(research note)

Regional exports and employment creation: the case of Argentina

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Abstract

In the last decades, there has been a growing interest among academia and policy makers on the impact of international trade on national employment. The studies about the impact of exports have found a positive effect on employment. Nevertheless, that impact would vary according to the kind of export, as trading manufactures create more jobs than the trade of primary products.

Argentine exports have increased considerably in the last decade, driven by the increased demand of food by Asia. This has reconfigured the characteristics of trade flows of the country, as traditional trade partners beyond Mercosur (Europe and the United States) lost ground against developing Asian countries.

The increase of exports to Asia generated important benefits to foodstuff producers and for the national government, who gets an important part of the sector's profitability through export taxes. The impact that this change had in Argentina's provinces, however, has not been properly studied. The objective of this study is to fill that gap, measuring the impact in private employment of the increased exports to Asia. To do that, regional data of employment and exports from 2003 to 2013 has been compiled and analyzed.

Certain patterns of agglomeration of private jobs are characteristic to Argentina: 73% of them can be found in the Pampas region, and the number jumps to 78% for the case of manufacturing jobs. The industrialist policies of the country in the last decade benefitted the Pampas region. Exports to South East Asia concentrate in a few primary products. Even though they had a positive effect on employment level in those sectors, that effect is not as strong as the one that can be found for manufacturing products. New and better policies that can help increase regional economies' added value are necessary in order to generate manufactured products that can be inserted in new and distant markets. This is a necessary step towards developing the private sector in poor provinces and balancing the concentration of economic activity in the Pampas regions.

Key words: Regional employment; Trade; Regional development

1. Introduction

In the last decades, there has been an increasing interest among academia and policy makers over the impact that external trade has on national employment levels. International trade has advanced constantly as globalization processes take place and economic actors and governments see now beyond the borders of their own country and want to sell their products in every corner of the Earth. Global economic growth has been pushed by the entrance of Asian economies to the world stage, especially China, a country where one fifth of humans live. Their increased purchasing power has reshaped trade flows and created many business

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opportunities. It has also reconfigured the manufacturing sector, as South East Asia became the "factory of the world", providing the world with low cost products. In South America, the increased interest in the relationship between exports and employment may lay on the openness of the Pacific Alliance countries and the new import-substitution-industrialization (ISI) policies of Mercosur countries: even though they have very different development strategies, they consider themselves as part of a global economy that influences economic performance and policies towards creating jobs. The change of century brought the end of the Washington Consensus policies in Latin America, so popular in the 1990s: now, countries recognize that in one way or the other, the government has an important role to fill in shaping trade flows.

There are several studies on the impact of exports in employment levels, finding a positive relation: Kiyota (2012), for example, found an increase of 55% in jobs that depend on exports between 1990 and 2006 in Japan, finding a positive effect of exports in employment both in the manufacturing and service sectors. Fu and Balasubramanyam (2005) found that the Chinese economic model based on exports allowed the country to use the excess of labor force that the country has. Every percentage point of increase in exports by township and village enterprises[1] corresponds with 213 thousand jobs created. Growing at a 15.5% rate between 1998 and 2003, an amount of 3 million jobs were created every year due to exports just in this type of firm. Ghosh (2000) found a negative relation between industrial imports and employment in the manufacturing sector in the USA (from 1961 to 1995), a similar result that Sachs and Shatz (1994) found. Nevertheless, Ghosh says that this can be the result of the comparative disadvantage of certain industrial sectors of the USA compared to other countries; increased external trade led to the growth of certain manufacturing subsectors and could have helped to the creation of many jobs in the service sector.

