

# **N**UFFOODS Spectrum

perspectives on food technologies & business

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52 pages including cover

## **Will Price Cap Disrupt Booming Nutra Industry?**

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“Navigating regulatory frameworks can be complex, especially with evolving food safety standards and labelling requirements”

- **Nidhi Singh, Co-founder, Samosa Singh**

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**F&B Industry Cuts Sugar Use for  
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**Publisher & Managing Editor**  
Ravindra Boratkar

**CEO**  
Manasee Kurlekar  
manasee.kurlekar@mmactiv.com

**Advisor - Content**  
Vijay Thombre

**Editorial**  
**Chief Editor**  
Dr Milind Kokje  
milind.kokje@mmactiv.com

**Editor**  
Narayan Kulkarni  
narayan.kulkarni@mmactiv.com

**Executive Editor**  
Dr Manbeena Chawla  
manbeena.chawla@mmactiv.com

**Assistant Editor**  
Nitesh Pillai  
nitesh.pillai@mmactiv.com

**Content Team**  
**Singapore: Hithaishi C. Bhaskar**  
hithaishi.cb@mmactiv.com

**Social Media Communications**  
**Poonam Bhosale**  
poonam.bhosale@mmactiv.com

**Production & Design**  
MEDIA VISION, Pune

**Cover Design**  
Dominix Strategic Design Pvt. Ltd.

**General Manager - Strategy & Marketing**  
**Ankit Kankar**  
ankit.kankar@mmactiv.com

**Asst. General Manager- HR and Admin**  
**Asmita Thakar**  
asmita.thakar@mmactiv.com

**Circulation, Subscription and Media Enquiry:**  
**Sudam Walekar**  
sudam.walekar@mmactiv.com

**MM ACTIV**  
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## MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications

**SOUTH REGION**  
Apoorva Mahajan  
Manager –  
Strategy & Partnerships  
"NITON", No. 11/3, Block "C",  
Second Floor, Palace Road,  
Bangalore, Karnataka- 560052  
Mobile: +91-7724025888  
apoorva.mahajan@mmactiv.com

**CENTRAL INDIA**  
Apoorva Mahajan  
Manager –  
Strategy & Partnerships  
Mobile: +91-7724025888  
apoorva.mahajan@mmactiv.com

### International offices

**SINGAPORE**  
Saradha Mani  
MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications  
#08-08, High Street Centre, 1 North  
Bridge Road, Singapore - 179094  
Tel: +65 6336 9142  
Mobile: +6590681202  
saradha.mani@mmactiv.com

**NEW DELHI**  
Anupam Chatterjee  
Regional Business Manager- North  
103-104, 1st Floor,  
Rohit House, 3 Tolstoy Marg,  
New Delhi - 110001  
Mobile: +91 9899815169  
anupam.chatterjee@  
agrospectrumindia.com

**MUMBAI**  
Mandar More  
Regional Business Manager- West  
1st Floor, CIDCO Convention Center,  
Sector 30A, Vashi, Navi Mumbai,  
Maharashtra-400703.  
Mobile: +91-9870009281  
mandar.more@mmactiv.com

**ASIA PACIFIC AND SOUTH EAST ASIA-**  
Ankit Kankar  
General Manager -  
Strategy & Marketing  
#08-08, High Street Centre,  
1 North Bridge Road, Singapore - 179094  
HandHeld: +65 90150305  
ankit.kankar@mmactiv.com

**PUNE**  
Ganesh Rajput  
(Officer Administration)  
Ashirwad, 36/A/2,  
S.No. 270, Pallod Farms,  
Baner Road, Pune-411045  
Mobile: +91-9762003626  
ganesh.rajput@agrospectrumindia.com

**NAGPUR**  
Manisha Boratkar  
402, Govind Apartments, Shankar Nagar  
Square, Nagpur - 440 010  
Tel. +91-712-2555 249

**NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE**  
BioSpectrum Bureau  
MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications  
Mobile: +65 90150305  
E-mail: digital@mmactiv.com

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## Letter from Publisher

Dear Readers,



**Ravindra Boratkar**  
Publisher &  
Managing Editor,  
MD, MM Activ Sci-Tech  
Communications Pvt. Ltd.

In February 2024, the government established a panel to assess if nutraceuticals ought to be overseen by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) instead of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), both of which fall under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). This panel, led by the Secretary of MoHFW, included the Secretary of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Ayush, along with other members. The FSSAI and CDSCO play distinct roles in the regulation of nutraceuticals. Although FSSAI oversees the quality of nutraceuticals and enforces the health and nutrition claims outlined in the FSS regulations of 2018, the CDSCO governs claims regarding the ability of nutraceuticals to cure or treat certain diseases, disorders, or conditions. It has ignited an intense discussion on various fronts over the past 10+ months.

While this move could theoretically ensure quality control, standardisation, and affordable pricing for consumers, it simultaneously threatens to adversely impact industry innovation and growth. Hence the nutraceutical industry stands at a crossroads. India, where healthcare costs are a significant burden for many families, affordable nutraceuticals could promote preventive care and reduce reliance on expensive treatments. The cover story critically examines the implications of bringing nutraceuticals under CDSCO regulations, particularly focusing on the contentious issue of price control.

Excessive sugar intake has long been associated with adverse health outcomes across the globe. Sugary foods and beverages are calorie-dense but lack essential nutrients, contributing to weight gain when consumed in excess. Furthermore, sugar's impact on metabolic health has been extensively documented, with studies linking it to insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. Each year, Action on Sugar, a registered UK charity, organises a national Sugar Awareness Week (November 18-24) to help raise awareness of the damaging effect of too much sugars in our diet. We touched upon this key issue in an article that provides the insights as to how the food and beverage industry is responding to the public awareness on sugar reduction and regulatory changes on cutting down sugar in India.

The year 2024 has marked a significant milestone for India's edible Cannabidiol (CBD) sector. With the worldwide demand for CBD growing daily, India is witnessing a similar increase, and individuals are now expressing significant interest in CBD-infused edible items like gummies, capsules, and oils used as tinctures. Due to the increasing global demand for these products and in India, where they are gaining more acceptance, the burgeoning industry is poised for rapid expansion. Nonetheless, an expert highlights several challenges that are unavoidable, such as regulation, stigma, and absence of frameworks. The demand for fish and fish-based products has grown in India by about 9.2 percentage points from 2005 to 2019-21. This growth presents a captivating opportunity for private-sector firms to innovate and expand in this evolving market. An expert explores how the private firms have a huge opportunity to fill gaps in product availability and consumer awareness, from fortified fish powder to dried fish snacks and innovative nutraceuticals beyond fish oil.

