



UDC 005.8

Integration of Agile methods into the management system as a tool for increasing the effectiveness of strategic management in the agri-food sector

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► **Abstract.** Within the framework of modern world conditions faced by the Ukrainian business subjects of the agri-food sector, conducting research on the possibility of using new methodologies in management can be an added advantage to optimizing and increasing the effectiveness of their performance. The purpose of this study was to highlight and summarize the work on the principles of introducing modern methodologies into general management systems as tools for increasing the effectiveness of strategic management in the agri-food sector, considering the modern world conditions. The study used general scientific and special research methods: monographic; theoretical generalization, analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction; structural and logical analysis; grouping and classification. The author substantiated the expediency of using flexible management methods in agri-food enterprises. The priority of using Agile management methods was identified, the advantages and disadvantages of using Kanban and Scrum methodologies in the management of an agri-food enterprise were investigated, and their main elements were determined (classification of roles in the team, key concepts, principles). Features of the functioning of business entities in the conditions of SPOD, VUCA, and BANI worlds were provided. It was noted that the flexible methods under study are aimed at the evolutionary development of organizations, i.e., gradual improvements that, in the end, ensure the effectiveness of management at a prominent level. This paper expands practical approaches to the application of flexible management methods in agri-food enterprises, which lays the foundation for further research on strategic management in the agri-food sector under the conditions of the need for their constant reorientation and adaptation to the BANI world. The practical significance of the study lies in the development and implementation of proposals and practical recommendations for the use of Agile management methods in the management system of an agri-food enterprise as a means of improving the effectiveness of strategic management

► **Keywords:** management; flexible management methods; management; strategic management; business processes; strategy

► Introduction

Considering the global trend of finding advanced and innovative solutions to increase labour productivity, improve quality, reduce costs, and use available resources, it is proposed to implement the methodology as an effective solution to the existing problems

of agri-food enterprises. By structuring information about providing and analysing the advantages and disadvantages of flexible management methods, it is possible to form an effective system that can help enterprises function in modern conditions.

► **Suggested Citation:** Khodakivska, O., & Voronko-Nevidnycha, T. (2023). Integration of Agile methods into the management system as a tool for increasing the effectiveness of strategic management in the agri-food sector. *Ekonomika APK*, 30(2), 49-56. doi: 10.32317/2221-1055.202302049

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The relevance of this study is conditioned upon the level of management of an agri-food enterprise that plays a dominant role in the effectiveness of its management. It is the need for rapid adaptation to dynamic market conditions and consumer needs that makes the introduction of flexible management methodologies urgent. World practice proves that the level of management is substantially increased with the introduction of modern, flexible methodologies.

The purpose of flexible management methods is not to level the existing management system, but the ability to consider its essence, flexibility, and the ability to apply existing advantages of enterprises. Accordingly, the claim that the existing management model does not function or function inefficiently is not true.

Today, the business environment is unpredictable, so managers must adhere to a systematic analysis of the external competitive and internal environment, and based on this, ensure the organization's strategy. In many ways, the effectiveness of strategic management depends on the synergistic effect of the management goals of an economic entity and the goals of employees, internal and external motivations for development, the availability of highly qualified, competent employees, etc.

At the same time, aspects of adaptation, and introduction of new methodologies in the management of agri-food entities as a tool for improving the effectiveness of strategic management, have not yet gained considerable popularity among the Ukrainian scientific community, which determines the relevance of this study.

Notably, agri-food enterprises are looking for a new management system that would be more adaptive and efficient, despite the challenges and risks of the external environment. D.M. Wiechmann *et al.* (2022) state the need for transformations of a modern enterprise, ensuring its market stability and the possibility of applying flexible management methods.

D. Larson & V. Chang (2016) investigated the benefits of using Agile management methods in business practices. Features of the application of Agile principles in project management were considered by N. Kaleshovska *et al.* (2015), in public management – by M. Maksimova (2021), etc. Among the benefits of Agile, C.Y. Hsieh & C.T. Chen (2015) note reduced time to complete tasks, higher quality, increased flexibility, and higher overall level of stakeholder satisfaction, etc. The study focuses on the effectiveness of Agile management methods, which occurs due to the productivity of employees, their high qualifications and work experience, the use of modern information technologies, a flexible management structure, etc. (Rudnicki, 2011).