The Department of Commerce of the United States calculates that there are 11.3 million jobs in that country that depend directly on exports: 7.1 in the export of goods, 4.2 in the export of services. This is approximately 8% of the total number of jobs of the country. Every billion dollars of exports create 5408 posts in the manufacturing industry and 5931 in the service sector. The impact that exports have in each subsector is very different: while 5.5% of the jobs related to exports are created by trade in the agricultural sector, exports are responsible for 23% of the jobs in this sector. 32.4% of the jobs created by exports come from the manufacturing industry, but 25% of the total jobs of that industry come from exporting activities. The European Union calculates that exports were responsible for 25 million jobs in 2007, showing a strong difference in each sector of the economy: while they are responsible for 15 million posts in the manufacturing industry, they just created 746 thousand posts in the primary sector (less than 3% of the total amount of jobs created by exports) (Sousa et al., 2012).

These analyses found a key point to understand the impact of exports in the job market: it will change according to the industry that produces the exported good or service. Being the primary sector the one that employs the least amount of workers in developed markets, the recent escalation of commodities' prices and international trade will have a limited effect in the people employed in that sector. It is, then, worthy to analyze the effect that the increase of exports has in economies with strong agricultural production and tradition as Argentina's, in order to comprehend the processes by which increased trade translates into greater job opportunities for the whole society.

The case of Argentina presents particularities that cannot be found in other markets, as the national

[1] Township and Village Enterprises are a type of local public company in Chinese subnational governments, with a clear market orientation.

government imposes high taxes in the export of primary products in order to finance government expenditures, including subsidies to the manufacturing sector, an increased fleet of public employees as well as an assortment of social programs and benefits[2]. An important part of the new public jobs can then be understood as a result of enlarged revenues arising from export taxes. Especially, those coming from the trade of agricultural products, as the international demand for food (mainly the Chinese demand of soybeans) and its price soared, the total amount of agricultural exports skyrocketed this century. Nevertheless, this is not the only sector that has seen an increase, as the manufacturing industry also had a growing trading activity, driven by Brazil's demand.

The increased commerce with Asia was driven in this century by the sale of primary products, concentrating in a small range of them. In 2011, for example, a 87.8% of Argentinean exports to China were concentrated in 4 products (oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, fixed vegetable oils, crude petroleum, leather, unprocessed tobacco). This is not a purely Argentine phenomenon, as most Latin American countries present a similar pattern of trade: in Brazil, the top five products accounted for 86.9% of all exports to China; in Chile, 94%; in Bolivia 91.3%; in Uruguay, 89.5%. As exports concentrate in a small range of primary products, known for not creating too many jobs, measuring the impact of increased exports in the labor market will help to a better understanding of how the two concepts are intertwined and serve as a base to develop public policy.

This paper is organized as follows: first, the evolution of exports by Argentine regions is analyzed; then, sectors' information is crossed with employment data and the effect that exports have on employment is calculated; then, the analysis on exports to Asia is presented and the sectors that have grown the most are identified. Finally, conclusions are presented.

2. Change in the regional composition of Argentine exports

Analyzing the evolution of Argentine exports in the period 1997-2013, a huge increase can be seen; a similar pattern is seen in the evolution of jobs[3]: As for primary products, exports jumped from 5.7 to 17.76 billion USD (representing 21.6 and 25.4 of total exports, respectively). Jobs in the primary sector moved from 282.7 to 435.9 thousand. The export of manufactures of agricultural origin (MAO) increased from 9.1 billion in 1997 to 26.99 in 2013 (a 35.4 and 38.7% of the total for each year). Employment related to these exports increased from 495.52 to 647.55 thousand[4]. The export of manufactures of industrial origin (MIO) were 8.33 billion (31.5% of the total) in 1997 and moved up to 26.32 in 2013 (37.7%). Employment grew from 418,915 posts to 636,725[5]. It should be said that the increased in MIO's proportion was not only a result of the exponential growth of trade, but also due to an important decline of energy exports, as they represented 12.4% in 1997 and 6.3% in 2013. It is also important to say that the price of commodities jumped in this century, therefore pushing the total values exported by a commodity producer as Argentina (both for the export of primary products and for the export of manufactures using those primary products, as

