MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES IN FOOD PRODUCTION- ETHICAL ISSUES

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The roles of the multinationals represent determinate paper and a powerful influence generally on different sector’s, but especially on the food production nowadays. Since the industrial revolution, we have watched an increase of the technology, the economy and agriculture as well. We assist, above all the replaced of men by the machines created by the news technologist, and at the same time rise a new relationship between money and work, which causes a new relation between countries, and this way arised the phenomenon called mass culture. Like the other sectors, the food production is not exception, nowadays is extremely important to look at this sector and include what is happening with the food that we eat. In the world of the multination producers of food, we have to analyze the site of the producers, the consumers, scientists, political leaders, and the most important of all the ethical issues implicated. The producers and consumers, the politics and the laws, the economists and money, the science and progress, the man nature, the good and evil, even always follow the best way to do the things, the ethical way. Portugal and Greece are the two examples that we are going to use in this study to saw the functionality of this system in European Union, where the rules seem to be equal for all those countries.
Introduction

A multinational corporation (MNC) or transnational corporation (TNC) is a corporation or enterprise that manages production or delivers services in more than one country. It can also be referred to as an international corporation. Their aim is the global profit maximization.

That kind of companies may pursue policies, that are home country-oriented or they can be host country-oriented or world-oriented. They use some terms as ethnocentric, polycentric and geocentric. Also, the “ethnocentric” is misleading, because it brings into focus on race or ethnicity. When the home country is populated by many different races. Insomuch, “polycentric” loses its meaning when the MNCs operate only in one or two foreign countries. After that, “geocentric” is reported on only one or two geographical areas.

A multinational corporation (MNC) is a business organization which has its headquarters is one country, but has operations in a range of different countries. The first modern (MNC) is generally thought to be the British East India Company, established in 1600. Very large multinational have budgets that exceed some national GDPs. Multinational corporations can have a powerful influence in local economies as well as the world economy and play an important role in international relations and globalization.

In our days, there are numerous examples of such organizations like:

- **Food and Drink Companies:** Coca-Cola, Interbrew, McDonalds
- **Car manufacturers:** Ford, Toyota, Honda, Volkswagen
- **Oil companies:** Shell, BP, Exxon Mobil
- **Technology Companies:** Dell, Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, Canon

Their size means they often have considerable power, influence and as a result have come in for some criticism of their actions. For instance, one of the most famous of such cases was the problem faced by Nestle in marketing its baby milk in Africa. The critics pointed out that this company was pushing the product on people. It was likely to be harmful to babies.

Another definition for MNC is Micro-multinational. These kinds of corporation start to operate in different countries from the early stages. The difference between micro and large-MNCs is that they are small businesses. Some of the micro-MNCs had been hiring employees in multiple countries, when the development of internet started. They slowly begin to market their products and services in various countries.
Moreover, they try to make a rapid evolution throw using low cost services, like internet and telephony.

The multinational companies have a positive influence to home-countries and host countries. Those positives are that they bring inward investment to countries that are not their home base. If they have the opportunity choosing to expand by building production facilities, they will be bringing in inward investment into the country. This investment can provide a boost, not only to the local economy but also to the national economy.

Furthermore, it can also be expected that the additional income will find its way through the local economy. If the additional people are hired, they will receive an income which they spend. For existing workers, increased orders might equate to job security and they might feel more confident in spending on new items. For example, they have the opportunity to buy new goods, furniture, house extension and holidays.

For less developed countries, inward investment can again act as a catalyst for other forms of investment. The effects of the investment might be less dramatic but nevertheless, it can be something that is seen as essential for helping a country escape from poverty.

Many will not only look to employ local labor but also provide them with training and new skills to help them improve productivity and efficiency.

In some cases, a host country the production may be primarily aimed at the export market. However, in other cases, the inward investment might have been made to gain access to the host country market to circumvent trade barriers.

Moreover, for the host country, there is a likelihood that the MNCs will have to be subject to the tax regime in that country. As a result, they pay large sums in taxes to the host government.

Last but not least, the investment in a country in production or distribution facilities, a company might invest in additional infrastructure facilities, like road, rail, port and communication facilities. It can provide benefits for the whole country.
Three Stages of Evolution of MNCs

The majority of multinational companies follow the three stages below:

1. **Export stage.** This stage includes initial inquiries and the firms rely on export agents. Also, the corporations use the expansion of export sales and the further expansion. With that the companies want to aim foreign sales branch or assembly operations (save transport cost).

