indonesia the largest global exporter of the commodity. Between January and August 2024, Indonesia exported approximately 127,805,157 kg of areca nuts, valued at USD 81,804,628 (BPS, 2024). However, the export value has been volatile, reflecting global price dynamics and shifting demands. This variability calls for a focused analysis of Indonesia's competitive position in the areca nuts market. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) represents a significant market for Indonesian areca nuts, alongside other major importers such as Iran, India, and China. From 2019 to 2023, global demand for areca nuts increased by 39%, illustrating the potential opportunities for Indonesian exporters (Trademap, 2024). Notably, the UAE has shown stable growth as an importer, offering an important opportunity for Indonesia to solidify its export

# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe

strategy for this commodity. This research seeks to analyze the competitiveness of Indonesian areca nuts exports to the UAE, utilizing comparative metrics to benchmark Indonesia against other exporting nations, such as India, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand. By leveraging tools like the Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA), this study aims to identify strengths, challenges, and actionable recommendations to enhance Indonesia's position in the global areca nuts market and contribute to its agricultural sector's sustainable growth.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 International Trade and Economic Growth

International trade plays a vital role in fostering economic growth by enabling countries to access resources, technologies, and markets that would otherwise be unavailable domestically. According to Castellani et al. (2010), international trade promotes economic growth, increases employment opportunities, and drives industrialization and investment. Indonesia, as an open economy, relies heavily on trade to sustain its development. However, the global trade landscape presents challenges, such as economic instability and competitive pressures, requiring nations to enhance their trade strategies (Majoka, 2012). Salvatore (2020) highlights that international trade fulfills the unmet needs of countries by allowing access to goods and services unavailable domestically. This study focuses on Indonesia's trade performance in exporting agricultural products, particularly areca nuts, to the global market.

### 2.2 Export Competitiveness

Export competitiveness refers to a country's ability to produce and sell goods or services in international markets efficiently and effectively compared to other nations. The Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) method, developed by Balassa (1965), is widely used to measure export competitiveness by evaluating the specialization of a country in specific commodities (Irwandi & Purwanti, 2024). A commodity is deemed competitive when its RCA value exceeds 1, indicating strong comparative advantage. Previous studies, such as by Lestari et al. (2023) and Manalu et al. (2022), have demonstrated the utility of RCA in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of agricultural exports. This study employs the RCA method to assess Indonesia's competitive position in the areca nuts market, particularly in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

### 2.3 Indonesian Agricultural Exports

Indonesia's agricultural exports have long been a cornerstone of its economy, contributing significantly to foreign exchange earnings. Commodities such as palm oil, rubber, cocoa, and areca nuts have demonstrated strong performance in international markets (Ratnasari et al., 2020). Despite being the world's largest areca nuts exporter, Indonesia faces challenges such as fluctuating export values and declining international prices (BPS, 2024). Ratnasari et al. (2020) further emphasize that export strategies must adapt to changing global market conditions to sustain growth. This study examines the factors influencing the competitiveness of Indonesian areca nuts in the UAE market.

### 2.4 The United Arab Emirates as an Export Destination

The UAE has emerged as a significant market for Indonesian agricultural products, including areca nuts. From 2019 to 2023, global demand for areca nuts increased by 39%, with the UAE being one of the fastest-growing importers (Trademap, 2024). However, fluctuations in export values highlight the need for targeted strategies to maintain competitiveness in this market. Previous studies, such as by Marinda et al. (2024), emphasize the importance of understanding market-specific dynamics and consumer preferences in export destination countries.

### 2.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Areca nuts Exports

While Indonesia maintains a dominant position as the largest exporter of areca nuts globally, it faces challenges such as competition from countries like Myanmar, Thailand, and India (Irwandi & Purwanti, 2024). High-quality standards, fluctuating international prices, and trade policies are among the factors affecting competitiveness. Nevertheless, Indonesia's abundant production capacity and cost advantages present significant opportunities. According to BPS (2024), the country's ability to produce areca nuts at a lower price compared to competitors like Thailand and Myanmar enhances its appeal in international markets.

## IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design to investigate the competitiveness of Indonesian areca nuts exports to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to Ghozali (2021), explanatory research is utilized to explain causal relationships between variables and test formulated hypotheses. The key variables in this study include the dependent variable, export competitiveness, as measured through Revealed Comparative

# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe

Advantage (RCA), and factors influencing it, such as international trade dynamics, export volume, and pricing. The analysis specifically focuses on comparing Indonesia's competitiveness against other major exporting nations, including India, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand, over the 2013–2023 period. The data used in this study consists of secondary data, sourced from credible institutions such as the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Trademap, and UN Comtrade. These datasets encompass export volumes, export values, and trade trends related to areca nuts for the identified countries during the specified timeframe. A purposive sampling approach is applied to select data relevant to the research objectives. This includes a total of 55 observations comprising annual export figures from five countries over 11 years (2013–2023). The rationale for using purposive sampling lies in its ability to target specific data that aligns with the research focus, ensuring validity and reliability (Ghozali, 2021). Data analysis employs the Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) method, which Balassa (1965) introduced to measure a country's specialization in producing and exporting certain commodities. RCA is calculated using the following formula:

$$RCA = (X_{ij} / X_t) / (W_j / W_t)$$

## Keterangan:

RCA	= Revealed Comparative Advantage komoditas buah pinang.
$X_{ij}$	= Nilai ekspor komoditas $i$ dari negara $j$
$X_t$	= Total nilai ekspor dari negara $j$
$W_j$	= Nilai ekspor dunia komoditas $i$
$W_t$	= Total nilai ekspor dunia

An RCA value greater than 1 indicates a strong comparative advantage, while values below 1 suggest weak competitiveness (Irwandi & Purwanti, 2024). The statistical tool employed for data analysis is Microsoft Excel for preliminary data organization and calculation of RCA values, as well as comparative analysis across countries. A detailed interpretation of RCA scores over the selected years is used to identify trends, challenges, and opportunities in Indonesian areca nuts exports. By incorporating both descriptive and inferential approaches, the study seeks to provide a robust understanding of Indonesia's position in the global areca nuts market. This method is particularly relevant for analyzing longitudinal trade data and identifying competitive dynamics among exporters. The RCA framework provides actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in the agricultural export sector, enabling them to craft targeted strategies for enhancing Indonesia's export performance, especially in high-potential markets like the UAE.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Research Data Description

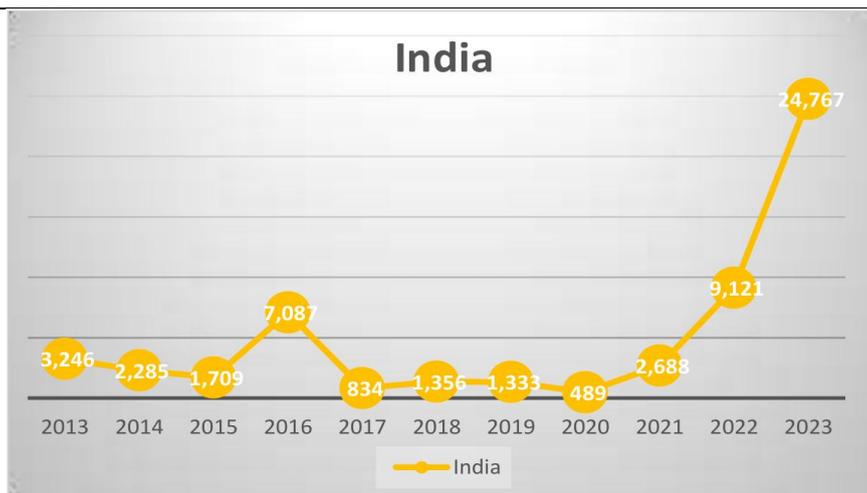
This study uses a combination of time series data from 2013 to 2023 from five countries exporting areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates, namely India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia. The data used in this research includes the export value of areca nuts and the total export value obtained from Trademap. The export data used is specifically for areca nuts under HS Code 080280.

### 4.2 Areca Nut Export Value to the United Arab Emirates

The export value of areca nuts is data obtained from Trademap for the years 2013 to 2023. The data collected represents export figures from the five areca nut exporting countries, namely India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia, to the importing country, the United Arab Emirates, with the values recorded in thousands of US dollars (US\$ thousand).

#### 1. India

The export value of areca nuts from India is sourced from Trademap. The data obtained is in a time series format from 2013 to 2023. India's export value, as one of the exporting countries of areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates, is as follows:



**Figure 4.1** Graph of India's Areca Nut Export Value

Observing the export value of areca nuts from India to the United Arab Emirates from 2013 to 2023, it has experienced fluctuations. However, from 2020 to 2023, India's areca nut export value showed a significant increase, especially in 2023, rising from US\$ 9,121 thousand in 2022 to US\$ 24,767 thousand.