2024 was quite an eventful year of growth and milestones. Together, we've achieved remarkable things. May the '2025' bring you endless possibilities and successful endeavours.

Thanks & Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ravindra Boratkar', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Ravindra Boratkar**  
Publisher & Managing Editor

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## Will PRICE CAP DISRUPT BOOMING NUTRA INDUSTRY?

Onion prices surged to Rs 100-150 per kilogram in 2019 due to poor monsoon and subsequent crop damage. The government responded by banning exports, imposing stock limits, and importing onions. While these steps reduced domestic prices, farmers and exporters protested, citing financial losses. Critics argued that better supply chain management and long-term investments in storage infrastructure would have been more effective than reactive price controls. Price control measures on onions highlight the delicate balance between protecting consumer interests and ensuring farmer welfare. While such interventions offer immediate relief, they often come at the cost of long-term market stability, making them a subject of recurring controversy. The same situation could be a reality for the Indian nutraceuticals sector in 2025 if the idea of bringing nutraceuticals under the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) activates on the field. Let's explore further.



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## Acknowledgements/ Feedback

"The cover story on Trends 2025 was an excellent read. The trends mentioned in the article are certainly ones to watch out for. I look forward to your upcoming issues for more in-depth articles."

**Subha Nishtala**, Mumbai

"The write-up on 'Emerging Trends in the Nutra & Ayurvedic Industries for 2025' provided detailed and insightful information about the trends in these industries. Thank you for such a valuable article."

**Abhilash Gorhe**, Mumbai

"The story on 'Big Ticket Acquisitions and Investments Mark 2024' was well-analyzed. I enjoy reading NUFFOODS Spectrum for its insightful and analytical pieces."

**Rukmini Ravishankar**, Chennai



Thanks for your feedback. We have taken note of your suggestions and will surely try to incorporate the content accordingly in coming issues. Please keep sending us your feedback and updating us on your views about the issue and keep giving your opinions on the content.

– Editor



Please send your feedback to  
[communications@nuffoodsspectrum.in](mailto:communications@nuffoodsspectrum.in)

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Ashirwad First floor, S.No. 270, Pallod Farms, Near Bank of Baroda, 36/A/2, Baner Rd, Pune, Maharashtra 411045

Phone: 020 2729 1769







# Better late than never

**Dr Milind Kokje**  
Chief Editor

**P**arallel authorities is a problem industries face. More than one authority is monitoring or regulating a similar product, or a service makes industries face complicated situations. Overlapping of rules and regulations of different organisations create confusion making it difficult for the concerned entities to decide which organisation's rules and regulations to adhere to.

It is unfortunate that such a situation existed till now in the food sector in the case of some products despite enacting a comprehensive food law. It is worth recalling here that when the FSSA 2006 was enacted nine different Acts, Rules and Orders were brought under it. They were Vegetable Oil Products (Control) Order 1947, Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954, Fruit Products Order 1955, any Order issued under the Essential Commodities Act 1955 relating to food, Solvent Extracted Oil, De-oiled Meal and Edible Flour (Control) Order 1967, Meat Food Products Order 1973, Edible Oils Packaging (Regulation) Order 1988, and Milk and Milk Products Order 1992.

Like different laws, rules and orders, there were different agencies controlling food safety and standards. They included Agmark, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Indian Standards Institute (ISI) etc. Comprehensive food law was made to integrate and streamline many laws, orders and authorities as the industry had been facing problems due to multiple laws and varied standards. FSSAI was to be the single reference point for all food items and all stakeholders in the food segment.

However, it did not happen as envisioned, at least in the case of some products. It was evident from the recent order of the FSSAI removing Agmark, BSI and ISI certification required for certain food categories. As per the notification, Clauses 4 and 5 of Regulation 2.3.14 of FSS (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sale) regulations are dropped. Clauses 17 and 18 are also removed.

Clause 4 prevented manufacture, sell, store and exhibit for selling infant nutrition food except under BIS certification mark wherever standards were available. Clause 5 made ISI certification mark mandatory to sell condensed milk sweetened, condensed skimmed milk

sweetened, milk powder, skimmed milk powder, partly skimmed milk powder and partly skimmed sweetened condensed milk. Clause 17 was related to packaged drinking water and it made a mandatory BIS certification mark for its sell, manufacture and exhibit for selling. Clause 18 made the BIS certification mark mandatory for manufacture, sell or exhibit for selling mineral water. Agmark was entrusted with the certification for multi-sourced edible oil and fat spread.

The new rule regarding edible oil specifies that restriction on sale of mixture or two or more edible oils as an edible oil will not apply to multi-source edible oil as specified under Clause 24 of Sub Regulation 2.2.1 of Regulation 2.2 of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulation 2011. However, multi-source edible oil must not be sold in packages exceeding 15 liters.

In short, despite the enactment of comprehensive FSSA and formation of FSSAI, certification of some other agencies was required to manufacture and sell some food items. With the amendments in the rule those certificates are no longer required and FSSAI has made only its certificate mandatory. The process to bring in these changes has been ongoing since the 43rd meeting of the FSSAI in February. At the meeting it was decided in principle to make only FSSAI certification compulsory and then accordingly notification amending the concern regulations omitting the clauses was issued.

It is a welcome sign that the FSSAI has moved to meet the original idea of enacting FSSA and the concept of one nation, one commodity, one regulator. Industry has welcomed the move since it will bring ease in the business of the specific commodities. FSSAI was formed in 2011. It took a long time for it to remove the overlapping of certifications and multiple authorities. But it is better late than never. **NS**

## 284 cold chain projects operational in India

A total of 399 cold chain projects have been approved since inception (2008) to date (October 31, 2024) under the component scheme- Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure (Cold Chain scheme) of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY). Out of these, 284 cold chain projects have been completed and commenced their commercial operations. Cold Chain scheme is demand driven and proposals are invited under the scheme from time to time across the country including difficult areas based on availability of funds by floating Expression of Interests (EoIs). Individuals including small farmers as well as entities/ organisations such as FPOs/ FPCs/ NGOs/PSUs/Firms/Companies, etc. are eligible to avail benefits under the scheme. An amount of Rs 2366.85 crore has been disbursed under the scheme since its inception. Maharashtra is leading the table in getting maximum grants-in-aid with Rs 431.62 crore followed by Uttarakhand (Rs 255.57 crore) and Andhra Pradesh (Rs 213.97 crore).