2. **Foreign production stage.** There is a limit to foreign sales. Wages and land rents might be lower in the foreign countries.

   **DFI versus licensing.** When the firm chooses a foreign production and they use it as a method of delivering goods to foreign markets. It must be decided whether to establish a foreign production subsidiary or with giving a license to a foreign firm.

   **License.** Licensing is easy to be given and that is the reason for being the first experience. For example, Kentucky Fried Chicken in U.S.A.. It doesn’t require any capital expenditure. Secondly, it isn’t risky and lastly the payment is equal with a fixed percentage of sales.

   Problem: the mother firm cannot any managerial control over the license and it is independent.

   The license may transfer industrial secrets to another independent firm, thereby creating a rival.

3. **Direct investment.** This requires the decision of the top management, because it is a critical step. It is a risky decision, because there is lack of information. An example, which can be given, is that US firms tend to establish subsidiaries in Canada first. The Singer Manufacturing Company established its foreign plants in Scotland and in Australia in the 1850s. Those plants are being established in several countries. After that, licensing is switched from independent producers to its subsidiaries. Lastly, the export is being continued.
Ethical Issues

General things for ethical issues in business

Ethics on business play an important role in education for every manager. They are confronted with many ethical issues that do not arise in domestic business. Moreover, many factors face ethical problems because of international business, including: different ethical traditions, legal and political systems, forms of economic organization and different levels of economic development.

But in less developed countries, observe a variety of problems between rational, national, economic and political interests. Above all business must demonstrate that:

- Global economic development create opportunities for millions of people and their families
- Companies may take unwritten values.

For MNCs there two ethical codes of conduct:

- Corporate codes of conduct are a policy statement of individual company. That defines a company’s own ethical standards.
- Codes of conduct for MNCs are outwardly generated and to some degree command the multinationals.

The business ethics issues treat the philosophy in a work and think about the enterprises objectives, for example if the first objective of a company, it is just to receive more than the things that it gives, it is not considerate an ethical way, because it is a difficult way to respect the rights of everyone. Inside the enterprise there are some rules that we cannot forget:

- Corporate social responsibility that keeps the dialog of the rights and duties in an ethical way between the workers, company and society.
- These problems have regarded the moral rights and duties between the company and the shareholders. Like for example, responsibility and selfishness.
• The company has to be careful with problems, like how works the leadership the political contribution, and how to make the reforms to avoid the manslaughter and the practice of fair marketing.

• The ethic against the corruption like facilities of the payment, all the excessive payments whose can attend against the human values in the society.

*Ethics of economic systems*

The economic business ethics are related to business ethics, which venture into the fields of political philosophy and political economy. They focus on the rights and wrongs of various systems for the distribution of economic benefits.

*Ethics of Human Resource Management (HRM)*

The Human Resource Management (HRM) explains the ethical problems around the employer-employee relationship. Teaches what are the rights and duties between them, the problems like discrimination on the bases of ageism, religion, race and disabilities, the democracy in the work space, the lack of privacy of the employer and employee, like the safety and health as well.
Ethics on production

Verifies which products are not dangerous, because sometimes it is difficult to define the dangerous degree of food product and prevents technologies which can become dangerous for the people.

For instance, some dangerous products (tobacco, alcohol, weapons and other), ethical relationships between the company and the environment (mobile phone radiation, genetically modified food), testing ethics on products (animal testing and animal rights).

Ethics of skills and knowledge

Skills and knowledge are not easily “own able” as objects. Can it be obvious who has the greater rights to an idea, the company who trained the employee or the employ themselves? As a conclusion, attempts to assert ownership and ethical disputes over ownership arise. Lead, the problems that are realationated with this subject are the notion of intellectual property itself has been criticized on ethical grounds (intellectual property). Moreover the practice of attracting key employees away from a competitor to take unfair advantage of the skills or knowledge they may possess. The practice of employing people in a specific field, in order to prevent any competitors employing them.

Ethics on sales and marketing

That kind of ethics, throw a product has the ability to manipulate our values and behavior. Marketing ethics are facing with media ethics, because marketing makes heavy use of media.

For example, the fix prices, the higher prices, the anti-competitive prices, the use of immoral pages in the internet to advertise that people, the wrong strategies of marketing and the use of black market.
Theoretical issues in business ethics

If someone wants to analyze business ethics, he can examine them from many perspectives. Case in point, perspective of the employee, commercial enterprise and society as a whole. Sometimes, there are situations about conflict between one or more of the parties. Likely, the employee’s payment might be good for him but it can be bad for the company.

