

# RCEP Rules and Sichuan Exporters' Adaptation Strategies

Meiqing Chen<sup>1</sup>, Shuai Shao<sup>1</sup> and Guosheng Li<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Southwest Medical University, Luzhou, Sichuan 646100, China

<sup>2</sup>TAHOTA Law Firm Guiyang Office, Guiyang, Guizhou 550000, China

---

**Abstract:** The RCEP framework redefines Asia-Pacific economic integration by establishing streamlined trade protocols, harmonized rules of origin, service sector liberalization, and robust investment safeguards. For Sichuan, this presents a strategic inflection point - the province stands to reinforce its position as a critical node in domestic-international dual circulation while catalyzing industrial transformation through deeper regional value chain participation. The agreement unlocks three pivotal advantages: preferential tariff structures that enhance competitiveness in electronics and advanced manufacturing exports, digital economy expansion anchored by Chengdu's innovation ecosystem, and agricultural trade growth through standardized regulatory alignment. However, structural challenges emerge in balancing industrial upgrading with compliance across RCEP's diverse regulatory landscapes. To capitalize fully, Sichuan must pioneer institutional innovations - optimizing cross-border data flows, cultivating specialized talent attuned to RCEP dynamics, and developing sophisticated dispute resolution mechanisms - thereby converting regulatory convergence into enduring competitive differentiation.

**Keywords:** RCEP, Rules of Origin, Tariffs, Corporate Exports.

---

## 1. Overview of the RCEP Agreement

The RCEP agreement encompasses a broad scope with extensive content, featuring a legal text spanning 14,000-page legal text. Following the structure of other free trade agreements, it consists of a preamble, main text, and annexes. The main text comprises twenty chapters covering initial provisions and definitions, rules of origin, trade in goods, customs procedures and trade facilitation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, standards and technical regulations, trade remedies, temporary movement of natural persons, trade in services, investment, intellectual property, e-commerce, competition policy, SMEs, technical cooperation, general exceptions, institutional arrangements, government procurement, dispute settlement, and final provisions. The annexes contain specific commitments regarding tariffs, services, investment, and movement of personnel.

### 1.1. Trade Facilitation

The RCEP agreement on trade facilitation is divided into goods trade and service trade, mainly covering the second to ninth chapters of the agreement. The core provisions include: The agreement requires member states to commit to tariff reductions, either immediately eliminating tariffs or phasing them out to zero within ten years. The ultimate objective is to eliminate tariffs on over 90% of goods, thereby removing trade barriers among member nations. Sectors with high tariffs, such as food, agricultural products, consumer goods, and automobiles, stand to benefit the most. The Rules of Origin in the agreement were designed to facilitate national calculations of country-specific trade in international commerce. They serve not only as the foundation for implementing non-discriminatory trade policies but also as the criteria for determining product nationality in global trade. The key aspects include origin determination standards and certification procedures. The three primary methods for determining origin are production process rules, tariff classification changes, and regional value content. Unlike

other international trade agreements, RCEP does not require goods to meet multiple criteria simultaneously—compliance with just one standard suffices, provided that full regional cumulation is achieved within five years of the agreement's implementation.

Regarding certification procedures, the focus lies on Certificates of Origin, Origin Declarations, and Certified Origin Declarations. Prior to RCEP, member states had established their own Rules of Origin under various free trade agreements, which often differed and sometimes conflicted. RCEP resolves these inconsistencies through its new cumulation rules, harmonizing origin standards across the region. The "cumulation" rule consists of two key provisions. The first provision stipulates that once a product (primarily intermediate or semi-finished goods) originating in any RCEP member country qualifies as locally produced under the Rules of Origin, its subsequent import and export among member states will be recognized as originating goods, thereby eligible for preferential RCEP tariff rates. This significantly expands manufacturers' sourcing options within the region and creates potential linkages between RCEP and other trade agreements. For instance, a company may first import raw materials from non-RCEP countries into an RCEP member state under another preferential trade agreement, then process them into RCEP-compliant originating goods by leveraging the country's dual membership. These processed goods can then be exported to other RCEP members for further manufacturing, all while enjoying cumulative tariff benefits throughout the supply chain. The second provision mandates that within five years of RCEP's implementation, member states will review whether to extend the first provision's cumulation principle to cover all production and value-added activities within the region. If adopted, this would mean that semi-finished goods circulating among RCEP members need only meet origin criteria at the final production stage, eliminating the need for interim origin certification. This "full cumulation" approach would drastically lower compliance barriers, enhancing supply chain flexibility and operational

efficiency for businesses.