## Centre sells over 12.35 lakh tonnes of Bharat chana dal

The Government of India's Bharat Brand food initiative has seen significant success, meeting consumer demand while stabilising market prices and ensuring affordability. Since its launch, 12.35 lakh tonnes of chana dal, 5,663.07 tonnes of moong dal, and 118 tonnes of masur dal have been sold. The programme, introduced in July 2023, began by converting chana stocks from the price stabilisation buffer into Bharat Chana Dal and later expanded to include Bharat Atta and Bharat Rice. Bharat Atta launched in November 2023, followed by Bharat Rice in February 2024. Cumulative sales reflect the initiative's impact: Bharat Atta (15.20 lakh tonnes in Phase I, 2,952.25 tonnes in Phase II) and Bharat Rice (14.58 lakh tonnes in Phase I, 3,413.35 tonnes in Phase II). Products are distributed through NAFED, Kendriya Bhandar, NCCF, e-commerce platforms, retail chains, and mobile vans. This initiative underscores the government's commitment to food security, affordability, and market stability.

## India aims to conserve camels and unlock potential of camel milk industry

The United Nations has designated 2024 as the International Year of Camelids. To mark this occasion, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and ICAR – National Research Center on Camel (NRCC), hosted a stakeholder workshop in Bikaner, Rajasthan, focusing on strengthening the camel milk value chain in India. The workshop aimed to address challenges and explore sustainable development opportunities within the non-bovine



(camel) dairy sector, highlighting its nutraceutical and therapeutic potential. Over 150 participants, including camel rearers from

Rajasthan and Gujarat, government officials, social enterprises, scientists, and representatives from key organisations such as the National Dairy Research Institute-Karnal, Sarhad Dairy-Kutch, Lotus Dairy, and Amul, engaged in discussions. The event facilitated brainstorming sessions to identify sectoral challenges and devise sustainable solutions to support camel rearers. This initiative underscores a collective effort to enhance the camel milk value chain and promote its economic and health benefits.

## FSSAI issues advisory to FBOs to prioritise food safety and compliance

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued an advisory to e-commerce food business operators (FBOs) to enhance their food safety compliance practices. This action is in response to the growing popularity of online food delivery and emphasises the importance of ensuring the safety and quality of food products sold through these platforms. E-commerce FBOs are encouraged to prioritise training for their delivery personnel in food safety and hygiene practices. This training should focus on proper handling, transportation, and storage of food products to prevent contamination. Platforms must ensure that the product information displayed online matches the physical product label. Misleading or unverified claims can lead to regulatory action and damage consumer trust. Additionally, e-commerce FBOs need to verify that food products delivered to customers have a sufficient remaining shelf life, as required by FSSAI regulations.



## FSSAI introduces quarterly reporting for expired and rejected products

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has mandated licensed food businesses, including manufacturers, importers, repackers, and relabellers, to report quarterly data on expired and rejected food products via its FOSCOS platform. This initiative aims to prevent the resale of such items, ensuring stricter food safety standards. Key requirements include reporting quality failures, tracking expired or returned items, and providing detailed disposal records, including methods like destruction or auction and buyer or waste disposal agency details. The mandate enables real-time tracking of expired products, preventing them from being repurposed for human consumption or illicitly rebranded as cattle feed. While the FOSCOS system is under development, businesses must immediately begin collecting data for seamless compliance later. Additionally, in November, FSSAI reclassified packaged drinking and mineral water as high-risk categories, imposing stricter regulations such as annual inspections, third-party audits, and adherence to higher quality standards to enhance consumer safety.

## FSSAI reclassifies packaged drinking water as high-risk food category

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has reclassified packaged drinking water and mineral water as a high-risk food category. An order in this regard was issued on November 29, 2024. The reclassification follows a recent amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011, which eliminated the mandatory Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certification requirement for certain food products. Manufacturers of packaged drinking water and mineral



water will now face more stringent regulatory oversight. The FSSAI will conduct mandatory annual inspections of manufacturing facilities to ensure adherence to food safety and quality standards. Central License holders in high-risk food categories, including packaged drinking water and mineral

water, are now required to undergo annual third-party food safety audits. This reclassification emphasises the FSSAI's commitment to safeguarding public health and ensuring the quality and safety of food products.

## Bayer takes on micronutrient deficiencies in rural and peri-urban communities in India

Micronutrient deficiencies affect more than two billion people globally, with nearly half living in India. A 2021 study revealed that the average Indian diet meets only 70 per cent or less of essential nutrient requirements, with critical deficiencies in calcium, iodine, and iron, with the remaining 30 per cent of nutrient needs needing to be complemented, e.g. with supplementation. To tackle this widespread gap in nutrition, Bayer partnered with reach52, a last-mile health tech social enterprise, to launch its Nutrient Gap Initiative in 2023. As a part of the initiative, they launched



a health campaign to enhance awareness among the underserved communities in peri-urban and rural areas, on the importance of attaining 100 per cent nutrition, through a diverse diet and essential supplementation. The pilot projects of the campaign in Karnataka (Chikkabalapur, Bangalore) and Uttar Pradesh (Mirzapur) engaged over 80,000 residents (47,432 in Karnataka, 33,895 in Uttar Pradesh). The campaign started with research to understand the community's knowledge and behaviour on dietary diversity, supplement usage, and their potential links to health outcomes.

## KKR invests in Internet restaurant company Rebel Foods

Rebel Foods, a leading internet restaurant company, and global investment firm KKR announced the completion of an investment in Rebel Foods by affiliates of KKR. Through this transaction, KKR will support the company's growth, including its expansion in India and the Middle East and adding more food and beverage brands into its portfolio. Founded in 2011 as a quick service restaurant, Rebel Foods is today the world's largest multi-brand cloud kitchen platform, with 450 cloud kitchens serving a network of more than 5,000 internet restaurants in more than 70 cities across India, the UAE, and the UK, and more than two million customers globally. Rebel Foods uses a proprietary technology stack to deliver on end-to-end food orders, demand forecasting, brand launches and customer insights for multiple food and beverage brands.



## Dr Morepen announces launch of LightLife to address weight management



Dr Morepen has announced the launch of LightLife, a wellness product designed to tackle India's growing obesity crisis. The product is targeted at health-conscious individuals aged 25 to 50, particularly in Tier-I and Tier-II cities. Available in five flavours—Fruit Punch, Litchi, Lemon, Green Apple, and Orange—LightLife aims to provide a sustainable weight management solution by focusing on gut health. The company noted that high-fat and high-carb diets have contributed to a surge in obesity and diabetes in India. With LightLife, it addresses these challenges without crash diets or harmful fads, offering freedom from complicated regimens. This programme is not just about weight loss—it's about promoting a healthy, balanced lifestyle through globally respected innovations like Slimbiome and Intelicaps, empowering individuals with a scientifically validated, trustworthy solution they can rely on.