[2] Since 2002, export taxes were implemented to almost all exports, reaching 35% for the export of soybeans. Meanwhile, up to 2014 the amount of public employees increased 80% in the national administration and doubled in subnational administrations. Government expenditures measured as a percentage of GDP increased exponentially and reached the highest level in history in 2014.
[3] We consider jobs as full time employees, disregarding part timers, public employees and those illegally hired. This data is collected by the Ministry of Work, employment and Social Security (MinTEySS).
[4] The categories that belong to the production of Mao range from the 15 to the 22 of International Standard Industrial Classification of all economic activities (ISIC).
[5] The categories related to MIO are those from the 23 to the 37 of the ISIC.

soybean oil). All in all, jobs in the three sectors jumped from 997 thousand in 1997, to 1,106 in 2003, to 1,720 thousands in 2013.

Even though just a part of the new posts can be explained by the increase of exports (as the internal market also augmented its demand), it is significant the difference according to the sector analyzed. In the primary sector, every million dollar exported corresponds with a creation of 11.69 posts between 2003 and 2013. For the MAO, which number increases to 11.78; as for the MIO, the increase is much higher: 15.44. It is not strange that this sector has the highest figure, as it is the one with the highest added value. This is one of the reasons why public policy in Argentina is inclined towards subsidizing the manufacturing sector.

The results are consistent with the ones found by Porto (2008), who found a positive relation between primary products and MAO's prices and employment creation. According to his study, for every 10% of increase in those products there is a 1.36% raise in employment. Between 2000 and 2013, the terms of trade (measured by the Central Bank of Argentina in the index of raw material prices) jumped 278%, while posts related to primary products and MAO increased 39%. According to this century's data, every 10% increase in the price of commodities corresponds with 1.4 new private jobs in the primary and MAO sectors.

Table 1 Exports and employment by sector, 1996-2013

	1997		2003		2013		2003 -2013
	Exports	Job posts	Exports	Job posts	Exports	Job posts	Δ employment per 1M USD of exports
Primary Products	5,700	282, 704	6,471	303, 958	17,758	435, 904	11.69
MAO	9,104	495, 518	10,004	447, 457	26,988	647, 548	11.78
MIO	8,334	418, 915	8,047	354, 674	26,316	636, 725	15.44

Note: Exports in million USD.
Source: Author, based on CAC, INDEC and MinTEySS.

2.1 Provinces: actual state and evolution of employment and exports

Argentina's provinces outside the Pampas are historically behind in terms of development, productive capacity and job opportunities. 24% of private jobs today are found in Buenos Aires City, and if we consider Buenos Aires Province, Córdoba, La Pampa and Santa Fe, they concentrate 73% of total private jobs. The other 19 provinces just have the remaining 27%. This agglomeration jumps to 78.2% when considering posts in the industrial sector.

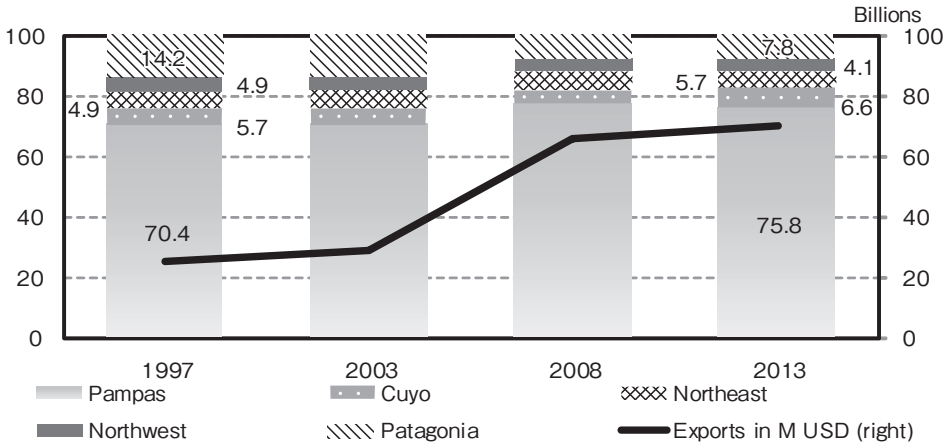
This panorama represents a great challenge for the provinces outside the Pampas, who not only have to compete against the longer manufacturing tradition of the rich provinces, but also have to deal with a bad infrastructure and certain inflexibilities[6] that attempt against their productive capacities. It is also attention-grabbing the fact that in the period 1997-2013 job creation in periphery regions has been just higher than that one in the Pampas region: this last area concentration diminished a mere 2 percentage points, from 75 to 73%. Moreover, during the decade 2003-2013 the concentration just decreased one percentage point.

