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Analysis of entry barriers for small producers of fast-moving consumer goods into organized retail

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Abstract. *The study's relevance stems from the growing role of organized retail as the dominant sales channel for everyday goods and, at the same time, the limited integration of small producers into network supply chains. The purpose of the article is to identify and systematize the entry barriers faced by small producers of fast-moving consumer goods when accessing organized retail, based on an analysis of the structural characteristics of the entrepreneurial environment, financial and economic performance indicators of business entities, and the institutional conditions governing interactions with retail chains.*

The methodological framework of the study includes structural-logical and comparative analysis, statistical processing of official data, generalization and systematization techniques, and elements of institutional and structural approaches. The research is based on statistical data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine for the period 2010–2024, survey results from small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular the Ukrainian Business Index (UBI), and analytical materials on the functioning of organized retail.

The findings reveal that the numerical dominance of small businesses within the overall business structure, particularly in the food industry, is not matched by a proportional economic contribution to total sales volumes. It is substantiated that the operational and logistical requirements imposed by retail chains–especially those related to the regularity and centralization of deliveries–intensify these limitations by transforming the production and infrastructural characteristics of small producers into sources of operational risk.

Furthermore, the study identifies that regulatory and contractual interaction mechanisms with organized retail, including the asymmetric allocation of contractual liability and the risk of delisting, function as institutional barriers that reproduce structural inequality within the sector. The practical significance of the results lies in their potential to substantiate approaches to mitigating entry barriers for small producers into organized retail by developing cooperative models, alternative distribution formats, and institutional instruments to support entrepreneurship.

Keywords: *organized retail, small entrepreneurship, distribution channels, market structural asymmetry, institutional constraints.*

Аналіз бар'єрів входу малих виробників товарів повсякденного попиту в організований ритейл

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Анотація. *Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростанням ролі організованого ритейлу як домінуючого каналу збуту товарів повсякденного попиту та водночас обмеженою інтеграцією малих виробників у мережеві ланцюги постачання. Метою статті є виявлення та систематизація бар'єрів*

входу малих виробників товарів повсякденного попиту до організованого ритейлу на основі аналізу структурних характеристик підприємницького середовища, фінансово-економічних показників діяльності суб'єктів господарювання та інституційних умов взаємодії з торговельними мережами.

Методологічну основу дослідження становлять методи структурно-логічного та порівняльного аналізу, статистичні методи обробки офіційних даних, узагальнення та систематизації, а також елементи інституційного та структурного підходів. У процесі дослідження використано статистичні дані Державної служби статистики України за 2010–2024 рр., результати опитувань малих і середніх суб'єктів бізнесу, Ukrainian Business Index (UBI), а також аналітичні матеріали щодо функціонування організованого ритейлу.

У результаті дослідження встановлено, що домінування малих форм підприємництва у кількісній структурі бізнесу, зокрема у харчовій промисловості, не супроводжується відповідним економічним внеском у формування обсягів реалізованої продукції. Обґрунтовано, що операційно-логістичні вимоги торговельних мереж щодо регулярності та централізації поставок посилюють зазначені обмеження, трансформуючи виробничі та інфраструктурні особливості малих виробників у фактори операційного ризику.

Виявлено, що регуляторно-контрактні механізми взаємодії з ритейлом, зокрема асиметричний розподіл договірної відповідальності та ризик виключення з асортименту, виконують функцію інституційних бар'єрів, що відтворюють структурну нерівність у межах галузі. Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає у можливості їхнього використання для обґрунтування напрямів пом'якшення бар'єрів входу малих виробників до організованого ритейлу шляхом розвитку коопераційних моделей, альтернативних форматів збуту та інституційних інструментів підтримки

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підприємництва.