E. Karaesmen & Y. Dallery (2000) defined the characteristics of Kanban work methods; in turn, T. Murino *et al.* (2010) substantiated the main functions of team members' joint work, their roles, and tasks that must be performed during its provision. In the study G.N. Krieg & H. Kuhn (2008) discuss the details of Kanban, which embodies the idea of flow as a specific production process, the absence of down-

time and unfinished tasks. The study by M. Senapati & M.L. Drury-Grogan (2021) focuses on practical recommendations for improving the productivity of teams, and the quality of their tasks in today's rapidly changing business environment.

This means that multiple experts can perform the same task sequentially. In this case, the diagnosis of previous errors and their processing is accelerated. This allows for avoiding unnecessary costs, improves the quality of development, and reduces its implementation time (Kirichek *et al.*, 2020).

Proceeding from the relevance of this study, most researchers and analysts support the idea of recommending managers systematically assess the external environment of the organization and compare the advantages and disadvantages of many alternatives before formulating a strategy.

The purpose of this study was to introduce and provide Agile management methods in the management system of an agri-food enterprise as a way to increase the effectiveness of strategic management, considering the concept of modern world conditions.

► Characteristics of concepts

Presently, domestic enterprises, regardless of their forms of ownership and management, have to adapt to the new conditions of martial law: most logistics routes have been changed, and production and processing have been suspended or destroyed. That is why there is a need for high-quality management, the main task of which is to ensure the sustainability of the enterprise's functioning, and create new and maintain existing competitive advantages. It is this way of managing the organization in a dynamic environment and fierce competition that is an important factor in strengthening competitiveness. The emphasis on the strengths of an economic entity is not an accident, but the result of systematic efforts to create and strengthen the opportunities necessary for the development of the organization – this is the main task in strategic management.

To characterize the concept of world conditions before considerable globalization, scientists note the expediency of using the SPOD world (steady, predictable, ordinary, definite).

In the early 1990s, the US military proposed the concept of the world in the VUCA format (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity). This concept focused on issues of behaviour in unstable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous situations that arose after the end of the Cold War. Gradually, the VUCA concept spread to the business environment.

VUCA is a world where circumstances change quickly and unpredictably; devastating changes occur, and a retrospective cannot predict the future; facts that are difficult to understand (black swans), causes and factors that cause problems; difficulty answering the questions “Who, What, When, Why”.

Whereas in the SPOD world, business entities have progressed through the implementation of appropriate strategies, the results of which are somewhat predictable and achievable, with the advent of

the VUCA world, corporate strategies must be mobile and adaptive so that enterprises can effectively respond to fundamental changes in the external environment.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the world has become BANI (brittle, anxious, nonlinear, incomprehensible), since 2020. The term was proposed by James Kashio, lead researcher at the Institute for the Future (USA) (Horney, 2015).

Accordingly, for business entities, the BANI world declares a high probability of destruction of all the usual methods and actions of management, the absence, and unavailability of providing long-term plans and actions. Anxiety has become a disease of the 21st century.

Rapidly changing conditions make it impossible to form long-term strategies for the development and life support of enterprises due to the inability to factor in all changes that occur simultaneously, there is an acute lack of initial data, furthermore, all knowledge becomes incomplete and superficial. Accordingly, management decisions are made in conditions of uncertainty, often intuitively. Therefore, the priority competitive advantages for modern organizations are the processes of constant reorientation and adaptation.

Consequently, there is a further change in the management paradigm all over the world (Khodakivska & Kononenko, 2020). Presently, it is common practice for managing agri-food enterprises to distinguish two main types of strategic management. The first is regular management, which includes several systems that complement each other. Within the framework of this type of strategic management, the process of managing the main functions of the enterprise takes place. At the same time, the second type of strategic management is carried out in real-time and is associated with solving problems and force majeure situations. It is important to note that in this type, it is important to refine and improve the existing strategy.