The level of service sector development is a key indicator of a nation or region's economic advancement. As a core component of the RCEP agreement, the provisions on trade in services aim to reduce—and ultimately eliminate—restrictive and discriminatory measures that may hinder cross-border service trade among member states. By progressively expanding market access, these measures will catalyze accelerated growth in regional service trade. Currently, RCEP's specific commitments on trade in services adopt a hybrid approach, combining both positive list and negative list mechanisms. The positive list outlines market access and national treatment commitments across four modes of supply—cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence, and movement of natural persons—through sector-specific enumerations. Meanwhile, the negative list specifies non-conforming measures and their legal bases, along with reserved measures for certain sectors.

Among 15 member states, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore—have already submitted negative lists for trade in services. The remaining eight members, including China and New Zealand, are committed to transitioning to a negative list approach within six years (by January 1, 2028). Notably, all 15 members have made service sector commitments exceeding the standards of previous "10+1" agreements. With the exception of Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, all members have opened over 100 service subsectors, reflecting a significant elevation in liberalization compared to earlier frameworks. This dual-track approach not only enhances transparency but also provides flexibility, allowing members to progressively deepen integration while safeguarding sensitive sectors. The phased transition to negative lists underscores RCEP's balanced design, accommodating diverse developmental levels while advancing regional service trade liberalization.

## 1.2. Regional investment

The provisions on regional investment are covered in Chapter 10 of the RCEP agreement and can be categorized into investment protection clauses, investment access and liberalization clauses, and investment promotion and facilitation clauses based on their functions and roles. One of the primary objectives of the RCEP agreement is to protect investments. In terms of investment scope, the agreement not only includes various assets directly or indirectly controlled by investors but also encompasses all forms of proprietary interests held by legal entities, such as equity interests, debt interests, intellectual property-related rights, contractual project rights, and claims with financial value related to investments. By defining the scope of investment through such enumerations, the agreement fully safeguards the rights and interests of investors from contracting parties. At the same time, the agreement clearly defines the term "investor," referring to natural persons or legal entities that intend to or have already invested within the territory of a contracting party. Here, "legal entity" refers to any entity established under law, regardless of whether it operates for profit. In other words, both private legal entities and government-owned entities fall within the scope of qualified investors. This rule aims to prevent state-owned enterprises from being excluded from RCEP protections solely due to their public ownership.

Regarding investment access and liberalization, RCEP grants investors comprehensive most-favored-nation treatment and national treatment, ensuring that investors

enjoy facilitation in establishment, operation, acquisition, disposal, and other investment activities. The negative list mechanism is not designed to raise investment barriers but rather to advance deeper and higher-level liberalization in investment among member states, moving beyond the traditional framework where host countries exercised complete jurisdiction over investment access. Furthermore, the agreement allows member states to tailor their commitments by listing reserved measures and non-conforming exceptions in their negative lists based on their respective development levels and economic conditions. This approach respects national circumstances while maintaining regulatory coherence within the RCEP region.

In terms of investment promotion and facilitation, RCEP encourages mutual investment among member states by establishing investment centers and liaison offices, facilitating business matching, organizing investment forums, and promoting information exchange on issues of common concern. High-quality investment development relies on a favorable business environment. Accordingly, the agreement requires governments to maintain such an environment by setting up dedicated agencies to address complaints and investment challenges, eliminating unnecessary approval procedures, and ensuring public access to investment-related information. This signifies that RCEP's implementation will foster a more stable, open, and convenient investment climate.

## 1.3. Dispute resolution clause

The inclusion of a dispute settlement mechanism serves as a hallmark of a comprehensive regional trade agreement. Chapter 19 of RCEP establishes such a framework, detailing procedures for panel formation, proceedings, hearings, reports, and implementation, with the objective of providing effective, efficient, and transparent rules for resolving disputes arising under the Agreement. Regarding its scope of application, the mechanism governs two categories of disputes: first, those concerning the interpretation or application of RCEP provisions among member states; second, situations where a member alleges another's failure to fulfill obligations or measures inconsistent with the Agreement. Notably, the mechanism applies exclusively to inter-state disputes, leaving disputes between private entities and member states to be addressed through other applicable international treaties, without prejudice to such alternative remedies. Conversely, RCEP explicitly excludes non-violation complaints, meaning members cannot invoke the mechanism solely based on nullification or impairment of benefits absent a breach of obligations. Additional exclusions cover specific areas including anti-dumping/countervailing investigations, government procurement, competition policy, SME matters, transparency lists, subsidies, e-commerce, economic cooperation, and investment facilitation.