Ключові слова: *організований ритейл, мале підприємництво, канали збуту, структурна асиметрія ринку, інституційні обмеження.*

Problem statement. The development of organized retail as the dominant channel for the sale of everyday goods significantly transforms manufacturers' access to the consumer market. Retail chains form standardized supply chains focused on scalability, operational reliability, and financial stability of suppliers, as a result of which the integration of manufacturers into network sales channels is increasingly determined not only by the consumer characteristics of products, but also by compliance with the institutional, logistical, and financial requirements of retail [1]. At the same time, the business environment in Ukraine is characterized by the predominance of small businesses, especially in sectors focused on domestic demand [2, p. 322]. The food industry in this context is indicative, as it combines the numerical dominance of small manufacturers with their high dependence on organized sales channels. Despite their significant market presence, small producers are characterized by limited economic capacity and low integration into network sales structures, indicating persistent barriers to access to organized retail [1].

The problem's relevance is heightened by macroeconomic instability, military risks, and an increasing regulatory burden, which heighten the vulnerability of small producers and complicate their adaptation to formalized market structures [3, p. 115]. Under such conditions, barriers to entry into organized retail become systemic and cease to be purely market restrictions, becoming a mechanism for reproducing structural inequality between economic entities of different scales. This necessitates a comprehensive analysis of entry barriers arising from a combination of market, institutional, and structural features of the modern market for everyday goods.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Modern research documents

ISSN: 2786-9431

the strengthening of asymmetry in market power between retail chains and suppliers, which significantly complicates small manufacturers' access to organized retail. M. Dekimpe and H. J. van Heerde associate the strengthening of the asymmetry of market power with inflationary pressure, which encourages retailers to more strictly formalize price and contractual requirements for suppliers [2, p. 322]. Under such conditions, conflicts between manufacturers and retail chains acquire a systemic character, which is confirmed by empirical studies of supplier vulnerability. In particular, M. Hermans and colleagues demonstrate that conflict delisting significantly reduces the effectiveness of manufacturers' marketing tools, transforming manufacturers' competitive strategies into a forced response to chains' actions [4, p. 866]. Similar structural effects are enhanced by the development of private labels, which, according to S. Maesen, is accompanied by the displacement of national brands from the chain assortment [5, p. 192]. In a broader sense, these processes reflect the asymmetric distribution of risks in vertical relationships. H. Zhang et al. find that, for small and medium-sized enterprises, supplier dependence is associated with increased financial and operational risks, whereas customer dependence has a limited compensatory effect [6]. These findings are consistent with the approach of C. R. d. Santos et al., who substantiate the cascading nature of supplier risks and the need for their comprehensive management, taking into account ESG and IT factors [7]. Institutional and spatial restrictions on market access are revealed in food systems studies, where A. Steines and other authors show that planning and legal frameworks in European countries create additional marketing barriers for small producers [8]. According to Y. Hasenko, these barriers are reinforced by environmental requirements for logistics, as «green» standards increase supply chain resilience but impose a higher cost burden on entities with fragmented infrastructure [9]. At the same time, K. Kupriienko [10] and Y. Tkachova [11] emphasize the role of intangible and digital factors in suppliers' competitive positions, linking the use of artificial intelligence and neuromarketing

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tools with increased promotional efficiency while simultaneously deepening digital asymmetry. M. Bogopolskyy complements these approaches, arguing that the aesthetic economy creates added value, but requires investments that are inaccessible to economically vulnerable subjects [12]. Alternative mechanisms for reducing barriers are associated with digital platforms: T. Zaruba shows that platform models reduce transaction costs and expand market access for small businesses [13], which is consistent with the conclusions of scientists led by O. Balan on the role of digitalization in reducing costs and eliminating hidden barriers to entry [14]. An important factor in the formation of barriers to entry into organized retail is the contractual and payment policy of retail chains. C. Rotta et al. show that payment terms to suppliers are determined by strict organizational and contractual rules rather than individual management decisions, thereby entrenching the institutional asymmetry in financial requirements and limiting the access of economically vulnerable producers to network sales channels [15]. Similar manifestations of asymmetry are also recorded in domestic practice. L. Yevchuk establishes that retail chains systematically violate payment discipline towards food suppliers, in particular through long delays in payments, which especially exacerbates financial risks for producers of perishable products and reproduces inequality in relations with retail [16, p. 94]. A producer's operational ability to fulfill contractual obligations is directly related to the quality of its internal management processes. A. Ortynska proves that in the conditions of hybrid and remote formats, the lack of flexible management approaches and digital tools reduces the operational stability of enterprises, which, in interaction with retail, is transformed into increased requirements for the reliability of suppliers and a narrowing of the possibilities of their integration into formalized supply chains [17].