## Mirror launches advanced Peri supplement to address silent health challenge

Mirror, a leading FemTech platform, has announced the launch of Mirror Bliss, an advanced supplement tailored to support women through this transformative life stage. Mirror Bliss is formulated with 18 scientifically selected ingredients designed to address common symptoms and support holistic health. It targets hormonal balance with ingredients like Shatavari and Black Cohosh while providing relief from hot flashes and night sweats through Evening Primrose and Gokhru. Mood and sleep issues are addressed with Ashwagandha and Magnesium Glycinate, while Calcium and Vitamin D3 strengthen bones and joints, ensuring resilience through these transitions. The inclusion of Ashoka Bark and CoQ10 bridges critical nutritional gaps, providing long-term health



benefits. Perimenopause and menopause mark a significant phase in a woman's life, often accompanied by challenges such as hormonal imbalances, hot flashes, mood swings, and sleep disturbances. These experiences are particularly acute in India, where women enter menopause earlier than their Western counterparts—at an average age of 46.2 years compared to 51 years globally. Perimenopause, which precedes menopause, often begins around the age of 44.7 and can last up to a decade, bringing with it a wide range of symptoms. With Mirror Bliss, the company aims to change that by combining science, nature, and a deep understanding of women's health to empower women to embrace this phase with vitality and resilience.

## Akums Drugs partners with Caregen to launch specialty nutraceuticals

Akums Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Ltd, India's largest contract development and manufacturing organization (CDMO), has entered into an in-licensing agreement with Caregen Co., Ltd., a global biotechnology leader based in South Korea. This strategic alliance marks a significant step in introducing speciality nutraceuticals, Pharmaceuticals, differentiated topical and injectable cosmeceuticals—including advanced Skinceuticals and Hairceuticals—tailored to meet the unique needs of Indian consumers. The collaboration brings together Caregen's global expertise in peptides, growth factors, and advanced formulations with Akums' manufacturing capabilities and expansive market reach. By uniting their strengths, the partnership aims to deliver science-backed, innovative solutions aligned with the rising consumer focus on health, beauty, and wellness in India. The agreement sets the stage for the launch of an array of innovative products, including topical solutions for skin and hair care, injectable products targeting deeper rejuvenation and repair, and premium nutraceuticals designed for holistic wellness.



## Goyal Salt expands manufacturing capacity with new Gandhidham plant

Goyal Salt Limited, a prominent FMCG player specialising in salt, is making a significant investment of Rs 80 crore to establish a large-scale salt manufacturing facility in Gandhidham, near the salt capital of Kutch. This state-of-the-art plant, spread across 12 acres, boasts a production capacity of 4,50,000 metric tonnes (MT) annually. Currently, in the trial phase, the plant is expected to become fully operational by the end of January 2025. Once operational, it will position Goyal Salt as the largest natural salt producer in India. In addition to the new Gandhidham plant, Goyal Salt operates an existing facility in Nawa City, Rajasthan, spanning 15 acres. This unit is dedicated to salt refining, raw salt storage, and refined salt packaging, with an annual production capacity of 2,10,000 MT. Goyal Salt produces a wide range of premium industrial and edible salts, including Triple Refined Free Flow Iodized Salt, Industrial Salt, Double Fortified Salt, and Triple Refined Half Dry Salt.

## Organic Tattva adds organic ghee & puffed rice to portfolio

Organic Tattva, a leader in organic food products, announced the addition of two new products to its portfolio: Organic Ghee and puffed Rice. These high-quality, nutrient-rich products promote overall well-being and elevate daily nutrition with numerous health benefits and versatile usage. Puffed Rice is a light and crunchy snack perfect for guilt-free munching or adding to breakfast cereal for a nutritious boost. It is ideal for making traditional Indian snacks like Bhel Puri,



mixed with nuts for a healthy trail mix or as a breakfast cereal alternative. Its low calories and fat make it suitable for Weight Watchers and health-conscious individuals. It also provides a good source of essential vitamins and minerals, promoting overall health and digestion. Crafted using traditional methods, Organic Ghee preserves the purity and flavour of nature. Rich in essential vitamins, and antioxidants, this ghee is perfect for cooking, frying, or simply adding a spoonful to your meals for an extra boost of nutrition and flavour.

## FranGlobal and WOW Burger join hands to bring vegetarian fast food to India

With the demand for nutritious and wholesome food on the rise, FranGlobal has partnered with Hong Kong-based WOW Burger, Asia's first vertically integrated high-protein vegetarian fast-casual brand. This collaboration aims to introduce WOW Burger's innovative, protein-rich vegetarian menu to Indian consumers, redefining fast food with a focus on health and taste. As the international business arm of Franchise India, Asia's leading franchising solutions provider, FranGlobal is committed to bringing world-class brands like WOW Burger to India, catering to the evolving preferences of health-conscious consumers. WOW Burger has gained recognition for its ability to create delicious, high-protein vegetarian burgers that cater to a growing market of health-conscious individuals. The brand's mission is to make wholesome eating convenient, accessible, and enjoyable for all. This partnership is not just about food but about empowering consumers to make smarter dining choices.



## Farmery launches fresh fruits & vegetables range



Farmery, a leading D2C brand in the farm fresh food industry, is revolutionising how consumers access high-quality farm fresh, pure & natural produce through its farm-to-fork approach. Emphasising sustainability, transparency, and quality, the brand is committed to making farm-fresh, chemical residue-free food accessible and convenient. With the introduction of its Fruits & Vegetables range, Farmery ensures that customers receive fresh, carefully sourced produce delivered daily. Farmery's farm-to-fork model gives the brand full control over sourcing, partnering directly with the local finest farmers to harvest fruits and vegetables at their peak for optimal freshness and flavour. By placing early morning orders, the brand ensures timely harvesting and delivery, preserving nutritional integrity and minimising transit time for fresher produce. Farmery's sustainability commitment extends beyond sourcing. The brand works with farmers who use sustainable farming methods and responsible land management, ensuring products are free from harmful chemicals and preservatives.