There are some disagreements about the purpose of a business ethic in society. Firstly, one of the disagreements is about a business, which wants to maximize the returns to the owners. Another disagreement is about the survival of MNC in a competitive market place. It is said that if one MNC survives, it will be, because of their only role is to maximize profits. From the other hand, it said that organizations are not able of moral agency, in this one there must be an ethical behavior of individual human beings are not of business or corporation. Moreover, some theorists believe to social control theory of business, where MNCs are becoming quasi-democratic associations and employees are given voice over companies operations.

Religious views on business ethics

Sometimes the historical and global importance of religious views on business ethics is underestimated. In some places, like Asia and Middle East, that kind of ethics have a strong influence on the conduct of business and the creation of business values. There are some examples included; the Islamic banking is associated with the avoidance of charging interest on loans.

Examples of ethical issues on MNCs

There are some ethical examples about MNCs like, the employment might not be as extensive as hoped; many jobs might go to skilled workers from other countries rather than to domestic workers.

There might be a limit in the effect on local economy. It will depend on how big the investment into the local economy actually is. Some MNCs might locate in a
country to gain the tax or grant advantages but then love away move away when these run out. As a result there might not be a long term benefit to the country.

If the investment into capital intensive production facilities might not bring them many jobs to an area as they hoped.

One of the negatives that have the MNCs is pollution and environmental damage. This can cause long term problems.

Comparing prices in Greece-Portugal and abroad

Some multinationals companies sell the same products cheaper in Europe than in Greece and in Portugal. This can be confirmed from a research by EBEA in four European countries and the differences are very big.

Moreover, the higher prices are also in the Greek and in Portugal market for basic foods products such as milk. Specifically, 1 litre of fresh milk sold in Greece to 1.38 Euros and in Portugal 0.59 Euros, while the price of other countries varies from 0.99 Euros to 1.1 Euros. From the above, the conclusion is that the price of some basic goods in Greece is from two to five times compared with other countries and for Portugal some of the products are cheaper and other are more expensive than in other countries.

The different product prices between Greece, Portugal and abroad:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Price in Greece</th>
<th>Price in Portugal</th>
<th>Price abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEER (330ml)</td>
<td>€1,00</td>
<td>€0,40</td>
<td>€0,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUMS</td>
<td>€0,80</td>
<td>€0,80</td>
<td>€0,65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEER (500 ml)</td>
<td>€1,00</td>
<td>€1,10</td>
<td>€0,82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPRITE 1,5lt</td>
<td>€2,00</td>
<td>€1,12</td>
<td>€1,67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCA COLA (330ml)</td>
<td>€0,80</td>
<td>€0,55</td>
<td>€0,68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOTCH (70CL)</td>
<td>€15,00</td>
<td>13,00</td>
<td>€13,34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEMONADE (330ml)</td>
<td>€0,80</td>
<td>€0,60</td>
<td>€0,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORANGE (330ml)</td>
<td>€0,80</td>
<td>€0,60</td>
<td>€0,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROPS</td>
<td>€4,10</td>
<td>€3,59</td>
<td>€3,96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multinational Companies In Greece

From research, the domestic multinationals companies are being strengthened than other years and they determine the Greek economy. Their international development activities cause positive multiplier effects. It gives strong boost to exports, boosting research and development, competitiveness and stimulates employment. The last finding is important, because the extension of Greek businesses abroad involves reduction domestic jobs. The basic characteristic is that the main incentives for Greek expansion businesses abroad is the exploitation of new purchasing and maintaining their competitive position in international market. It is assigned much less importance on the farm, which has lower costs in host countries. This means that Greek companies invest abroad, in response to new conditions of internationalization and do not look for low - labor costs.

Moreover, firms that invest abroad to expand business prospects, targeted at new markets. They enhance the regional influence and role of the country controlling local decisions.

As a conclusion from IOBE’s research, Greece has a high classification output in the global foreign direct investment (FDI). The bulk of FDI outflows in Greece is mainly directed towards the Balkan countries, like Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, FYROM, the markets of Northern Africa for example Egypt and the U.S.A.

In 2000 and for the first time, the value of Greek investments abroad exceeded more than the input investments. Greece was the most developed economy in Southeast Europe and was being the only country in the region who was a member of the European Union until 1 January 2007. With this way, Greece took precedence from other countries of the Balkans.