[6] These inflexibilities refer to the existence of national minimum salaries, a national component of taxes much higher than provincial and local ones and a dependency of provinces' revenues on money sent by the central government.

The persistence of agglomeration also happens in the manufacturing sector, where from 1997 to 2013 the percentage of jobs in the Pampas decreased from 78.4 to 76.8%. The reduction was important between 1997 and 2003, but from this year until 2013 the concentration increased 1.4 percentage points.

This concentration can also be seen in exports: in 2013, 75.8% of Argentina's exports had their origin in the Pampas region (INDEC 2014).This number implies an accentuation of the concentration that could be seen in 1997, when 70.4% of exports were originated in Buenos Aires city and province, Córdoba, Santa Fe and La Pampa. This growth is related to Patagonia's reduction in the nominal amount of exports. The other regions show a small variation in their proportion in exports. Graph 1 shows this evolution, and it also shows the increase in total exports, which jumped from 25 billion in 1997, to 30 billion in 2003 to over 70 billion USD in 2013.

Graph 1　Origin of Argentina's export by region



Source: Author, based on INDEC

This concentration and small variation of the exporting structure in Argentine regions is probably the result of a lack of incentives to regions that want to develop their own international insertion: Taxes to international trade are not distributed among regions and go directly to the national administration; just a small proportion of tax revenues derived from increasing exports go to subnational administrations[7]. Therefore, provinces lack people in charge of promoting exports, they seldom participate in international fairs and lack products with the standards necessary to enter the toughest markets: they produce for the local market.

The variation that can be found between the exporting capacity of regions and employment creation is also remarkable. This is related to the stronger or weaker share of sales to the internal market, and in some cases is related to the growth of a particular industry. In Patagonia, for example, the export of precious stones and metals (considered as MIO) augmented 6 fold between 2003 and 2013. This generated 23,000 jobs, that are included in the "primary products" category and explain 75% of the jobs created in that period, in that region. The growth of employment in the industrial sector in Patagonia, though, is

[7] In 2009 the Central Government created the Fondo Federal Solidario, by which provinces get 30% of tax revenues coming from the export of soybeans.

explained by national policies to develop the manufacturing sector in the southern island of Tierra del Fuego, responsible for 65% of the manufacturing jobs added in the whole region. These policies give strong subsidies to the assembly of electronic devices in order to provide the internal market, and not to export them.

Table 2 shows that exports in all regions increased significantly in the period analyzed, although it has been lower than the growth in global trade (191% in current USD). The only item that grew above global average was MIO. The export of primary products from the Pampas (mainly soybeans) and Cuyo (corn) stand out. The MAO from Cuyo and Northwest also stand out, with wine and fruit juices driving the first region's exports and juices and sugar the second one. In MIO, the Pampas lead because of the export of cars and autoparts, and Cuyo stands out for the export of precious stones and metals.