In general, the barriers to entry for small manufacturers into organized retail are reproducible, structural, and shaped by the combined action of financial, operational, and contractual-institutional factors determined by the logic of network-

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market functioning, rather than by the individual characteristics of suppliers.

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem. Despite a significant body of scientific research on the interaction between suppliers and retail chains, the issue of a comprehensive analysis of the barriers to small manufacturers' entry into organized retail, in the context of a combination of financial, operational-logistical, and institutional-contractual restrictions, remains insufficiently studied in modern literature. Most existing work focuses either on individual aspects of negotiation asymmetry or on the behavioral and marketing consequences of interactions with retail, ignoring the relationship between the structure of the business environment, the financial performance of small entities, and the mechanisms that reproduce barriers to access to network sales channels.

In this regard, this study aims to develop a holistic analytical approach to identify systemic constraints that hinder the integration of small producers of everyday goods into formalized supply chains of organized retail. The practical value of the results lies in their use to substantiate management decisions by small producers, retail chains, and business support institutions to mitigate structural barriers, improve contractual models of cooperation, and increase the sustainability of supply chains.

Formulation of the objectives of the article. The purpose of the study is to identify, systematize, and analytically substantiate the barriers to entry for small producers of everyday goods into organized retail, taking into account the structural characteristics of the business environment, financial and economic indicators of business entities, and institutional conditions for interaction with retail chains.

Presentation of the main material of the study. The functioning of business entities in Ukraine over the past decade has occurred amid profound macroeconomic, institutional, and social transformations that have significantly affected the configuration of the business environment, the scale of economic activity, and the development opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses.

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War risks, instability of the regulatory field, limited access to financial resources and transformation of consumer demand lead to a rethinking of the role of entrepreneurship as one of the key mechanisms for adapting the economy to crisis conditions [3, p. 118]. Under such circumstances, the analysis of business development requires a focus not only on the total number of business entities, but also on their structural characteristics, in particular their forms of organization, the scale of their activities, and their ability to integrate into formalized market channels. In this context, the food, beverage and tobacco production sector deserves special attention as the basic segment of the domestic market for everyday goods. Its significance lies in its system-forming role in shaping consumer demand and ensuring food security [1]. At the same time, the food industry combines a high concentration of small and microenterprises with strict requirements for quality, safety, and traceability of supply chains, thereby strengthening market and state standardization and control. Such structural duality makes the food industry a suitable representative for studying barriers to entry into organized retail. For retail chains, food products of daily demand constitute the core of the assortment, which increases the requirements for supplier reliability and financial discipline, creating a structural mismatch for small producers between their economic capabilities and the parameters for access to network sales channels. In view of this, further analysis of the number of operating business entities and the proportion of individual entrepreneurs in the economy as a whole and in the food industry (table 1) allows us to identify basic structural imbalances that form the prerequisites for the emergence of barriers to entry for small producers into organized retail.

The data presented indicate persistent structural differences between the general business environment of Ukraine and the food, beverage and tobacco production sector. In 2010–2024, the economy as a whole consistently had a high and growing share of individual entrepreneurs, confirming the dominance of small-scale entrepreneurship.