## LT Foods launches DAAWAT Jasmine Thai rice

LT Foods Ltd., an Indian-origin global FMCG company in the consumer food space, has launched a Non-Genetically Modified Organism (Non-GMO) Certified global gourmet food – DAAWAT Jasmine Thai Rice for Indian consumers. Known for its naturally fragrant aroma and soft texture, DAAWAT Jasmine Thai Rice is the authentic Thai Hom Mali, sourced from Thailand. This latest addition to the DAAWAT portfolio underlines the company's commitment to introducing global gourmet food to Indian consumers, catering



to the aspirations of those seeking diverse global culinary experiences at home. It also marks another milestone in the company's journey to diversify its product range and align with the evolving food preferences of consumers. DAAWAT Jasmine Thai Rice pairs excellently with classic Thai curries to even fusion dishes. Its versatility makes it an ideal choice for any Thai

and oriental recipe. DAAWAT Jasmine Thai Rice has been launched nationally on all leading E-Commerce platforms.

## Bikano introduces Chatax soya sticks

Bikano, a leader in the Indian snack industry, has launched Chatax Soya Sticks, a new soy-based snack designed to meet the growing demand for flavourful and satisfying options. Made with rice flour, soy flour, and spices, these crunchy sticks offer bold flavours that cater to consumers looking for unique and enjoyable snacking experiences. Chatax Soya Sticks reflect Bikano's commitment to delivering exciting snack options that align with consumer preferences. With the soy-based snack market expected to grow from Rs 10 billion in 2020 to Rs 19 billion by 2025, Bikano aims to tap into this demand. Currently holding 5-6 per cent of the Indian snack market, the company seeks to increase its market share by 0.5-0.75 per cent through this new product and other innovations.



## Nutrizoe launches healthy snacking range SnackEasy

Nutrizoe, a homegrown women's wellness and nutrition brand specialising in maternal care, has launched SnackEasy – a pioneering snack range crafted specifically for pregnant women. This launch stems from Nutrizoe's extensive research to understand the unique challenges expectant mothers face when choosing snacks that are both tasty and nutritious. After interviewing over 2000 mothers and 50 key opinion leaders (KOLs) including doctors, nutritionists, and healthcare experts, Nutrizoe identified a recurring concern: pregnant women struggle to find convenient snacks that meet their nutritional needs without compromising on taste. Mothers consistently expressed a need for protein-rich options, light on the stomach, nausea-friendly, and free from added sugar. Meanwhile, experts highlighted the lack of satisfying, balanced options they could confidently recommend. Current suggestions like protein powders, diskettes, nuts, and seeds often fell short in addressing cravings and delivering comprehensive nutrition.



## Biodegradable packaging company Agrileaf secures Rs 16 Cr funding

Agrileaf, a leading Indian manufacturer and exporter of biodegradable dinnerware, announced it has secured Rs 16 crore in growth funding led by Capital-A and Samarsh Capital. This investment will enable Agrileaf to expand its operations in existing markets across the US and Europe, as well as build a consumer-facing brand in India. This marks Agrileaf's first fundraiser after being bootstrapped and profitable to date. The round also saw participation from angel investors including Shaji Devekar, Siddharth Bafna,



Co-founder of The Nutcracker, Family office of Ved Prakash, Pritie Jain of Bling Mushrooms, Sumeet Bhalotia, Director at Vario Lounge, Dhruv Taneja, Founder – Matchlog and Chiranth Patil- Beta Plus. With this investment, Agrileaf will expand production capacity, enhance its biodegradable dinnerware and packaging line, and deepen its community impact. Operating from a world-class facility in Dharmasthala, Karnataka, Agrileaf integrates a robust supply chain of areca leaf collection.

## The Organic World to add 30 new stores in Hyderabad



The Organic World (TOW), part of the Bengaluru-based Nimida Group, is targeting the addition of 30 new stores in Hyderabad, by the end of 2025. In September this year, TOW marked its foray out of Karnataka with the launch of its first store at Pragathi Nagar in Hyderabad. This targeted expansion marks a pivotal step in TOW's strategic growth as it aims to increase its footprint across South India. This move underscores TOW's commitment to making worry-free, wholesome, curated groceries accessible to a wider audience and supporting its ambitious pan-India target of Rs 100 crore in revenue by the end of FY 2025. Hyderabad has been a key focus area for the brand, given the growing preference for organic and chemical-free products among consumers in the city. TOW's presence in the city will be marked by its ongoing investment in new store setups and comprehensive marketing efforts, alongside a 2-hour delivery service to cater to the growing demand for convenience and quick commerce.

## Samosa Singh Eyes Global Expansion after 5X Production Ramp up

Bangalore-based Samosa Singh, one of India's leading quick-service restaurant (QSR) chains, recently expanded its manufacturing capacity and launched a new manufacturing unit. In line with the growing demand and aiming for global expansion, the brand has now equipped its manufacturing capabilities to grow 5X, which makes it one of the largest manufacturers of samosas in the country. Samosa Singh is making waves in the food industry with its remarkable journey from a startup to a scaling powerhouse. With a 5X boost in manufacturing capacity and achieving key export certifications, the brand is now aligned with global quality standards. The brand will operate 100+ physical QSR stores across major cities in 18 months. Samosa Singh has earned ISO standardisation and is actively pursuing



FDA certification, reinforcing its commitment to top-notch manufacturing and food safety practices. The company operates from a semi-automated factory nestled in a green, eco-friendly environment, ensuring sustainable and efficient production processes.



## Quaffine cold brew coffee liqueur launches in Mumbai



Quaffine, India's first cold brew coffee liqueur, launches in Mumbai following its success in Goa. With presence across more than 600 points of sale, including a mix of over 500 retail stores and over 100 restaurants and bars in Goa, the brand's expansion to Mumbai marks a strategic move aimed at redefining the city's drinking culture while ambitiously positioning itself as the go-to coffee liqueur across the country. The brand's entry into Mumbai comes amidst a growing consumer demand for coffee-inspired beverages and premium drinking experiences. As India's first cold brew coffee liqueur, Quaffine stands out by combining meticulous Indian craftsmanship with global standards. It is crafted with 100 per cent Arabica beans sourced from Chikmagalur's coffee estates in Karnataka, and specifically roasted to a perfect medium-dark. Through an 18-step process

encompassing precise sourcing, roasting, brewing, and maturation, Quaffine ensures unmatched consistency and quality, delivering a unique blend of flavours free from additives or artificial ingredients.