Table 2 Exports and employment in Argentine regions, 2003-2013

		2003		2013		2003-2013(%)		Δ new jobs for every 1 million more of exports
		Exports	Job posts	Exports	Job posts	Exports	Job posts	
Primary Products	Pampas	3,781	126,492	11,252	172,835	197.6	36.6	6.20
	Cuyo	1,942	35,696	6,665	60,046	243.2	68.2	5.16
	Northeast	623	42,521	1,470	53,738	136.0	26.4	13.24
	Northwest	1,057	43,355	2,510	66,976	137.5	54.5	16.26
	Patagonia	760	52,742	1,650	82,677	117.1	56.8	33.63
National average, primary products						**174.4**	**45.0**	**11.69**
MAO	Pampas	8,543	313,076	20,439	458,584	139.2	46.5	12.23
	Cuyo	583	47,582	1,795	64,731	207.9	36.0	14.15
	Northeast	311	36,685	1,119	54,907	259.8	49.7	22.55
	Northwest	169	36,394	488	50,540	188.8	38.9	44.34
	Patagonia	298	13,898	331	19,715	11.1	41.9	176.27
National average, MAO						**169.8**	**45.0**	**11.78**
MIO	Pampas	6,044	309,258	20,101	548,086	232.6	77.2	16.99
	Cuyo	322	21,388	2,125	32,509	559.9	52.0	6.17
	Northeast	194	6,434	273	13,667	40.7	112.4	91.56
	Northwest	199	7,807	554	15,465	178.4	98.1	21.57
	Patagonia	502	8,668	1,499	26,260	198.6	203	17.64
National average, MIO						**227.0**	**79.9**	**15.44**

Notes: Exports in million USD.
Source: Author, based on INDEC and MinTEySS

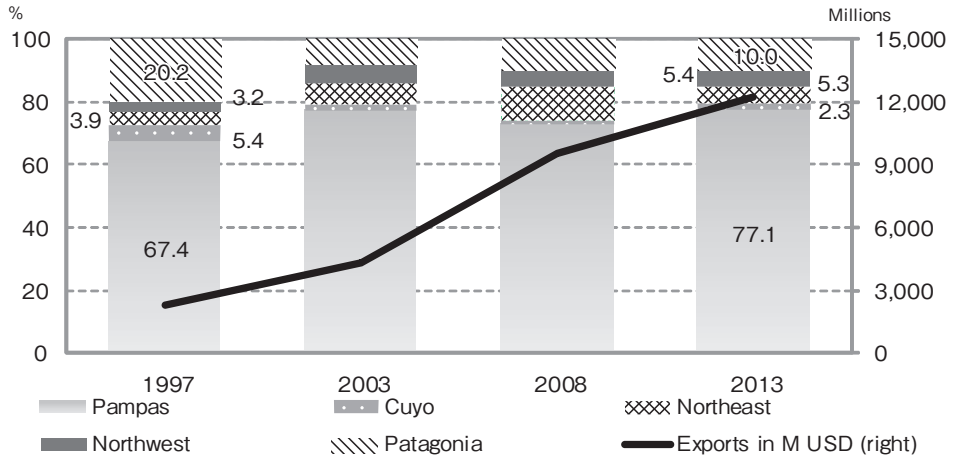
Several differences can be seen in this relationship according to the region analyzed. We divide the change in the amount exported by the change in employment in the 2003-2013 decade. Every million dollar exported by Northwest has a bigger impact in employment than in Pampas. As it was said, this could be the result of a stronger focus in the internal market, but also can come from the development of labor-intensive sectors. In the Northeast region, for example, the growth of MAO's exports is explained by the emergence of the poultry industry, while in the Pampas is due to the soybean industry (including oil, flour and other derivatives). In MIO, it is noteworthy the creation of jobs in the Northwest, as a result of the growth of essential oils and autoparts, two labor intensive products.

The growth of exports has a positive effect on jobs, especially the trade of industrial manufactures. In this sense, it could be expected that several policies aim at developing exportable products and designing commercial strategies that can secure a good international penetration. It will be explained later that this supposition is false.

2.2. Exports to South East Asia

Argentine exports to South East Asia[8] present two main characteristics: first, the continuous growth since 1997, with acceleration from 2003. In 1997, they accounted for 2.3 billion USD, jumped to over 4 billion in 2003 and soared to over 12 billion in 2013 (see graph 2). Second, a strong concentration in the regional origin of these exports: over 77% is produced in the Pampas. This is a consequence of the type of products that are exported to Asia, as they are chiefly primary products and MAO generated from these, especially those related to soybeans. The concentration has deepened in the last decades, increasing ten percentage points since 1997. These numbers show that the Asian high growth and its subsequent increase in international trade has a very different impact in each of the Argentine regions.