**2. Malaysia**

Nilai ekspor buah pinang negara Malaysia ke negara United Arab Emirates dari tahun 2013 hingga 2023 dapat di lihat pada gambar diatas. Negara Malaysia tidak melakukan ekspor buah pinang ke negara United Arab Emirates dari tahun 2013-2017. Aktivitas ekspor buah pinang baru di lakukan negara Malaysia dari tahun 2018 dengan nilai yang cukup kecil dan di tahun 2020 kembali negara Malaysia tidak mengekspor buah pinang ke negara United Arab Emirates. Nilai ekspor buah pinang tertinggi terjadi pada tahun 2023 yaitu dengan nilai US\$ 975 Ribu. 3. Myanmar.

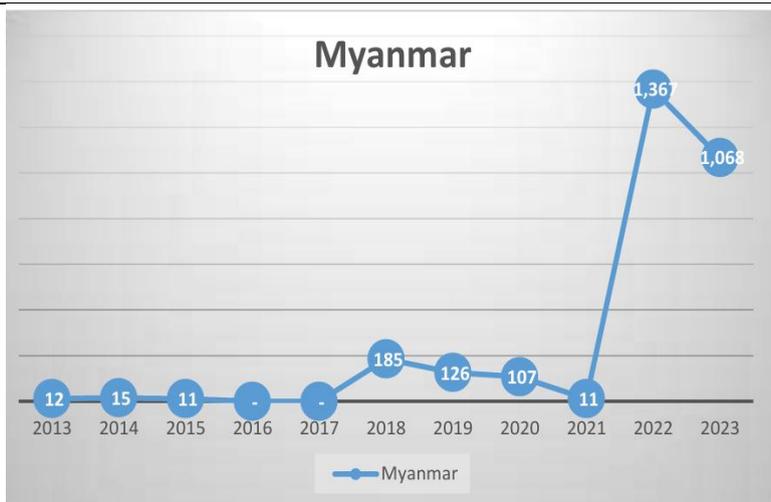


**3. Myanmar**

Myanmar, as one of the countries exporting areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates, started its areca nut exports in 2018 with an export value of US\$ 185,000. The highest export value recorded by Myanmar occurred in 2022, with an export value of US\$ 1.367 million.

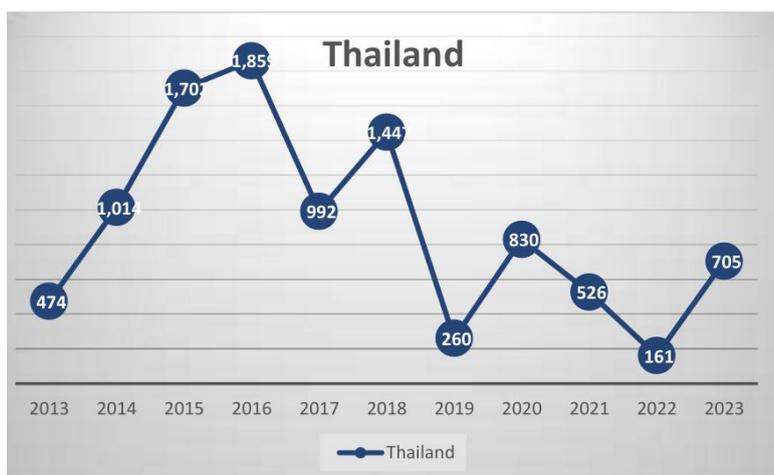
# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe



## 4. Thailand

Thailand has frequently exported areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates in previous years. Since 2013, the export value of Thailand's areca nuts has been fluctuating, with values changing and experiencing both increases and decreases. The lowest export value occurred in 2022, with an export value of US\$ 161,000. The highest export value of Thailand's areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates occurred in 2016, with a value of US\$ 1.859 million.