## Ball Corporation and Dabur partner to expand real juice portfolio

Ball Corporation, the leading global provider of sustainable aluminium packaging for beverages, announced its partnership with Dabur India Limited, one of the most iconic and longstanding consumer goods companies founded over 135 years ago, to expand their Real Juice portfolio with the launch of the new Real Bites in fully recyclable aluminium cans in India. Real Bites juice offers a unique drinking experience with real fruit chunks in every sip. Real Bites in aluminium cans is available in delightful flavours like: Peach, Pineapple and Real Green Apple. The 185ml can be introduced as an entry point for this segment, offering a convenient size for on-the-go consumption. Along with the refreshing taste, the new aluminium cans provide a shelf life of up to one year, significantly longer than the four to nine months offered by other packaging formats.



## Sid's Farm introduces A2 buffalo milk in aseptic packaging

Sid's Farm, a leading D2C dairy brand in Telangana, has introduced A2 Buffalo Milk in a new 1-litre aseptic packaging SKU. Renowned for its pure, healthy, and adulterant-free dairy products, the brand aims to cater to the growing demand for high-quality milk with this innovative packaging. The aseptic pack is initially available in Hyderabad and Bengaluru and can also be purchased on eCommerce platforms in cities like Mumbai, Kochi, Nashik, Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, Vadodara, and Hubballi. The aseptic packaging offers several benefits, including extended shelf life without the need for refrigeration until opened, ensuring convenience for households and those on the move. This packaging solution aligns with modern lifestyles and reduces waste by using recyclable materials, making it environmentally friendly. Sid's Farm's launch of the A2 Buffalo Milk aseptic pack reinforces its commitment to providing quality and convenience, catering to the evolving preferences of health-conscious consumers across India.



## Coca-Cola Company announces investment by Jubilant Bhartia Group in India

The Coca-Cola Company announced that it has reached an agreement with the Jubilant Bhartia Group, a multi-billion conglomerate with a global presence in diverse sectors, to acquire a 40 per cent stake in Hindustan Coca-Cola Holdings Pvt. Ltd., the parent company of the largest Coca-Cola bottler in India, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd. The Coca-Cola Company's locally owned franchise partners in India are positioned to drive successful outcomes. The investment by the Jubilant Bhartia Group family will contribute to the company's ongoing success and help strengthen its position in the Indian market. The Coca-Cola System in India is continuing to drive sustainable, long-term growth by investing in the opportunities available in India. The transaction is subject to regulatory approval. Rothschild & Co acted as exclusive financial adviser to The Coca-Cola Company.

## Diageo India's single malt debuts in UK

Godawan Artisanal Indian Single Malt, Diageo India's most awarded Single Malt made its highly anticipated debut in the United Kingdom, with both Rich & Rounded and Fruit & Spice expressions that have wowed consumers across the world. The celebrated whisky will be available across London starting in December. The milestone was celebrated with an exclusive dinner in Central London attended by an intimate group of global consumers, media and local partners. Godawan's entry into the UK underscores its commitment to serving exceptional Indian craftsmanship and luxury single malts to a global audience. Developed under the philosophy and programme of The Good Craft Co. – DIAGEO India's craft and innovation hub, Godawan is rooted in the ideals of mindful luxury. Each bottle of Godawan tells a story of conscious creation, preserving India's cultural heritage as a brand that is 'crafted for good'.



## Starbucks India unveils limited edition beverages

The holiday bells are ringing, and Starbucks is ready to sprinkle its signature festive magic! Customers can immerse themselves in the warmth and wonder of the season with the return of Starbucks iconic handcrafted holiday beverages, seasonal pastries, and a dazzling array of festive merchandise. From the beloved Peppermint Mocha to the indulgent Toffee Nut Crunch and playful Crunchy Red Hat Mocha, Starbucks has curated a line-up that promises to make Christmas celebrations unforgettable. Feel the cosy embrace of tradition with a modern twist! Whether it's a cosy night in or a festive gathering, the Toffee Nut Crunch collection is your perfect companion for all those holiday moments. Toffee Nut Crunch Frappuccino: Starbucks signature blend of milk, coffee, and toffee nut, topped with whipped cream and graham cracker crumbles for a deliciously indulgent treat.



## MIRAILAB BIOSCIENCE launches NMN supplements and cosmetics in Singapore

MIRAILAB BIOSCIENCE Inc. has entrusted Global Ocean Distribution Pte Ltd with the sales of its original supplement brand MIRAI LAB, which contains  $\beta$ -Nicotinamide Mononucleotide ( $\beta$ -NMN). The supplements are now available for purchase on Shopee, one of Singapore's major e-commerce platforms. NMN is a nutrient widely studied around the world for its potential effects on rejuvenation and anti-aging. It has garnered significant attention, being featured in numerous media outlets. MIRAILAB BIOSCIENCE company offers the "Pure NMN Series," a line of NMN supplements containing high concentrations of  $\beta$ -NMN only. Additionally, we develop other supplements and cosmetics to support overall well-being. The company pioneered the commercialisation of NMN supplements, launching the world's first NMN product on April 1, 2015.



## US FDA awards tea 'healthy' label

Tea Council of the USA, the FDA released the final rule on the use of "healthy" on food labels, granting tea the opportunity to use this claim. Certain tea products, including tea bags and bottled tea, can now display the "healthy" claim on packaging, provided they contain less than 5 calories per 12 fluid ounce serving. This exciting recognition underscores tea as a health-promoting beverage. Tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world next to water, with scientific research providing robust support for its health benefits. True teas – black, green, oolong, white and dark – all come from the same plant, a warm-weather evergreen named *Camellia sinensis*. True tea has the highest concentrations of flavan-3-ols of all foods and beverages, making it the go-to source for this powerful plant compound. These findings are further supported by a 2021 review, which found that a consistent intake of two cups of tea per day has the potential to decrease the risk of heart disease and its progression.

## Circus launches fully autonomous food service using AI & Robotics in the European care market

Germany-based Circus SE, a leading technology company for AI and robotics in the food service sector, can announce the first successful deal with customers from the nursing and elderly care market. With its innovative technology, Circus is setting a new standard for nutrition and care in care facilities. The growing demand for efficient and high-quality care poses major challenges for the industry. With its AI-based robots, Circus offers a solution that not only reduces the workload



of workers, but also ensures healthy and personalised nutrition. The robots use artificial intelligence to fully automatically prepare fresh meals every day, personalised to individual needs - from preparation to serving. Circus' AI robots use artificial intelligence and machine learning to adapt to the nutritional needs and preferences of each user.

Whether it's diabetic food, lactose-free dishes or a high-protein diet - the robots create personalised menus and guarantee the highest quality and hygiene.