The dispute settlement process unfolds through three principal phases. The initial consultation phase requires respondents to acknowledge requests within seven days and engage in consultations within thirty days (fifteen days for perishable goods). Should consultations prove unsuccessful, the complaining party may request panel establishment through RCEP's designated body. Panels, typically comprising three experts, operate under strict timelines: 150 days for interim reports (90 days for urgent cases), with final reports due within thirty days thereafter. Panel decisions constitute binding, final determinations without appellate review.

Beyond these formal procedures, RCEP emphasizes flexible dispute resolution. Article 19.4 encourages parties to pursue mutually acceptable solutions through sustained consultation and cooperation at all stages. Furthermore, Article 19.7 (1) explicitly endorses alternative dispute resolution methods—including mediation, conciliation, and good offices—which parties may initiate or terminate at any time by mutual consent. This dual approach combines rigorous adjudication for legal disputes with voluntary mechanisms for diplomatic resolution, reflecting RCEP's balanced design accommodating both legal certainty and cooperative problem-solving.

## **2. Impact on Sichuan's Export-Oriented Enterprises**

### **2.1. Sustained expansion in the scale of goods trade**

On the export front, RCEP has unleashed significant potential in goods trade. As the world's fifth-largest economy with a predominantly young population (aged 15-35), ASEAN boasts robust consumer demand. The agreement has substantially increased the number of duty-free product categories for Sichuan's exports to ASEAN markets. Regarding imports, RCEP enriches supply diversity across goods and services. Traditionally high-tariff sectors—including food, agricultural products, consumer goods, and automobiles—are undergoing liberalization. China has committed to progressively reducing and ultimately eliminating tariffs on 80% of Japan's fresh fruits, while achieving full tariff exemption for fresh fruit imports from ASEAN, Australia, and New Zealand. This structural shift enhances consumer choice while lowering input costs for Sichuan's processing industries. The dual dynamics of export growth and import accessibility position Sichuan as a pivotal trade hub within RCEP's integrated market framework.

### **2.2. Rapid expansion in the scale of service trade**

The implementation of RCEP presents strategic opportunities for Sichuan's financial services sector to penetrate ASEAN markets. With its competitive edge in high-tech industries, Sichuan's leading technology enterprises are well-positioned to capitalize on this agreement and strengthen their global market presence. The agreement's enhanced openness in the financial and telecommunications sectors paves the way for digital service exports to emerge as a key growth driver for Sichuan. This expansion will further facilitate the internationalization of Sichuan's 5G technologies, products, and industry standards across global supply chains. By leveraging RCEP's framework, Sichuan can transform itself into a regional hub for cross-border digital services and advanced technological exports, reinforcing its role in shaping Asia's digital economy landscape.

### **2.3. The allocation of industrial chains has been optimized**

The tariff concessions and rules of origin under RCEP will catalyze deeper regional industrial integration and supply chain realignment, elevating the value-added potential of intermediate goods from Sichuan's export-oriented enterprises. This transformation will expand trade volumes of

intermediary products and strengthen Sichuan's position in global value chains, manifesting in two key dimensions:

The RCEP will accelerate the development of export markets for intermediate products, particularly in the electronics, automotive, furniture, and textile-apparel sectors—industries where Sichuan holds competitive advantages. As intra-regional trade intensifies, RCEP member states will emerge as primary export destinations for Sichuan's automotive components, electronic parts, textiles, and other intermediate goods. By enhancing supply chain coordination across RCEP markets, Sichuan enterprises can optimize their international trade structure while reducing reliance on traditional Western markets. Notably, the agreement will diminish RCEP members' dependence on intermediate goods imports, creating new opportunities for regional substitution. The tariff reduction mechanism delivers immediate cost advantages, enabling manufacturers to scale up intermediate goods production with improved profit margins. Coupled with cumulation-based rules of origin, these provisions will streamline regional production networks, boosting trade efficiency and industrial specialization. The cost competitiveness of RCEP's integrated market will attract trade diversion from non-member economies, accelerating intra-regional flows of intermediate goods. This dynamic will particularly benefit Sichuan's pillar industries by enlarging their trade scale and sharpening their global competitiveness through refined division of labor within Asia's manufacturing ecosystem. Ultimately, RCEP positions Sichuan as a pivotal node in Asia's redefined supply chain architecture, where intermediate goods trade becomes both an economic stabilizer and a growth multiplier.