 ISSN: 2786-9431

Table 1

Structure of business entities in the food industry of Ukraine, 2010–2024

Year	Total by economy, units	Individual entrepreneurs by economy, units	Share of individual entrepreneurs, %	Total in the food industry, units	Individual entrepreneurs in the food industry, units	Share of individual entrepreneurs, %
2010	2 183 928	1 805 118	82,7	17 323	10 772	62,2
2014	1 932 161	1 591 160	82,4	15 517	9 989	64,4
2018	1 839 593	1 483 716	80,7	15 544	9 829	63,2
2020	1 973 577	1 599 755	81,1	16 222	10 199	62,9
2022	1 732 508	1 470 584	84,9	13 937	9 129	65,5
2024	1 949 408	1 663 811	85,3	17 033	11 559	67,9

Source: constructed by the author based on [18]

At the same time, the share of individual entrepreneurs in the food industry has remained significantly lower throughout the period, reflecting increased requirements for the organization of production, compliance with quality standards, and the financial capacity of business entities. This gap arises from the combination of the mass nature of small businesses with the industry's strict institutional and operational conditions for functioning, creating a structural asymmetry between the quantitative presence of small producers and the real market requirements for stability and standardized supplies. As a result, this creates systemic barriers to entry for small business entities into organized retail, which are of a deeper economic nature than formal access to sales channels.

To deepen the analysis, it is advisable to move from the quantitative structure of entrepreneurship to assessing the economic role of small producers through the volume of products sold (table 2), which allows us to determine their real contribution to industry turnover and the degree of integration into value chains.

 ISSN: 2786-9431

Table 2

Sales volume of economic entities in the production of food, beverages and tobacco products in Ukraine in 2010–2024

Year	Total sales, thousand UAH	Volume of sales by individual entrepreneurs, thousand UAH	Share of individual entrepreneurs in the total volume, %
2010	206 473 068,0	3 157 709,4	1,5
2014	341 551 635,5	4 392 887,8	1,3
2018	681 408 697,1	7 585 715,2	1,1
2020	787 333 181,0	9 613 779,2	1,2
2022	796 596 637,7	3 134 789,4	0,4
2024	1 158 792 446,8	6 348 756,9	0,5

Source: constructed based on [2, p. 322]

The data provided indicate a significant increase in the total volume of sales of food, beverages, and tobacco products during 2010–2024, confirming the industry's economic significance to the domestic market. At the same time, the dynamics of individual entrepreneurs' participation in the formation of industry turnover are fundamentally different. Despite the numerical dominance of small forms of entrepreneurship, their share of total sales throughout the period remains critically low, at 1–2%. The period 2022–2024 is particularly indicative, during which the share of individual entrepreneurs in total sales decreased to 0.4–0.5%, despite a recovery in total industry turnover. This indicates the high vulnerability of small producers to external shocks, limited opportunities for capital accumulation and a decrease in their real participation in value chains in crisis conditions.

Thus, in the food industry, a persistent asymmetry arises between the quantitative presence of small producers and their economic contribution to industry turnover. Under the conditions of organized retail, this means that the majority of small business entities are unable to ensure the volumes, regularity and financial stability of supplies, which are critical for cooperation with retail chains. At the same time, limited participation in the formation of sales volumes is directly reflected in

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the financial results of small and micro-enterprises (table 3), deepening their vulnerability and reducing their investment capacity.

Table 3

Financial results of small and micro enterprises in the food industry of Ukraine in 2010–2024

Year	Small enterprises: financial result (balance), thousand UAH	Share of profitable small enterprises, %	Micro-enterprises: financial result (balance), thousand UAH	Share of profitable micro-enterprises, %
2010	–401 510,6	58,9	–235 498,7	59,3
2014	–1 464 901,6	63,5	–909 200,1	63,6
2018	25 252,0	69,5	–268 280,1	66,5
2020	–269 731,9	67,7	–695 958,3	64,6
2022	–2 408 423,4	65,8	–3 200 766,1	61,3
2024	–1 050 145,3	70,5	–2 612 534,7	66,4

Source: constructed by the author based on [18]

The data presented indicate the chronic financial instability of small and micro-enterprises in the production of food, beverages and tobacco products. For most of the analyzed period, the financial result of small enterprises before taxation is negative, and a positive balance is recorded only episodically, particularly in 2018, which does not indicate a stable trend of improving the industry's financial condition. Micro-enterprises are especially vulnerable, with financial results remaining negative across all reference years, and the scale of losses increases significantly during crisis periods.

Even with a relatively high share of profitable enterprises in the total number of entities, the overall financial result indicates low profitability of activities and limited self-financing capabilities. This means that the profitability of individual entities does not translate into overall financial stability for the small business sector.