Graph 2　Regional origin of Argentine exports to ASEAN +3



Source: Author, based on INDEC.

[8] In this paper, South East Asia means the ASEAN countries plus China, South Korea and Japan.

This concentration of the origin of exports is one of the reasons why private jobs are condensed in the Pampas. These two processes are strongly related and generate a vicious circle from where is difficult to find an easy way out. Provinces outside the Pampas lack the human, financial and infrastructural resources to compete globally[9], and by not being able to compete globally, they cannot nurture firms that can pay local taxes, allowing the subnational government to improve their financial position and to invest in infrastructure and human resources.

To analyze the impact of exports to ASEAN +3 on employment in Argentina's regions, we use the same formula used for table 2, and we add a coefficient of adjustment in trade data. As just a part of each region's trade is done with Asia, it cannot be though that all employment is attributable to that trade.

$$\frac{JPr_s^{t1} \Big/ JPr_s^{t0}}{ExpSEAr_s^{t1} \Big/ ExpSEAr_s^{t0} \; x \; CRA}$$

In the formula above, JPr is job posts in region r, s is the sector (primary, MAO or MIO), t1 is 2013, t0 2003, ExpSEAr is exports to South East Asia by region r and CRA is the coefficient of regional adjustment. The CRA is calculated:

$$\frac{1}{ExpSEAr_s^{t1} \Big/ Exp\ r_s^{t1}}$$

Where Exp r is the total of exports from region r in the sector s in t1.

Table 3 shows the variation on exports by region to ASEAN +3. On one side, a larger increase in trade with this area than with other parts of the world can be seen. But this growth is based on primary products and MAO, as the augmentation of manufacturing exports is much smaller (26.5% for SE Asia, 227% for the whole world). The growth of MAO is originated in the derivatives of soybeans, that comprise 80% of exports to SE Asia. In MIO, the most important product is aluminum, second are plastics and then pharmaceuticals, item that shows a 1300% growth in the period analyzed.

As it was previously mentioned, it is notorious the predominance of the Pampas region in exports, but this is even bigger if we see the MAO, where the concentration is 92%. In the MIO, the concentration is much lower, as aluminum is extracted and exported from Patagonia.

As for the regional variations, the growth of primary exports from Patagonia is remarkable, especially by seafood, while MAO declined due to a decrease in trade of wool. Cuyo also sees a 20 fold increase of its exports to SE Asia, with corn and soybeans spearheading trade. It is also remarkable the proportional increase in exports of MAO in Northwest and Northeast, driven by the growth of sales of animal food, juices and leather in the firsts, and poultry, animal food and dairy.

It is difficult to establish the precise impact that exports to SE Asia have on private employment in regions. Results using the same formula for regions than the one used in table 2 for primary products and

[9] Just as an example to picture these inequalities, small and poor provinces as Santiago del Estero have just 2% of their population with a university degree. In Buenos Aires city, that number jumps to 21%. The capital collects 84% of its expenses through local taxes. Five provinces collect less than 10% of their expenses through local taxes.

MAO for the whole country, show similar levels of relationship between trade and job creation. At the regional level some differences can be found, even though they are not so deep. From now on, it is the challenge to find a methodology that can measure the impact in employment of trade with SE Asia at the subational level. The composition of exports to SE Asia is less labor intensive than the average, especially in the primary production (10.91 vs. 11.69, when in MAO is 11.41 vs. 11.78). Nevertheless, this analysis pinpoints the importance of having effective regional policies to develop and insert products in the global market and that the growth of Asian economies presents a renewed opportunity for provincial governments to revamp productive structures and, through increased export capabilities, reduce the economic, financial and productive gap that separates poor periphery provinces from the Pampas.