More than 3,500 companies of Greek interests currently active in the Balkan countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, FYR of Macedonia and FRY) and they invested about 6 billion U.S. dollars. In Bulgaria, Greece is the second largest investor after Austria, with investments worth 1.4 billion euro in Romania and Greece is the 10th in series investor.
Examples of Multinational in Greece

In Greece, there are a lot of multinational companies, value example such as:

- Kraft Foods Hellas S.A.
- Nestlé Hellas S.A.I.
- Coca-Cola H.B.C.S.A.
- Mc Donald’s Hellas LTO
- Starbucks
- Carrefour-marinopoulos
- Häagen Dazs
- Appleabees

Transfer pricing

There are some products which are sold to multinational corporations more expensive in Greece, compared with other European Union countries. The ministry of development creates a legal framework that is internationally known as transfer pricing for multinational groups of companies. With this law is being created an obligation to the companies to trade under free competition by applying the equal distance.

The basic parameters of the new framework

The companies must behave under circumstances of free competition with this way the consumers can afford buying the products. The prices of those products will be the “real”.

If the price of a product is not the same in other countries the corporation should say why had this happened. All the corporations that have action in Greece ought to apply the above.
European Union had given the details of the files.

The file details must be given in 4,5 months which are available for every supply and tax control.

There is an obligation to update the documentation when data change that affect the evaluation of the pricing policy.

There is established strict fiscal and administrative sanctions against those who violate the obligations imposed.

**Basic information about transfer pricing**

What are the responsible organism for controlling if the corporation’s follow their obligations?

The Secretariat of Commerce and the Office of Market Oversight are responsible for controlling, once activated. In other case, if there is a problem in prices of products between other counties, then the case will relegate the matter to taxation authorities for assessment penalties.

When will have breach of the rules?

If there is no documentation in product prices relatively about the standards, this means breach of rules.

What is the scale of penalties?

If one corporation has not opened file details for a product or there is missing information, the company will have to pay a per cent value of dealing for the time which there was not the file detail opened.
Earnings profits for companies

The food companies and supermarkets increase their profits all the time and have high incomes, in addition to economic and leasing crises, which «kneels» the Greek household. Specifically, in the first three months in 2008 the most corporations which on stock-market showed downturned. But exactly the opposite happens corporation that sells or produces food products and other things of personal use. The listed companies recorded total profits of food in 278 %, the retail businesses have won a total of 20.4%, as many companies as a wholesaler, restaurants by 100%!

Economic results from first 3 months in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOODS</th>
<th>Clear Profits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALLATINI</td>
<td>512,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KATSELIS</td>
<td>238,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARAMOLEGOS</td>
<td>77,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KREKA</td>
<td>33,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRETA FARM</td>
<td>13,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETAIL PROFITS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VASILPOULOS</td>
<td>60,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRINK PRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCA COLA</td>
<td>10,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESTAURANTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRIGORIS</td>
<td>102,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVEREST (9M 2007)</td>
<td>54,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Milk production in Greece

In Greece, there are not many companies in milk production and most of them are not multinationals. The brand names of those companies are: Mevgal, Delta, Olympos, Evrofarma, Farma Koukaki and Dodoni. Also, they agree together for the prices, as a result the high prices in this field of production.

The producers sell the milk in low prices, because the companies force them. If they don’t want to buy milk in high prices, so they will import this product from other countries in lower cost. As a result, the last four months have closed 500 cows’ farms in country from the 5600 that exist.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0.32-0.39€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.55€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.3489€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.3572€</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The costumers buy milk, even if the cost is high, because it is a first need product. In a research that had been in Thessaloniki (Greece) in exhibition of Zootechnia. 405 adults have been questioned about their opinion in milk production.

The conclusion from the research had seen the choices from the consumers. The most of the people buy milk every day not so many people buy milk once a month. The other result from the research was about the daily consumption of milk, the majority drink from half a litre to one litre a day and the minority drink 2 litres
and more. The 39.70% prefer the fresh milk with 1.5% and 0.80% drink chocolate milk. The consumer also answered on what kind of packing they want to buy, many of them choose the tetra pack and not so many answered that it doesn’t matter. Further down, there are the results of this research.