Under such conditions, small and microenterprises in the food industry have limited access to investment resources, credit, and opportunities to modernize production. In the context of organized retail, this significantly reduces their ability

 ISSN: 2786-9431

to meet the requirements of retail chains regarding volumes, regularity, and financial discipline, thereby transforming financial instability into sustainable barriers to entry into network sales channels. Thus, the financial instability of small producers in the food industry is not formed in isolation, but within the broader institutional and business environment that determines the framework conditions for their activities. The combination of macroeconomic, regulatory, and administrative factors is translated into external development constraints that directly affect the ability of small business entities to integrate into formalized sales channels, particularly organized retail. To generalize these constraints, it is advisable to consider the key problems of micro, small, and medium-sized business entities as interrelated sources of barriers to entry (table 4).

Table 4

Key problems of micro, small and medium-sized business entities as sources of barriers to entry of small producers into organized retail

Group of problems (source of barriers)	Manifestations
Macroeconomic and market uncertainty	Unpredictability of the development of the situation in Ukraine and on the domestic market
	Lack of a sufficient number of solvent customers
Regulatory instability and administrative risks	Unforeseen actions of the state that may worsen the state of business
	Obstacles from regulatory and/or fiscal authorities
	Blocking of tax invoices
	Refusal to book employees
	Pressure of authorities on business
Financial constraints	Lack of sufficient capital
	Unavailability of credit funds (including «5–7–9%» programs)
	High taxes and fees
Logistics and operational constraints	Delays with logistics at the border (queues at customs points)
Staffing restrictions	Lack of sufficiently qualified employees
	Refusal to book employees
Legal and institutional risks	Unfair court decisions
	Extortion of overpayments of taxes («fulfilment of the collection plan»)

ISSN: 2786-9431

Group of problems (source of barriers)	Manifestations
	Extortion of bribes by government officials
	Unjustified denial of access to government grant programs
	Unjustified denial of permits
	Raiding (including with the participation of government officials)

Source: built according to [19; 20]

Thus, under current conditions of food industry development in Ukraine, the set of identified macroeconomic, financial, and institutional problems has become a systemic barrier to small producers' entry into organized retail. Unlike formal administrative restrictions, these barriers are mainly economic and organizational, implemented through standardized requirements set by retail chains for suppliers. Organized retail, focused on the continuity of product flows, minimizing operational risks and ensuring financial discipline, forms the conditions for access to network sales channels, which are objectively difficult for most small producers to fulfill. The key limitation is suppliers' financial capacity. The requirements of retail chains for minimum delivery volumes, the use of deferred payments, and the need to maintain stable working capital create a situation in which small producers are forced to finance the production and sales cycle with their own funds. In conditions of chronic capital shortages, low profitability, and limited access to credit, this significantly increases liquidity risks and reduces the ability to scale activities. As a result, financial restrictions serve as the primary filter for access to organized retail.

No less important are operational and logistical barriers, manifested in the requirements for regularity of supplies, centralized logistics, and adherence to clear supply schedules. Retail chains operate within complex logistics systems, where even minor failures can lead to losses and reputational risks. At the same time, small manufacturers, constrained by production capacity, human resources, and infrastructure, are unable to guarantee long-term supply stability. Under such conditions, even competitive-quality products do not compensate for the high operational risks for retail.

ISSN: 2786-9431

Additionally, entry barriers are strengthened through regulatory and contractual mechanisms for interaction with retail chains. This is not only about compliance with technical and sanitary standards, but also about the system of contractual liability, penalties and the risk of exclusion from the assortment (delisting). For small producers, such conditions increase the risk of losing the sales channel due to minor deviations from contractual requirements. In the absence of financial reserves and legal support, contract terms serve as an institutional barrier, cutting off economically vulnerable suppliers from network sales channels.

Generalizing the study's results allows us to present the barriers to entry for small producers into organized retail as an interconnected system of financial, operational, and regulatory-contractual restrictions that cumulatively reproduce structural inequality within the industry (table 5).