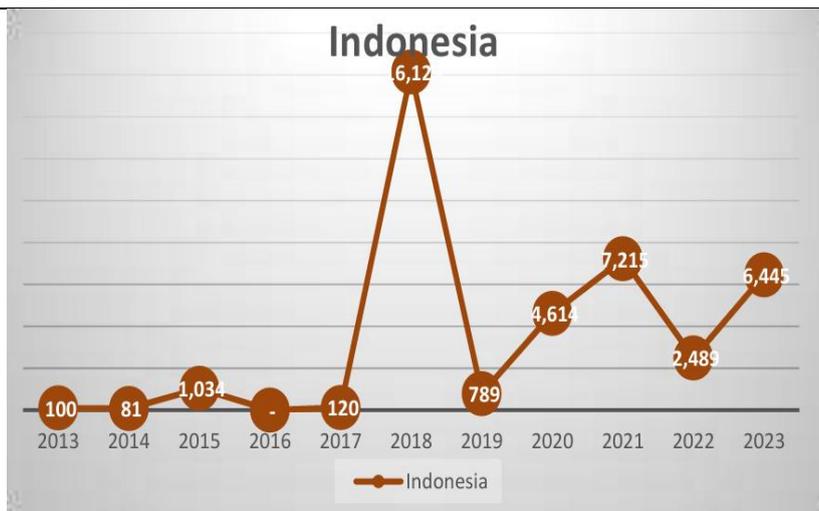


## 5. Indonesia

The export value of Indonesia's areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates from 2013 to 2023 started with relatively small export values. However, in 2018, there was a significant surge in export value to US\$ 16.129 million, exceeding the export values of previous years, which were relatively low. However, in the following year, there was a considerable decline in export value, dropping to US\$ 789,000.

# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe



## 6. Dunia

The export value of Indonesia's areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates from 2013 to 2023 started with relatively small export values. However, in 2018, there was a significant surge in export value to US\$ 16.129 million, exceeding the export values of previous years, which were relatively low. In the following year, there was a notable decline in export value, dropping to US\$ 789,000.



From 2013 to 2024, the global export value of areca nuts experienced a decline in export value five times, specifically in 2016, 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023. The most significant decline in export value occurred in 2013, with an export value of US\$ 353.419 million. The highest increase in the global export value of areca nuts occurred in 2021, with an export value of US\$ 770.503 million.

## RCA Analysis Research Results

The results of the RCA analysis were obtained after collecting export data of areca nuts from exporting countries, namely India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia, to the United Arab Emirates as the importing country, sourced from Trademap. The RCA results will compare the comparative advantage of each country. In this study, the RCA analysis is formulated as follows:

$$RCA = (X_{ij} / X_t) / (W_j / W_t)$$

**Explanation:**

**RCA** = Revealed Comparative Advantage of the areca nut commodity.

= Export value of areca nuts from the exporting country to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe

= Export value of all agricultural commodities from the exporting country to the UAE.

$W_j$  = Total export value of areca nuts to the UAE from all exporting countries.

= Total export value of all agricultural commodities to the UAE from all exporting countries.

By applying the RCA formula, the competitive analysis results of areca nuts from exporting countries are as follows:

## 1. India

India is one of the world's largest producers of areca nuts. Besides being a global importer of areca nuts, India is also a significant exporter, particularly to the United Arab Emirates. Based on the RCA analysis conducted on India's areca nut exports to the UAE, the RCA results are shown in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1** India's RCA Value

India	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
RCA	1,143	0,974	0,537	1,071	0,606	0,097	0,751	0,114	0,343	1,005	1,012

The results of the RCA calculations for India from 2013 to 2023, as shown in the table above, indicate that India's areca nut commodity had a relatively high competitive or comparative advantage in 2013, 2016, 2022, and 2023, with RCA values above 1. Meanwhile, during 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, the RCA values of India's areca nut exports to the United Arab Emirates were below 1, indicating a lack of high competitiveness or comparative advantage. The fluctuating RCA values in India are due to the country's high domestic demand for areca nuts, which are used as a natural dye and for other domestic needs, leading India to prioritize fulfilling domestic needs first.

## 2. Malaysia

Malaysia is also one of the exporting countries targeting the United Arab Emirates, specifically for the areca nut commodity. As seen in Table 4.2 below, Malaysia, as an areca nut exporter to the United Arab Emirates, has not shown a strong comparative advantage or high competitiveness, as the RCA value for Malaysia remained below 1 from 2013 to 2023. Furthermore, Table 4.2 shows that Malaysia did not frequently export areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates, with no exports recorded between 2013 and 2017, and again in 2020. This was due to Malaysia's low production levels, which limited the country's capacity to export areca nuts effectively.