## Herbalife Foundation awards \$5M in grants to empower communities globally

The Herbalife Family Foundation (HFF) announced it has awarded \$5 million in grants to 164 nonprofit organisations across 59 countries and territories. The grants, part of the foundation's Casa Herbalife Program, will provide crucial funding to nonprofit partners dedicated to providing access to nutritious meals, educational resources, and safe spaces for children and underserved communities worldwide. HFF and its Casa Herbalife Program are fueled and funded by Herbalife's independent distributors and employees. Their passion and commitment to empowering communities have enabled the foundation to directly support and uplift communities for the past 30 years. This year's funding is expected to deliver critical support to approximately 200,000 children worldwide.



## Sodexo reveals 5 campus dining trends for 2025

Sodexo Campus, a leader in college food service, has revealed five key dining trends for 2025, reflecting students' desire for vibrant and social food experiences. Chef Jennifer DiFrancesco, Director of Culinary Innovation at Sodexo Campus, highlights that bold flavours will dominate campus dining, with indulgent desserts and globally-inspired dishes becoming key. The five anticipated trends are: Showstopper Desserts: Visually appealing, indulgent desserts like Freakshakes made with healthier ingredients; Rebellious Tacos: Tacos featuring bold, multicultural ingredients like BBQ cornbread crumble and green curry tofu; Chili Crunch: Chinese chili oil with sweet heat and crunch, enhancing dishes from noodle bowls to ice cream; Curry Everywhere: Creative dishes incorporating curry, such as Thai red curry polenta and curry meatballs and Functional Foods: Dining focused on community and wellness, with meals promoting mental and physical health. These trends aim to create unforgettable, dynamic dining experiences for students in 2025.

## Arla Foods creates project with Morrisons, Tesco and Aldi to trial use of Bovaer

Arla Foods has launched a new collaborative project with Morrisons, Tesco, and Aldi to test the use of Bovaer, a feed additive that significantly reduces methane emissions in cows. British farmers, part of the UK's largest dairy cooperative, Arla, are working with some of the



country's biggest retailers in a pioneering initiative aimed at addressing methane emissions in the dairy industry. This project seeks to observe how Bovaer can reduce enteric methane emissions from cows by an average

of 27 per cent. As part of its FarmAhead Customer Partnership initiative, Arla will collaborate with Morrisons and Aldi, as well as work with Tesco on its Future Dairy Partnership initiative. The goal is to demonstrate how these feed additives can be integrated into traditional

feeding practices. The project will involve around 30 of Arla's farmer members and aims to enhance the understanding of how feed additives can be effectively implemented across a larger group of farmers.



## Unilever to sell foods brands Unox and Zwan to Zwanenberg Food Group

Unilever announced that it has received a binding offer from Zwanenberg Food Group to acquire the Unox and Zwan brands. Both iconic brands have been part of the Unilever portfolio for almost 100 years, the Dutch Unox brand since 1937 and the Belgium Zwan brand since 1928. Unilever is looking to sharpen its Foods portfolio for long-term growth and scalability, focusing on fewer and bigger brands, in categories such as cooking aids, mini meals and condiments. The meat and soup products of Unox and Zwan require a distinct supply chain, sourcing model and set of technological and R&D capabilities, making them less scalable within the broader Unilever Foods portfolio. Unox's Noodles and Cup-a-Soup products are a good fit with the mini meals category and will therefore remain part of the total Unilever Foods portfolio.



## Lubrizol's MAGSHAPE magnesium microcapsules has good sensory appeal as a powder supplement: Study

Lubrizol has announced that melt-in-your mouth magnesium powder sticks incorporating Lubrizol's MAGSHAPE microcapsules were rated a palate-pleasing option in a new consumer study. The results strengthen evidence for the value proposition of MAGSHAPE microcapsules as a magnesium ingredient that can support the creation of sensory-appealing, stand-out magnesium products that align closely with on-the-go consumer needs. MAGSHAPE microcapsules are a highly concentrated source of magnesium in which magnesium oxide particles have been micronised to provide a bioavailable, stable and water-dispersible ingredient that can be incorporated into a variety of delivery formats. In the test, participants were given five orosoluble powder formulations that contained 250 mg of magnesium from different sources. MAGSHAPE microcapsules were compared to commonly used magnesium salts, including magnesium oxide, magnesium citrate, magnesium bicarbonate, and magnesium bisglycinate.

## Shanghai Pepsi-Cola Beverage selects Blue Yonder to optimise production operations

To better address increasingly complex supply chain challenges, Shanghai Pepsi-Cola Beverage will deploy Blue Yonder Production Planning to improve customer satisfaction, enhance asset utilization, and reduce waste in the supply



chain. The project will be implemented by PwC, Blue Yonder's strategic partner. Shanghai Pepsi-Cola Beverage Co. Ltd. is one of PepsiCo's important subsidiaries in China, focusing on the development of the beverage business. The company mainly produces and sells popular beverage brands such as PepsiCo, 7-Up, Mirinda and Gatorade, and provides the Chinese market with high-quality products

and innovative marketing strategies. This project will digitally transform production planning for Shanghai Pepsi-Cola Beverage Co. Ltd. by improving production efficiency and optimising inventory structure and levels,

thereby enabling the company to reduce production, inventory and delivery costs while meeting its business needs. With Blue Yonder Production Planning, Shanghai Pepsi-Cola Beverage Co. Ltd. will be able to reduce operating costs with the ability to factor in complex constraints and faster response times to changing demand and supply conditions.



# Will PRICE CAP DISRUPT BOOMING NUTRA INDUSTRY?

Onion prices surged to Rs 100-150 per kilogram in 2019 due to poor monsoon and subsequent crop damage. The government responded by banning exports, imposing stock limits, and importing onions. While these steps reduced domestic prices, farmers and exporters protested, citing financial losses. Critics argued that better supply chain management and long-term investments in storage infrastructure would have been more effective than reactive price controls. Price control measures on onions highlight the delicate balance between protecting consumer interests and ensuring farmer welfare. While such interventions offer immediate relief, they often come at the cost of long-term market stability, making them a subject of recurring controversy. The same situation could be a reality for the Indian nutraceuticals sector in 2025 if the idea of bringing nutraceuticals under the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) activates on the field. Let's explore further.