The implementation of RCEP will fundamentally reshape consumption patterns and industrial structures in Sichuan through its profound impact on trade costs, factor mobility, and business environments. By eliminating intra-regional trade barriers and establishing a more liberalized market system, the agreement creates conditions for enhanced economic dynamism that will ultimately stimulate greater consumer market vitality. For Sichuan's manufacturing sector, particularly its competitive processing and assembly industries, RCEP accelerates an inevitable industrial transformation. The automotive sector serves as a prime example - as tariff concessions and origin rules dramatically reduce cross-border trade costs, they simultaneously undermine the traditional dominance of developed markets while elevating Southeast Asia's position as East Asia's emerging automotive parts manufacturing base. This evolving landscape presents Sichuan enterprises with strategic opportunities to optimize their value chain positioning. While gradually transferring labor-intensive assembly and low-end component production to Southeast Asian partners, local firms can concentrate on cultivating higher-value activities including R&D, design and brand development. Such industrial upgrading, when combined with Sichuan's inherent advantages in complete supply chain integration and domestic market scale, will not only enhance the global competitiveness of final products but also foster the organic growth of more sophisticated local consumer markets.

The cumulative effect of these changes represents more than mere industrial relocation - it signifies Sichuan's transition toward becoming a regional hub for innovation and value-added production within RCEP's integrated economic framework. This transformation will ultimately create a virtuous cycle where industrial upgrading and consumption

growth mutually reinforce each other, positioning Sichuan at the forefront of Asia's evolving economic architecture.

Sichuan's manufacturing sector, with its core competencies in product processing and assembly, faces inevitable industrial restructuring as RCEP progressively relocates these labor-intensive segments to lower-cost member states. The automotive industry exemplifies this transformation - tariff concessions and rules of origin under the agreement will significantly reduce trade and investment costs across the automotive value chain, potentially disrupting the long-standing "Japan-US-Europe" dominated paradigm. This cost reduction enables Southeast Asian nations to emerge as East Asia's new hub for automotive parts processing and downstream manufacturing.

Capitalizing on its comprehensive industrial ecosystem and vast domestic market, Sichuan's automotive enterprises are strategically positioned to transition toward higher-value activities such as R&D, design and marketing, while gradually offshoring low-end component manufacturing and assembly to Southeast Asia. This dual-track industrial upgrading not only enhances the global competitiveness of Sichuan's automotive sector but also facilitates its evolution into a knowledge-intensive innovation center within regional production networks. The resulting industrial reconfiguration will ultimately strengthen Sichuan's position in the higher echelons of East Asia's automotive value chain.

### **3. Risks and Challenges**

The implementation of RCEP presents a strategic opportunity to propel Sichuan's economic development, offering local enterprises an expansive platform to integrate into global markets. However, amid the profound transformations of our era—marked by rising unilateralism, protectionism, and heightened global uncertainty—Sichuan's businesses must remain acutely aware of the risks inherent in international expansion while developing robust contingency measures. This dual reality demands a balanced approach: while leveraging RCEP's trade liberalization to enhance competitiveness, Sichuan firms should simultaneously strengthen risk assessment frameworks, cultivate resilient supply chains, and deepen their understanding of diverse regulatory environments. Such preparedness will enable them to navigate geopolitical complexities while securing sustainable growth in the evolving international economic order.

#### **3.1. Trade Implications**

While the RCEP agreement presents significant opportunities for trade expansion, these advantages are inevitably accompanied by legal risks—particularly in services trade. First, the intangible nature of services trade, coupled with its diverse forms and complex financial flows, makes it inherently difficult to verify transaction authenticity. This opacity increases the risk of illicit activities such as money laundering. Second, emerging service trade models introduce novel challenges. Cross-border data flows in digital services, for instance, face volatile regulatory environments and cybersecurity threats. Enterprises must maintain rigorous data security standards across all stages—from negotiation and storage to processing—as any lapse could result in substantial financial losses. Moreover, many RCEP member states still maintain relatively low openness in their services sectors, with limited experience in risk identification and mitigation. The lack of foresight and robust regulatory

mechanisms heightens the likelihood of policy violations, potentially stifling the growth of services trade under the agreement. Thus, while RCEP facilitates market access, businesses must navigate these legal and operational risks with heightened vigilance to fully capitalize on its benefits.