**Table 4.2** Malaysia's RCA Value

Malaysia	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
RCA						0,013	0,011		0,436	0,028	0,235

## 3. Myanmar

Myanmar, as one of the exporting countries to the United Arab Emirates, has also been exporting agricultural fruit commodities from 2013 to 2023. However, in 2016 and 2017, Myanmar did not export areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates, as shown in Table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3** Myanmar's RCA Value

Myanmar	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
RCA	0,672	0,679	0,099			1,019	5,293	1,464	0,228	22,071	5,422

The results of the RCA calculations for Myanmar's areca nut exports to the United Arab Emirates from 2013 to 2023 show that Myanmar had a high competitive advantage or comparative advantage during 2018-2020, as indicated by RCA values above 1. However, there was a decline in 2021. The comparative advantage returned in 2022-2023. Meanwhile, from 2013 to 2017, Myanmar did not demonstrate a strong competitive advantage in exporting areca nuts to the UAE, as the RCA values were below 1. Myanmar is one of the largest exporters of areca nuts, alongside Indonesia. Myanmar's areca nuts have a high flocculant content and sufficient fiber, making them of superior quality compared to Indonesia's areca nuts. As a result, Myanmar's areca nuts are more favored in the international market. However, Myanmar's largest importer of areca nuts is India, which limits Myanmar's export capacity to the United Arab Emirates.

# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe

## 4. Thailand

Thailand is also an exporter to the United Arab Emirates. From 2013 to 2023, Thailand consistently exported areca nuts to the UAE. The RCA values of Thailand's areca nut exports to the UAE can be seen in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4** Thailand's RCA Value

Thailand	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
RCA	1,778	3,501	5,139	3,143	7,708	1,269	1,423	2,179	1,013	0,242	0,414

The results of the RCA calculation for Thailand's areca nut exports to the United Arab Emirates, as shown in Table 4.4 above, from 2013 to 2023 indicate that Thailand had a relatively high competitive or comparative advantage. This is evidenced by Thailand consistently having RCA values above 1 from 2013 to 2022, indicating strong comparative advantage or competitiveness. However, in the last two years, 2022-2023, Thailand's RCA value dropped below 1, indicating a decline in competitive advantage during those years. Thailand's competitive performance has generally been strong because, in addition to exporting, the country also imports a significant quantity of areca nuts to meet domestic demand, allowing it to maximize its exports to importing countries. Notably, in 2021, Thailand's total import volume of areca nuts reached 116,533,828 kg, while Indonesia's import volume during the same year was only 207,000 kg.

## 5. Indonesia

Indonesia, as one of the largest producers of areca nuts in the world, has also been exporting areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates from 2013 to 2023, except in 2016 when no exports were recorded. Table 4.5 below shows the RCA values for Indonesia's areca nut exports to the UAE.

**Table 4.5** Indonesia's RCA Values

Indonesia	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
RCA	0,320	0,212	2,452		0,545	7,574	3,108	6,926	5,277	1,835	1,877

Based on the results of the RCA calculation for Indonesian areca nuts exports to the United Arab Emirates from 2013 to 2023, Indonesia has experienced changes in its competitiveness. From 2013 to 2017, Indonesia only had a competitive advantage or comparative advantage in 2015, with a value above 1, while in other years, the competitiveness value was below 1. In 2016, Indonesia did not export areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates. However, since 2018 until 2023, the RCA value of Indonesian areca nuts exports has been above 1, indicating that from 2018 to 2023, Indonesia's areca nuts exports to the United Arab Emirates had a fairly strong comparative advantage. Indonesian areca nuts are highly sought after in global markets. It is known that from 2012 to 2021, Indonesia's contribution as a global areca nuts exporter was 64.01%. This is significantly higher compared to other areca nuts exporting countries, such as Thailand at 12.12%, Myanmar at 12.05%, Sri Lanka at 4.04%, and other countries at 8.12%. In addition to the relatively high production of Indonesian areca nuts, which can meet global market demand, Indonesian areca nuts are also cheaper compared to those from other exporting countries. The price of Indonesian areca nuts in the global market in 2020 was US\$ 1.25/kg, in contrast to the prices of areca nuts from other exporting countries in the same year, such as Thailand at US\$ 1.54/kg, Myanmar at US\$ 1.59/kg, and Sri Lanka at US\$ 3.61/kg.