Table 5

Systemic barriers to entry of small producers into organized retail and their mechanism of action

Barrier type	Requirements of organized retail	Typical restrictions of small producers	Barrier formation mechanism	Economic consequence
Financial barriers				
Minimum volume of supplies	Guaranteed volumes, scalability of supplies	Limited production capacity	Inability to achieve critical volume	Refusal to include in the assortment
Liquidity	Payment delays (30–90 days)	Working capital deficit	Cash flow gap	Inability to fulfil contracts
Financial stability	Supplier's stable solvency	Low profitability, unprofitability	Increased risk for retail	Limitation or termination of cooperation
Operational and logistical barriers				
Regularity of supplies	Continuity and predictability	Unstable production cycles	Violation of supply schedules	Displacement from supply chains
Centralized logistics	Supply to distribution centres	Lack of own logistics	Increasing logistics costs	Uncompetitive terms of cooperation

ISSN: 2786-9431

Barrier type	Requirements of organized retail	Typical restrictions of small producers	Barrier formation mechanism	Economic consequence
Operational reliability	Minimization of operational failures	Human and infrastructure limitations	High operational risk	Refusal of long-term contracts
		Regulatory and contractual barriers		
Standards and certification	Compliance with quality and safety standards	High cost of compliance	Limited access to certification	Denial of access to the network assortment
Contractual liability	Penalties, compensations	Lack of financial reserves	Asymmetry of risks in the contract	Self-exclusion of small manufacturers
Delisting (exclusion of a supplier from the assortment of a retail network)	Instant exclusion from the assortment	High dependence on one channel	Risk of losing the sales market	Structural crowding out of retail

Source: constructed by the author

The results indicate that the barriers to small producers’ entry into organized retail are systemic and institutionally determined, and are not related to a quantitative shortage of potential suppliers. The key problem lies in the mismatch between the economic capabilities of small producers and the parameters of network retail. Potential areas for mitigating the identified barriers should be considered not as separate support instruments, but as elements of a holistic model of integrating small producers into formalized sales channels. The development of cooperative forms of interaction can reduce the effect of fragmentation of production by consolidating supply volumes and sharing logistics and financial infrastructure. The use of private-label models can serve as a mechanism to reduce contractual and market risks for small producers, providing more predictable sales conditions and gradual adaptation to retail chains’ requirements. At the same time, strengthening the role of regional retail chains creates an intermediate level of access to organized retail, enabling small producers to increase operational capacity without incurring significant financial burdens. Together with institutional support in the field of financing, standardization and contractual interaction, such approaches form the basis for

ISSN: 2786-9431

reducing the structural asymmetry between small producers and organized retail, transferring the problem of entry barriers from the plane of quantitative restrictions to the plane of managed economic transformations.

Conclusions. The study found that the barriers to entry for small producers of everyday goods into organized retail are systemic and stem from the structural features of Ukraine's business environment. The dominance of small businesses in the quantitative structure of business, particularly in the food industry, is not matched by commensurate economic weight, indicating an asymmetry between numerical presence and market capacity among small producers. It is proven that financial barriers are a key mechanism for restricting access to network sales channels. Low liquidity, unstable financial results, payment delays, and minimum supply requirements limit small producers' ability to scale and fulfil contractual terms of cooperation with retail. It has been established that operational and logistical factors, as well as contractual and regulatory factors, reinforce financial constraints. Limited production capacities, requirements for the regularity of supplies, asymmetric distribution of contractual risks, and the possibility of delisting create increased vulnerability and instability in market positions for small producers. Generalizing the results allows us to conclude that the barriers to entry into organized retail are cumulative and reproduce structural inequality in the industry, caused by the mismatch between the scale of operation of small enterprises and the institutional logic of network retail. Overcoming these barriers requires comprehensive solutions that increase the economic capacity of small producers and adapt the contractual-institutional environment to the specifics of their activities.

Prospects for further research include developing and testing models to integrate small producers into organized retail, accounting for cooperation mechanisms, private-label formats, and tools to reduce financial and contractual risks.

 ISSN: 2786-9431

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