#### **3.2. Regional Investment Implications**

The RCEP's expansive membership encompasses nations with starkly divergent political climates, legal traditions, and judicial systems, while cross-border investments span a multitude of industries and operational phases—each layer compounding potential risks. The legal landscape itself presents a minefield of uncertainties, from jurisdictions where opaque enforcement or underdeveloped regulations heighten investment exposure, to regulatory misalignments between member states that inflate compliance burdens or trigger conflicting legal penalties. Equally perilous is the specter of corruption, exacerbated by the uneven economic development and compliance maturity across RCEP economies. In markets where governance remains weak, some firms succumb to the temptation of bribery as a shortcut to securing contracts—a gamble that increasingly invites draconian sanctions from both national authorities and multilateral anti-graft regimes.

When disputes inevitably arise, the path to resolution demands specialized expertise. The choice between arbitration forums—whether institutional or ad hoc—carries profound implications for enforcement, particularly given the patchwork of judicial recognition across member states. A misstep in procedural strategy or venue selection can render even favorable awards unenforceable, leaving investors stranded. These intersecting vulnerabilities underscore a paradox of regional integration: while RCEP dismantles formal trade barriers, its legal asymmetries erect invisible—yet equally consequential—hurdles for unwary investors.

#### **3.3. Supporting Regulations**

E-commerce has transcended traditional trade barriers to emerge as a transformative economic paradigm, heralding the future of global commerce. The critical challenge lies in aligning domestic legal frameworks with international standards. As the world's second-largest e-commerce market, China sees RCEP as a pivotal opportunity for Sichuan's cross-border trade to ascend to new heights. Yet, given China's competitive disadvantages in areas like source code and data storage, defensive policies safeguarding data sovereignty and security remain a priority—a stance that simultaneously heightens competitive pressures and risk exposure for domestic e-commerce operators.

RCEP's forward-looking e-commerce provisions stand in contrast to China's comparatively lagging regulations on cybersecurity, consumer protection, personal data governance, e-commerce oversight, and government data access. For instance, Article 10 of China's Electronic Banking Regulations mandates that financial institutions conducting internet-based services must host operational systems and data servers domestically (for Chinese banks) or maintain data-recording facilities within China (for foreign entities)—a requirement at odds with RCEP Chapter 12, Article 14. Similarly, provisions on automated contract systems under China's E-Commerce Law (Article 48) and Electronic Signatures Law (Article 9) lack the precision of RCEP's referenced UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Commerce.

Most of China's e-commerce legislation predates RCEP's

enactment, and the protracted timeline for legal revisions necessitates that businesses proactively internalize RCEP's rules. A granular understanding of these standards—particularly in cybersecurity, data compliance, and information governance—is indispensable to preempt legal pitfalls in this era of regulatory dissonance. The gap between domestic statutes and supranational norms underscores a pressing imperative: adapt or risk obsolescence in the new digital trade order.

## **4. Response Measures for Sichuan Enterprises**

The implementation of RCEP has ushered in a more liberalized, open, and inclusive environment for Sichuan's outward-bound enterprises, amplifying their potential for global expansion. Yet this newfound opportunity comes hand in hand with heightened compliance demands, subjecting businesses to rigorous regulatory scrutiny across all facets of operation. To fully harness the advantages of RCEP, enterprises must embark on a comprehensive transformation—fortifying their legal adaptability, refining risk mitigation strategies, and cultivating a workforce fluent in the nuances of cross-border commerce. The path forward demands not merely adjustment, but a fundamental recalibration of corporate governance to thrive in this era of sophisticated international trade frameworks.

### **4.1. Adjust perspectives and actively engage in RCEP**

The implementation of RCEP presents Sichuan enterprises with both unprecedented opportunities and heightened compliance challenges in the global marketplace. To fully capitalize on this agreement, businesses must undertake a comprehensive strategic transformation that encompasses legal adaptation, risk management, and talent development for cross-border operations. For manufacturers, particularly in electromechanical equipment, the imperative lies in accelerating digital and green transformations to meet the exacting standards of developed markets like Japan and South Korea. Industry leaders should drive digital overhauls of production processes while establishing integrated cross-border e-commerce platforms to optimize supply chain efficiency. Simultaneously, they must implement robust quality control systems and carbon footprint tracking mechanisms to align with RCEP's stringent requirements and enhance global competitiveness.