The essence of flexible thinking includes operational flexibility (improving an existing business) and strategic flexibility (creating new products and services, as a result – attracting new consumers (customers). Agile management technology, first of all, should be considered not as a methodology, but rather as a certain philosophy, way of thinking, culture, and a set of management methods (tools).

All forms of Agile methodologies used by organizations are based on team activities and have certain features based on the scope of their activities.

The lack of sufficient research in the field of Agile methodologies necessitates a systematic and interdisciplinary understanding of processes at the enterprise level.

► **Strategic management of SWOT analysis**

The main stages of strategic management are as follows:

1. Strategic diagnosis – analysis of the external and internal environment of the enterprise;

2. Determination of strategic goals, mission, vision, goals of the enterprise.

3. Strategic planning.

4. Strategic control.

SWOT analysis is a method of analysis in strategic management that organizations use to develop and validate their business strategies. SWOT analysis identifies and compares an organization's strengths and capabilities with external opportunities and threats in its environment. SWOT analysis clarifies internal, external, and other factors that may influence an organization's goals and objectives (MBA, 2019).

The SWOT analysis process helps managers determine whether the resources and capabilities of an organization are effective in a given competitive environment in which it operates, and, if necessary, improve the strategies necessary to maintain success in this environment.

Domestic agri-food enterprises are increasingly mastering European sales markets, which is why the main task for them is to create a sustainable competitive advantage. This is precisely what the strategy of functioning of economic entities should be aimed at.

Apart from the financial benefits, strategic management can increase employee motivation in the workplace. Setting effective goals for employees and engaging them in organizational work can improve overall productivity. Research shows that when goals are aligned, employee and business productivity increases dramatically (Peha, 2001).

Agile management methods developed within the framework of lean manufacturing were implemented in software after the “Manifesto for Agile” in 2001 and have since spread to all types of management tasks in all sectors of the economy (Manifesto for Agile..., 2001). Therewith, the purpose of flexible methods is not to level the existing management system, but the ability to consider its essence, flexibility, and the ability to apply existing capabilities of enterprises.

As a result, aspects related to the conditions for the formation, functioning, and development of groups, phenomena, and management processes that ensure the achievement of business goals are updated. Teams are characterized by open discussion of problems, pooling resources, and synergy.

The study of foreign practices (The Latest Reports..., 2019) highlighted certain advantages of Agile, among which it is worth noting that the method entirely changes the way the business entity works, as it introduces a new way of thinking. Unlike the main methods, Agile is aimed at flexible development, which includes, first of all, teamwork (Abrahamsson *et al.*, 2017). Therewith, labour productivity increases by changing conditions and setting tasks (they are changed by a certain sequence of phases – “iterations”, after which the results are summarized and the team's work is evaluated; the results of work are recorded in the form of weekly reports, which allows managers to indicate and correct incorrect decisions, improving the quality of project work

processes. Furthermore, there is a constant development of new techniques, exchange of knowledge and experience in the team, as there is an opportunity to learn and discover new things while working. Agile helps organizations increase revenue through the synergistic effect of communication, collaboration, feedback, and sharing accumulated knowledge, etc. However, the main advantage of using Agile is its main purpose – to create a qualitative value for the consumer.

► **The essence of practical management methods**

Kanban and Scrum, which have practical significance, should be highlighted among flexible management methods. Experts say that the information that is presented visually contributes to the best communication of the strategy to the employees of the enterprise. This allows all members of the team to visualize the scope and progress of their work. Kanban is a convenient tool for assessing the current status of tasks, the work performed, and the future scope of work to deliver the strategy (Zhmai & Badera, 2022).

Kanban is about limiting the number of unrealized tasks and maximizing efficiency and (or) speed. In the practice of management, there are situations of non-compliance with the deadlines for the implementation of tasks and projects (which is unacceptable under the conditions of using Kanban). It is important to pay attention to the creation of a single informational and categorical basis in which different units and employees can communicate effectively.