Table 3　Exports to ASEAN +3 and employment in Argentine regions, 2003-2013

		2003		2013		2003-2013(%)		Δ Jobs for additional 1 million USD exported*
		Exports	Job posts	Exports	Job posts	Exports	Job posts	
Primary Prods.	Pampas	1,246	126,492	4,493	172,839	260.6	36.6	5.71
	Cuyo	5	35,696	129	60,046	2480	68.2	59
	Northeast	201	42,521	480	53,738	90.1	26.4	8.93
	Northwest	293	43,355	557	66,976	138.8	54.5	29.24
	Patagonia	53	52,742	355	82,677	569.8	56.8	21.36
National average, primary products						**234.4**	**45.0**	**10.91**
MAO	Pampas	1,840	313,076	4,617	458,584	150.9	46.5	11.83
	Cuyo	54	47,582	141	64,731	161.1	36.0	15.55
	Northeast	25	36,685	154	54,907	600.0	49.7	14.33
	Northwest	7	36,394	49	50,540	516.0	38.9	46.46
	Patagonia	48	13,898	31	19,715	-35.4	41.9	n.d.
National average, MAO						**188.8**	**45.0**	**11.41**
MIO	Pampas	232	309,258	248	548,086	6,9	77.2	-
	Cuyo	6	21,388	9	32,509	50	52.0	-
	Northeast	20	6,434	26	13,667	3500	112.4	-
	Northwest	1	7,807	36	15,465	30	98.1	-
	Patagonia	95	8,668	126	26,260	32,6	203.0	-
National average, MIO						**26.5**	**79.9**	- **

Notes: Exports in million USD.

* Estimates consider the proportion of exports to Asia on total trade by region. Each sector and regions numbers is adjusted by this.

** Being MIO exports to SE Asia so small (1.7% of all exports to that area) they are not considered in this study.

Source: Author, based on INDEC and MinTEySS.

3. Conclusions

Argentine exports soared during the 2003-2013 period. This growth happened in primary products, MAO and MIO. The higher trade level generated many private jobs, in areas related to the production of the products being exported and in services related to the trade of goods. Even though some subsectors could

have been more influenced by the growth of internal rather than international demand, the three sectors show a positive relationship between exports and employment creation. The results are in line with those found in previous studies. The export of primary products present – not surprisingly – the lowest level of job creation for every additional million dollars of exports. This may be related to the low added value of the sector and the increased technological level that reduces the need for workers. MAO posts a slightly higher number, while MIO show a substantially higher impact.

There is also an unequal increase of exports depending on the region that produces the good. Most exports are produced in the Pampas. In this area, most of the private employment can also be found. In this sense, periphery regions have in general a small exporting capacity. The trend in the 2003-2013 decade does not indicate a convergence process: extra-Pampas regions hardly succeed in catching up, as they only increased 1.5 percentage points their share in MAO and MIO, while they lost 6 percentage points in primary products.

Trade with ASEAN +3 has a similar pattern of agglomeration: 77% of exports are produced in the Pampas. Most of it is produced by the export of primary products and MAO, leaving the MIO a very small share (a mere 4%). This last sector presents an increase in regions outside the Pampas, which gained almost 10 percentage points in the decade analyzed.

The limited growth of exports of products with high added value is related to several concomitant factors, starting with a lack of exportable products and an infrastructure favorable to exporting from different points of the country; a lack of incentives can be found as well, as provinces do not get any direct return on the export taxes that producers pay. Therefore, they have very small or non-existent export departments and allocate a very limited amount of resources to the promotion of external trade. This also creates a geographical concentration of exporting policies: the main directions and decisions are made in Buenos Aires city. The understanding of this phenomenon can serve to explain why Argentina has been so reluctant to signing agreements with neighboring countries to use their ports: they concentrate on the most important area of production and export (the Pampas), disregarding potential developments of exportable offers in the other regions.

The positive effects of exports on private employment in regions mark that despite the few incentives stated above, regional governments should also develop their own insertion strategy in external markets. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges that subnational governments have to face in order to better adapt to a growing globalization and to assure, through the development and trade of merchandises wanted by the world, an increasing and sustainable standard of living for their citizens.

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