Sichuan's distinctive agricultural sector, renowned for products such as apples, pomegranates, and green peppercorns, faces the dual challenge of overcoming production fragmentation while building international brand recognition. Strategic initiatives should focus on leveraging geographical indications for intellectual property protection, forging collaborative export alliances, and modernizing cold-chain logistics infrastructure to address perishability constraints. The agreement's progressive liberalization of services trade, transitioning to negative-list commitments within six years, creates significant potential in logistics, finance, and digital services. As goods trade expands under RCEP, ancillary services including warehousing, transportation, and trade finance will experience parallel growth. Moreover, the inherent service components within goods trade - such as the design and R&D embedded in semiconductor imports - present additional avenues for value

creation.

RCEP's tariff concessions complement rather than replace existing bilateral agreements, allowing enterprises to strategically navigate overlapping preferences. Businesses should conduct meticulous comparative analyses to optimize their tariff benefits, initially utilizing existing bilateral concessions where advantageous while preparing for the phased implementation of RCEP's more favorable terms. This nuanced approach to tariff optimization, combined with structural upgrades across manufacturing, agriculture, and services, positions Sichuan enterprises for sustainable expansion within the RCEP economic sphere.

### **4.2. Strategic Utilization of Investment Protection Mechanisms under RCEP Framework**

Enterprises engaging in cross-border investment should judiciously employ both domestic and international investment insurance mechanisms to mitigate political risks. China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinasure) offers comprehensive coverage against host country risks, including currency inconvertibility and political violence. Under its guarantee, Sinasure provides immediate compensation for qualified losses while reserving the right of subrogation against the responsible RCEP member state pursuant to the agreement's provisions. Concurrently, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), as a World Bank affiliate, extends its guarantee protection to Chinese investors in developing countries. Mirroring Sinasure's operational model, MIGA delivers prompt indemnification before exercising its subrogation rights under RCEP's legal framework.

The diverse legal traditions among RCEP member states – encompassing distinct legal classifications, terminologies, adjudicatory approaches, and conflict-of-law principles – necessitate rigorous pre-investment due diligence. Enterprises must conduct exhaustive investigations into host countries' legal environments, followed by systematic risk assessments to identify sector-specific compliance vulnerabilities. This dual-layered approach enables the establishment of robust risk evaluation systems, ensuring informed decision-making while optimizing risk allocation and transfer strategies across jurisdictions. Such prudent risk management protocols not only safeguard investment capital but also enhance enterprises' capacity to navigate the complex regulatory landscapes characteristic of RCEP's multilateral economic space.

### **4.3. The Imperative of Robust Compliance Frameworks in Cross-Border Expansion**

In the global business arena, particularly within developed economies, commercial integrity constitutes a fundamental pillar of corporate governance, underpinned by legal systems that frequently diverge from domestic frameworks. Chinese enterprises venturing abroad must transcend mere familiarity with RCEP provisions to develop sophisticated comprehension of host countries' commercial jurisprudence. The absence of such understanding risks exposing organizations to severe operational and reputational hazards. China's corporate compliance architecture has witnessed significant evolution since 2018, marked by seminal guidelines issued by regulatory authorities. Yet substantive gaps persist between policy formulation and practical implementation, with many enterprises continuing to operate

with underdeveloped compliance cultures, inadequate institutional safeguards, and insufficient specialized personnel. These deficiencies stem not merely from resource constraints but reflect deeper disparities in developmental trajectories and managerial paradigms.

To successfully navigate the complexities of RCEP integration, enterprises must fundamentally reconceptualize compliance as a strategic enabler rather than a regulatory burden. This transformation begins with cultivating executive-level appreciation of compliance imperatives through targeted legal education initiatives that elucidate the tangible business value of risk mitigation. Equally critical is the establishment of comprehensive protective mechanisms spanning preemptive due diligence, real-time operational monitoring, and post-crisis remediation protocols. Particular emphasis must be placed on investigative rigor when evaluating potential partners, scrutinizing their regulatory histories, operational track records, and compliance postures with forensic precision. Concurrently, enterprises should develop institutional competence in deploying RCEP-sanctioned trade remedies, ensuring preparedness to counter unfair competitive practices through legally prescribed channels.