Kanban is a concept that maximizes the efficiency of employees and teams to support continuous work flow and efficient execution. When applied, Kanban is based on fundamental principles such as task visualization and limiting the number of tasks “in progress”.

► **Advantages and disadvantages of using management methods**

Among the advantages of Kanban, it is worth noting the most important ones, specifically the improvement of work efficiency. No downtime and waiting for employees to complete tasks immediately after completing the previous one.

Thus, better interaction and communication in the team are formed. Responsible employees are always clearly defined by individual areas of responsibility. Constant communication, and prompt meetings of employees, contribute to the fastest solution to problems that may arise during work processes and allow the team to find the best solution.

Furthermore, Kanban is a flexible methodology that allows adding and cancelling tasks as a person works. Accordingly, this methodology can be easily adapted to existing work processes in the enterprise. There are no official roles, which is why it is easy to apply it to the specific features of an individual business entity's activities, and quickly change it at any time if necessary. Optimizing communication, discussion, and meeting time is an advantage

of Kanban, as employees have a continuous flow of tasks, so less time is spent on planning.

At the same time, it is possible to highlight certain disadvantages of Kanban. Specifically, the results of practical application may have low efficiency. The reasons for this are as follows: low motivation of employees, unsatisfactory level of incentives from the management of the enterprise, the unfavourable microclimate of the team, lack of well-established business processes, effective communication within the team, duplication or lack of those responsible for certain areas of work, etc. In addition, the requirements for the constant availability of tasks – the “conveyor principle” can be recognized as a disadvantage, provided that the task or project has periods of uneven work.

The lack of time limits is considered a disadvantage since Kanban does not have deadlines, i.e., the task is given as much time as necessary to complete, which creates problems with task implementation deadlines. In application practice, there is a chance to “lose” tasks with a high priority for the organization. Since employees take tasks to work on their own, they can choose low-priority tasks for the business. Therefore, the tasks must be thoroughly checked and ranked by priority by the management of the enterprise.

The need to use Kanban is determined by the variety and multi-vector nature of business processes in the operational and strategic periods of the enterprise's functioning, as well as in conditions of a dynamic external environment. Another condition for using this methodology is flexible obligations to complete a certain task, project implementation, or an unlimited schedule (or rather long deadlines).

The expediency of using Kanban on the part of the company's management is the fact of avoiding overloading employees, since they independently choose areas of activity, without expecting a task from the management. This avoids the accumulation of unfinished tasks or the assignment of more tasks than can be completed.

In turn, the Scrum methodology is designed to improve project management in the field of computer software product development, the Scrum methodology is used in many types of production, commercial and financial activities. As an organizational form, Scrum is capable of structuring the content of processes and collective activities (Peha, 2001; Professional Scrum..., 2022).

Scrum is a project management methodology that is popular among programmers and is becoming increasingly widespread in other areas and industries, among managers in modern business conditions (Professional Scrum..., 2022).

The essence of this management tool is the ability to distribute a certain task or project into time intervals, so-called sprints. A considerable number of organizations use a two-week time interval for sprints, but it is possible to set other periods: one week or three-week. The essence is to break down a large task into the smallest sub-items that can be

completed during a given period. For this, it is useful to prepare the structure of future work.

As with Kanban, cards are used for each task and a common board is created, divided into periods. The difference is that Scrum has more planning elements.

The use of Scrum is determined by the need for a prominent level of control over the results of work, and activities in the “just in time” format, ensuring the loyalty of consumers, stakeholders, etc.

Scrum also allows for improving business processes quickly. To ensure its activity, small teams and collectives are created, the members of which must cooperate effectively as a certain cohesive unit. However, this is only possible if everyone has the opportunity to express their opinion. Accordingly, the optimal size of a Scrum team is five to nine people. If necessary, it is possible to create several such teams and combine them (Schwaber & Sutherland, 2020) (Table 1).