**How often consumers buy milk:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>Every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>Every second day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>Once a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>Once a month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Daily consumption of milk:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>day consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71.90%</td>
<td>0.5lt - 1lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1lt - 1.5lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.5lt - 2lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10%</td>
<td>2lt and more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What kinds of milk drink the consumers:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>kind of milk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39.70%</td>
<td>fresh 1.5% fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.70%</td>
<td>fresh 3.5% fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10%</td>
<td>evapore with low fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10%</td>
<td>long last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>Chocolate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What kind of packing consumers prefer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>kind of packing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56,25%</td>
<td>Tetrapack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17,40%</td>
<td>Plastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,70%</td>
<td>Glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12,40%</td>
<td>Cun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,30%</td>
<td>doesn't matter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multinationals Companies in Portugal:

This subject it’s always controversial, and there are no exceptions for Portugal. The multinationals are seen like threats to the wealth and the national identity, but by the other side we know that the multinationals brings foreign investment, more employment, more technology and many times better work conditions.

The multinational contribute is essential for the increase not only of exportations but also for the P.I.B. It is an object for any country to increase the number of multinational’s even on the developed ones. Portugal has to compete hard with many countries to attract those enterprises. Just to see two examples; 1/3 of the Swedish P.I.B is originated by multinationals; and in 2005 when Portugal were about 600 enterprises, in Singapore already exists 7000 of this multinational’s

Here are some examples of multinationals that operate in Portugal and give an important contribution for it development:

- McDonalds
- Nestle
- Danone
- Pescanova
- Starbucks
- Matutano
- Cigala
Be a multinational enterprise is the best way to operate on an integrated global economy nowadays. And for the small and medium enterprises in Portugal to win access to the new markets, to get new technologies and look for more efficient production factors are some of the reasons to become a multinationals enterprises.

**Portugal in Europe: food prices**

When we talk about food prices, Portugal has the most vulnerable prices in Europe. It means that the inflation will not stop. The Portuguese consumer’s spend more money in food that the other countries of the E.U. Thus, Portugal has to import more and more food to meet the people’s needs, and compensate the lake of production.

Looking at the numbers and habits for the EU perceives itself the problem. Average basket of goods in the euro area, the food represents less than 15%, in Portugal this weight around 20%. Spain, the main trade partner and largest source of investment, is another of the countries with high exposure to the adverse situation in the prices of food and the cost of credit, the debt from the banks is the highest of the euro and the food has a weight 20% in the basic basket of consumer goods. Already Greece, France or Germany are proving to be less vulnerable, or at the lower weight of food in the basket, or by less dependence on bank credit.

Thus, Portuguese economy became the most exposed one at the increase of the world prices food, and moreover this country has to fight against the pressure of the higher debts in family’s and the enterprises expenditure. In short, this situation is pushing more people to the poverty and threat seriously the purchasing power of the family’s.
Milk production in Portugal

Due to lake of raw material land the rupture of production, the price of the milk is growing. The number of producers had suffered a decrease because the most of all have more than 50 years old and don’t want to invest in the new rules of the European Union. The increases of the prices of milk hap

In Portugal the milk prices are defined by two steps:

- To the production

- On the sale

The first step report’s the money and that paid to the producers and the varied according with the biological and physicochemical qualities. In Portugal the price in the production varies between 0.31 Euro and 0.32 Euro per L.

About the selling price, the milk goes to the market and wins a higher variety of prices according to the supply, and whether this reflects a large difference between the selling price and the price that is paid by the consumer. This price goes to around the 0.59 Euro.
Conclusion:

All of us know that nowadays the world economy it is at great part controlled by multinational’s corporation. This theme requires a peculiar study not only because the large number of people that employ but also the ethical problems and the real impact in the world that it causes. During this work we take the knowledge about everything that defines and surrounds a multinational corporation. Inside the world of the multinationals we can found the micro-multinational and multinationals.

They can play an interesting game on the economy of the home countries and host countries whit many strategies of investment that create an economic cycle around those countries. Is the entrance and exit of money that stimulate the economy, and it creates a huge and sometimes a dangerous demand by the countries. In a world driven generally by money we have to know and respect some ethical aspects.

The majority of the multinationals follow three stages: the export stage (to try expanding markets), the foreign production stages and the direct investment stage. Ethical issues are nowadays more important than ever, in a world driven almost by money and power, the ethic rules are essential to keep the good performance inside a multinational and between these and the environment.

Ethics of human resource management, ethics on sales and marketing, ethics on production and ethics of skills and knowledge teaches us the right way to follow and triumph with dignity inside the difficult world of money and multinationals.

Nowadays the food production becomes a totally business and represent part of the economy in each country. In this work we had the opportunity to compare the economies between Portugal and Greece, the different prices that they pay for the same product and the heavy that the roll of multinationals have in the economy of each country.
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