This holistic approach to compliance management transcends mere box-ticking to become a source of competitive differentiation, enabling enterprises to operate with confidence across RCEP's heterogeneous legal landscapes while systematically mitigating exposure to regulatory and reputational risks. The path to sustainable international growth lies not in circumventing compliance obligations but in transforming them into organizational strengths that command respect in global markets.

#### **4.4. Develop globally competitive talent for international expansion**

Modern enterprises increasingly demand versatile professionals who possess not only robust technical expertise and superior information processing capabilities, but also comprehensive knowledge frameworks coupled with substantial practical experience. Such talent must demonstrate adaptability to evolving domestic and international market dynamics while maintaining innovative thinking. These professionals play pivotal roles across multiple domains—from facilitating industrial investments and trade in goods/services to driving advancements in intellectual property management, SME development, and e-commerce. To cultivate and retain such high-value human capital, enterprises should adopt a multipronged strategy: First, establishing collaborative innovation ecosystems with academic institutions can bridge theory and practice. By integrating university entrepreneurship programs, specialized lectures, and industry salons into corporate training frameworks, businesses can nurture talent while exchanging critical market intelligence. Second, enterprises must strategically leverage government-sponsored talent recruitment and upskilling initiatives to address critical competency gaps. Proactive engagement with these programs enables organizations to source specialized professionals efficiently. Third, wise utilization of external expertise proves invaluable. Corporations should institutionalize consultations with legal advisors, accounting specialists, tax professionals, and think tank experts when making strategic decisions, managing investments, or executing major contracts. Finally,

creating conducive environments for globally-minded professionals remains paramount. Corporate leadership must demonstrate managerial acumen by fostering inclusive cultures, optimizing both physical and cultural workplace conditions, and designing clear career progression pathways. Only through such holistic talent management approaches can enterprises fully harness their human capital potential in today's competitive landscape.

## **5. Conclusions**

Since the official implementation of RCEP, Sichuan province has consistently deepened economic and trade cooperation with member countries by enhancing cross-border trade facilitation, optimizing investment environments, and promoting high-level openness. Government-led initiatives have enabled numerous enterprises to capitalize on RCEP's benefits, driving high-quality trade growth. However, challenges persist, including industrial relocation due to tariff reductions and rules of origin, divergent legal frameworks across member states, and incomplete dispute resolution mechanisms. These factors necessitate that Sichuan's export-oriented enterprises not only leverage RCEP's advantages but also adapt strategically—refining regulatory frameworks, adjusting industry structures in alignment with free trade zone realities, and accelerating technological innovation to enhance competitiveness.

This transformation demands urgent yet pragmatic action. Enterprises must cultivate a forward-looking mindset, integrating policy incentives with operational upgrades to strengthen their global positioning. While this study provides actionable insights for policymakers, industries, and businesses, certain areas—such as business environment evaluation mechanisms, sector-specific guidance frameworks, and international talent cultivation—require further in-depth research. The complexities of RCEP implementation underscore the need for continuous refinement of strategies to ensure sustainable development in an evolving global trade landscape.

## **References**

- [1] ZHANG Yan. "Regional Value Chain Cooperation in High-End Manufacturing Among China, Japan, and South Korea Under RCEP." *Asia-Pacific Economic Review*, 2021, no. 4: 11-22.
- [2] MO Zixiao, YE Qian. "Research on Regional Tax Coordination Among RCEP Member States in the Context of High-Quality Development." *Journal of Chongqing Technology and Business University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2025, vol. 42, no. 2: 108-119.
- [3] CUI Xiaojing, SUN Yi. "Enhancing the 'Belt and Road' Tax Administration Cooperation Mechanism by Drawing on Regional Tax Coordination Experience." *International Taxation*, 2023, no. 10: 17-26.
- [4] ZHENG Yi, QIN Chao, WEN Xia, et al. "Structural Characteristics and Trade Potential of Agricultural Products Between China and ASEAN." *Journal of Financial and Economic Theory*, 2024, no. 4: 73-86.
- [5] TANG Hongxiang, XU Luyuan. "Research on Fiscal and Tax Policies to Promote Cross-Border Industrial Chain Cooperation Between China and ASEAN." *Taxation Research*, 2023, no. 6: 118-123.
- [6] SUN Jun. "China's Role in RCEP and the Construction of a New Development Paradigm." *Academic Forum*, 2023, vol. 46, no. 2: 61-72.