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of using Kanban and Scrum methodologies in managing an agri-food enterprise

Methods	Workflow	Roles in a team (group)	Communication	Possibility of making changes	Time interval	Performance results
Kanban	Current	None	Permanent	At any time	None	Current
Scrum	Specific implementation time intervals	Defined	Planning, review, retrospective, daily meetings	Impossibility of making changes	Defined	At the end of each time interval

Source: developed by the author based on research by K. Schwaber & J. Sutherland (2020)

Therefore, the business entity's choice of a way to implement certain tasks depends on its needs. Scrum is suitable for long-term projects where all the requirements are known and there is a work plan that can be divided into parts to fulfil the purpose in smaller steps. Kanban is suitable for small projects, tasks without detailed plans, or long-term projects where tasks are formed during the workflow. It is advisable to implement Kanban to provide more flexible and adapted business processes to changes in the external environment.

Notably, by investigating the practical and scientific aspects of implementing flexible management of agri-food enterprises, one can conclude that the methodology for forming and managing Agile teams is mediated.

Currently, opinions about the need for collaboration experience among team members are debatable. On the one hand, the success of team activity depends on the maturity of the team, in which a common mental model should be formed. At the same time, by giving priority to newly created teams, the activities of existing teams lead to dysfunction and inefficient decision-making (Mkoba & Marnewick, 2017).

The fulfilment of the possibilities of the process-based approach in the strategic management of modern organizations requires the solution of several important methodological issues, specifically target indicators, indices, and methods of choosing alternatives, considering the life cycle of organizations, forms of ownership, key success factors in the industry and other factors.

Considering the mission and goals of analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the enterprise, as well as the opportunities and threats of the external environment, the manager should start developing possible alternative strategies. This requires evaluating strategic alternatives based on specific criteria such as suitability, probability of implementation, and resource availability (McGee & Sammut-Bonnici, 2015).

Organizations that continuously identify and analyse the results of their strategic approaches are more likely to succeed and improve their financial performance (Gartner top..., 2021).

It is important to conduct an external audit of strategic processes as a basis for clarifying further areas of functioning, adaptation, and development of the organization.

Globalization processes, martial law, the need for economic recovery, and business support in modern conditions emphasized the need to supplement financial indicators with other parameters. It can be assumed that the application of strategic management, the formation, and the provision of the strategy of the business entity in the agri-food sector have certain benefits.

► **Financial benefits**

Empirical research and analysis have proved that the growth in the performance of enterprises with progressive strategic management systems, which have a significant impact on both the planning and implementation of the strategy, is directly proportional to the increase in financial indicators of management.

Increasing opportunities for preventing and levelling force majeure circumstances. Strategic management motivates managers to encourage the work of those subordinates who are aware of the need for systematic monitoring, forecasting, and ensuring operation strategies.

Improving the quality of strategic decision-making through collective interaction. The process of group interaction for decision-making contributes to the creation of alternative strategies and the choice of the best option by exchanging opinions and competencies of team members (a separate group).

► **Employee motivation**

Engaging employees in strategy development can provide a better insight into the priorities and functioning of an existing reward system. This also better

evaluates the relationship between employee performance and productivity rewards inherent in strategic planning.

Reducing the duplication of job duties and (or) the absence of those responsible for certain areas of work. When formulating a strategy, there is a more profound understanding of individual and collective responsibilities, and individual areas of responsibility. Role differentiation, which exists by definition, should reduce disparities and duplications in the activities of groups and individual employees (The new organization..., 2021).

► Reducing resistance to change

The benefits of understanding the need for change with minimal resistance are also more likely to follow the process of developing an engagement strategy for the entire team, as there is a better awareness of the choices for particular options and available alternatives. In turn, the uncertainty associated with change is also eliminated from the process, and resistance to change becomes less harmful.

It is worth emphasizing once again that maximum efficiency can be achieved only through an integrated approach – strategic design, organization, and implementation of various management methods (specifically, Agile methods), strategic control, and analysis of all results. Exceptionally comprehensive and systematic actions will be the key to success in today's dynamic environment.

Strategic management plays a key role in achieving success and maintaining competitiveness in today's business environment. Strategic management is a set of decisions and actions that lead to the development of effective strategies that help achieve the organization's goals. Apart from making operational and effective decisions, using opportunities, and coordinating actions, strategic management contributes to cost reduction, better motivation and stimulation of employees, the response of the organization's management to threats or their levelling, transformation into opportunities, and timely reaction and adaptation to possible market trends, growth of overall productivity in the business entity's activity. Effective strategic management continuously plans, monitors, and verifies the organization's operations to improve operational efficiency, market share, and profitability.