### 4.4 Comparison of RCA Values of Exporting Countries

The areca nuts exporting countries to the importing country, the United Arab Emirates, each have their own comparative advantages. To see the comparative advantage or competitiveness of these exporting countries, refer to Table 4.6 below.

# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe

**Table 4.6** RCA Values of Exporting Countries

Year	RCA				
	India	Myanmar	Malaysia	Thailand	Indonesia
2013	1,143	0,672		1,778	0,32
2014	0,974	0,679		3,501	0,212
2015	0,537	0,099		5,139	2,452
2016	1,071			3,143	
2017	0,606			7,708	0,545
2018	0,097	1,019	0,013	1,269	7,574
2019	0,751	5,293	0,011	1,423	3,108
2020	0,114	1,464		2,179	6,926
2021	0,343	0,228	0,436	1,013	5,277
2022	1,005	22,071	0,028	0,242	1,835
2023	1,012	5,422	0,235	0,414	1,877
Rata-Rata	0,696	4,105	0,145	2,528	3,013

Table 4.6 above shows that the RCA values of areca nuts exporting countries to the United Arab Emirates demonstrate that each exporting country experiences changes in RCA values every year. The table indicates that the competitiveness or comparative advantage of areca nuts commodities from exporting countries is fluctuating. Exporting countries that do not have competitiveness or a comparative advantage for exporting areca nuts to the United Arab Emirates are Malaysia and India, as their average RCA values from 2013 to 2023 are below 1. The average RCA value for Malaysia is 0.145, while for India it is 0.696. The countries with the comparative advantage in areca nuts exports to the United Arab Emirates from 2013 to 2023 are Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia. The average RCA values for these three countries are above 1, indicating that they have a competitive advantage. Myanmar has the highest average RCA value of 4.105, followed by Indonesia with an average RCA value of 3.013, and Thailand with an average RCA value of 2.528.

Myanmar, as the country with the highest comparative advantage in areca nuts exports to the United Arab Emirates, excels in product quality, particularly the quality of areca nuts recognized globally. Myanmar's areca nuts have high flocculants, which results in superior taste compared to Indonesian areca nuts. Additionally, Myanmar areca nuts have higher fiber content compared to Indonesian areca nuts, which can be used in industries such as textiles and other sectors. Due to the better quality of Myanmar areca nuts, their prices are consistently higher than those of Indonesian or Thai areca nuts in 2020. Indonesia is the largest producer of areca nuts globally, which is an advantage for Indonesia in competing in the global market with the quantity it produces. This also impacts the comparative advantage or competitiveness of Indonesian areca nuts in the world, especially to the United Arab Emirates. Indonesia had a high market share in 2023, accounting for 74.67%, a very high figure compared to other areca nuts exporting countries. In comparison, India's market share is 1.59%, Myanmar's is 11.98%, and Thailand's is 12.10%.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the key factors influencing the competitiveness of Indonesian areca nuts exports to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study reveals that export volume, pricing dynamics, and trade dynamics significantly impact export competitiveness. Among these, pricing dynamics play a critical role as both a direct and mediating factor. By strategically managing pricing strategies and leveraging trade dynamics, Indonesia can enhance its position in the global areca nuts market, particularly in high-demand markets such as the UAE. The Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) analysis shows that Indonesia maintains a strong comparative advantage in areca nuts exports compared to other exporting countries such as India, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand. Despite this, fluctuations in export value underscore the need for consistent efforts to address global market challenges, such as changing consumer preferences and international trade policies. Enhancing export strategies through targeted interventions can further improve Indonesia's export performance. A conducive trade environment, supported by government policies and partnerships, also plays a significant role in boosting export competitiveness. Collaboration between stakeholders, including producers, exporters, and policymakers, is

# ANALYSIS OF THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF INDONESIAN ARECA NUTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fery Putra Alam Bara Munthe

essential for addressing trade barriers and optimizing the supply chain. Strengthening quality standards and certification processes can help Indonesian areca nuts compete effectively in international markets. The study's findings also emphasize the importance of market diversification. While the UAE remains a significant export destination, expanding to other potential markets can reduce dependency and mitigate risks associated with market-specific fluctuations. This approach ensures sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness for Indonesian agricultural exports. However, the study is not without limitations. The analysis is based on secondary data and focuses on a specific period (2013–2023). Future research should incorporate primary data and explore additional factors, such as environmental sustainability and technological advancements in agricultural practices. These insights can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing export competitiveness and guide more effective policy-making and industry strategies.

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