► Conclusions

Considering the need to find promising innovative solutions to improve the main aspects and needs of

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agri-food enterprises, the most effective solution to modern problems is the introduction of methodology. The implementation of the formation of an effective system that can help enterprises function in modern conditions has become possible due to the introduction and analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of practical management methods.

The present study found that the modern market economy confirms the expediency of considering strategic management as a special management technology that ensures the optimal organization of business processes in a dynamic environment. It is known that the effectiveness of strategic management depends on the synergistic effect of the management purpose of a business entity, as well as the availability of competent employees, and internal and external motivations for development. Considering the above, as well as global trends in finding solutions to increase labour productivity, reduce costs, and use real resources, it is the introduction of flexible management methods that are appropriate for agri-food enterprises. Accordingly, using a variety of flexible management methods, it is possible to coordinate the successful and productive work of agri-food enterprises.

The idea of using Agile management methods in the activities of enterprises is to strive to transform existing management models into more adaptive ones to external challenges, promote the improvement of information exchange, optimize processes and configure interaction within employee teams, establish a communication process with feedback, etc. Accordingly, the use of flexible management methods is a reliable support for ensuring the effectiveness of strategic management of enterprises in the agri-food sector.

This paper provides an area for new research related to the processes of implementing Agile management methods in the activities of agri-food enterprises, namely Kanban and Scrum, and will help in the initiation of the development of analogous approaches for other flexible management methods that involve dynamism, the mode of the greatest contribution to the implementation of interests, opportunities, and requests of buyers.

► Acknowledgements

None.

► Conflict of Interest

None.

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Інтеграція Agile-методів у систему менеджменту як інструмент підвищення ефективності стратегічного управління в агропродовольчій сфері

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► **Анотація.** У межах концепції сучасних світових умов, з якими зіштовхнулися вітчизняні господарюючі суб'єкти агропродовольчої сфери проведення досліджень щодо можливості використання нових методологій у сфері менеджменту може стати додатковою перевагою до оптимізації та збільшення результативності їх функціонування. Метою статті було висвітлення та узагальнення напрацювань щодо засад впровадження сучасних методологій у загальні системи управління як інструментів підвищення результативності стратегічного управління в агропродовольчому секторі з урахуванням концепцій сучасних світових умов. У дослідженні використано загальнонаукові та спеціальні методи дослідження: монографічний; теоретичного узагальнення, аналізу, синтезу, індукції та дедукції; структурно-логічного аналізу; групування й класифікації. Обґрунтовано доцільність застосування гнучких методів управління в підприємствах агропродовольчої сфери. Виділено пріоритетність застосування Agile-методів управління, досліджено переваги та недоліки застосування методологій Kanban і Scrum в управлінні підприємством агропродовольчої сфери, визначено їх основні елементи (класифікацію ролей у команді, ключові поняття, принципи). Наведено особливості функціонування суб'єктів господарювання в умовах SPOD, VUCA BANI-світів. Відзначено, що досліджувані гнучкі методи спрямовані на еволюційний розвиток організацій, тобто поступові вдосконалення, які, у кінцевому результаті, забезпечують результативність господарювання на високому рівні. У статті поглиблені практичні підходи щодо застосування гнучких методів управління в підприємствах агропродовольчої сфери, що закладає основу для подальших досліджень щодо стратегічного управління в агропродовольчій сфері за умов необхідності їх постійної переорієнтації та адаптації BANI-світу. Практична значущість досліджень полягає у розробці та впровадженні пропозицій й практичних рекомендацій щодо використання Agile-методів управління у системі менеджменту підприємства агропродовольчої сфери у якості засобу підвищення ефективності стратегічного управління

► **Ключові слова:** управління; гнучкі методи управління; менеджмент; стратегічне управління; бізнес-процеси; стратегія