Price controls are often seen as a win for consumers. Lower prices make essential products more affordable and accessible, especially for middle- and lower-income groups. In a country like India, where healthcare costs are a significant burden for many families, affordable nutraceuticals could promote preventive care and reduce reliance on expensive treatments. However, the possibility of the inclusion of nutraceutical products under the purview of CDSCO has sparked a heated debate across multiple fronts. While this move could theoretically ensure quality control, standardisation, and affordable pricing for consumers, it simultaneously threatens to curtail industry innovation and growth. Nutraceuticals—a booming sector combining nutrition and pharmaceuticals—has been largely unregulated in India, allowing companies to innovate, experiment, and flourish. However, the possibility of price control, an almost inevitable outcome of stricter CDSCO regulation, poses a double-edged sword.

This cover story critically examines the implications of bringing nutraceuticals under CDSCO regulations, particularly focusing on the contentious issue of price control. While the decision appears consumer-friendly, it risks stifling the very industry that has been instrumental in addressing health and wellness gaps in India.

### Inevitable Price Control

By bringing nutraceuticals under CDSCO's ambit, regulators aim to ensure product safety, combat false claims, and enhance consumer confidence. A regulated market could attract more consumers who may have been sceptical about the genuineness of nutraceutical products, but at what cost.

One of the most significant implications of CDSCO regulation is the potential imposition of price controls. If nutraceuticals are classified as "essential commodities" or their regulation mirrors that of pharmaceutical drugs, they could fall under the ambit of price caps similar to those enforced by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA). For consumers, this is good news. Price caps could make high-quality nutraceuticals more affordable, ensuring that essential products like dietary supplements and fortified foods are accessible to the masses. However, the industry sees this as a red flag.

According to a Research and Markets report, India's nutraceutical market is valued at approximately \$ 6.11 billion and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.39 per cent during 2025-2030. This growth is driven by rising consumer awareness about health, increased disposable income, and the widespread adoption of preventive healthcare. However, price controls could slow down this momentum.

### Innovation vs Regulation

One of the most significant concerns surrounding price control is its potential to stifle innovation. The nutraceutical industry thrives on its ability to develop new products tailored to emerging consumer needs. From plant-based protein supplements to personalised nutrition solutions, the sector has been a hub of creativity and scientific advancement. However, innovation comes at a cost.

"The nutraceutical industry is diverse, with products varying significantly in quality based on ingredients. Blanket price controls would discourage brands from striving for excellence, as sourcing premium ingredients becomes financially unviable, squeezing margins for manufacturers and retailers. This would reduce profitability, discourage innovation, and stifle R&D in an industry that is critical for preventive healthcare in India, said Sahil Agarwal, Co-founder, Dame Health.

India's healthcare system has traditionally focused on pharmaceuticals and curative treatments, whereas nutraceuticals prioritise prevention—a shift that can significantly reduce the nation's healthcare burden. Price control regulations risk limiting the availability of high-quality products and disincentivising industry growth at a time when awareness of preventive health is gaining momentum. Emphasising the need for interventions other than price control, Agarwal added, "Affordability is subjective and reflects the value consumers place on health. Premium nutraceuticals are priced higher not due to hype but due to the superior benefits they offer. Instead of price caps, the government should support the industry through tax incentives or subsidies for R&D and high-quality production, ensuring both affordability and innovation."

Indian nutraceutical products from renowned brands feature premium ingredients and are perceived as overpriced, but their pricing can still be justified based on factors like quality, research, branding, and effectiveness. An example could be Amway Nutrilite's Double X Multivitamin which contains a blend of 22 vitamins and minerals with plant concentrates from turmeric, spinach, and rosemary. It is priced at approximately Rs 4,500 for a 31-day supply. However, the process behind developing this formulation includes organic farming of botanicals sourced, rigorous lab work behind extracting and formulating dosages from critical phytoconstituents and high spending on branding. Many such formulations have proved to be efficacious and have played a vital role in preventive healthcare loosening the burden on the Indian healthcare sector. Well-being Nutrition's Marine Collagen, Herbalife's Formula 1 Nutritional Shake Mix, Cureveda's Mind Pro (Cognition Booster) and many such products are

thriving in the Indian market involving substantial investment in R&D. With price caps, companies may find it financially unviable to invest in such innovative products making them more risk-averse, leading them to focus on low-cost, generic products rather than investing in groundbreaking innovations. This could slow the industry's growth and competitiveness, especially in global markets where innovation is key.

### Double Trouble of Black Market Sales

Historically, price controls usually give rise to thriving black markets. Scarce or high-demand products could be sold at inflated prices through unregulated channels, defeating the very purpose of price regulation. Some consumers, especially those with higher incomes or specific health needs, may seek advanced or branded nutraceuticals that are unavailable or too generic under price-controlled regulations. Companies may reduce the production of premium products within the controlled price bracket, leading to their illegal distribution at higher prices.

Stressing on the needless price control scenario for nutraceuticals that can possibly be a reality shortly in the near future, Dr Nikhil Kelkar, Joint Managing Director, Hexagon Nutrition opined, "Although, the idea of getting nutraceuticals under price control is very forward-looking, however, it is very difficult to implement as nutraceuticals don't have any standard combinations like fixed drug combinations in pharma. Every product is unique in itself and might have a few or several ingredients in various permutations and combinations. Also, the levels of the ingredients are supplemental in nature and not targeting the treatment of any disease. It's more of a wellness perspective and that's what needs to be understood. It will require a huge infrastructure and manpower cost if this price control needs to be implemented. Focus on self wellbeing is a consumer choice and it needs to remain with the consumer who can very well decide what they want to

### The Global Perspective

To understand the potential impact of nutraceutical regulation and price control, it is useful to examine global precedents.

**United States:** In the US, nutraceuticals are regulated as dietary supplements under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA). While the FDA oversees safety and labelling, manufacturers are not required to prove efficacy or adhere to price controls. This regulatory flexibility has fostered a thriving nutraceutical market valued at over \$50 billion.

**European Union:** The EU adopts a stricter approach, requiring evidence to support health claims. However, like the U.S., it does not impose price controls, allowing market forces to determine pricing.

**China:** Nutraceuticals, in China, are categorised as "health foods" and are subject to rigorous registration and approval processes.

India must find a middle ground that ensures consumer safety without stifling industry growth.

Sources: Food & Drug Administration (.gov), health.ec.europa.eu, CIRS Group.

eat and whether they want to pay a premium for a top quality brand."

Enforcing price controls and monitoring illegal activities like black market sales would require significant regulatory resources, adding to the government's administrative burden and resulting in a double-trouble situation. Establishing a mechanism to identify which nutraceuticals qualify for price control is complex, as the sector is highly diverse with products ranging from vitamins to herbal supplements. Moreover, ensuring compliance among international nutraceutical brands operating in India would require additional negotiations and enforcement mechanisms.

Sanjaya Mariwala, Executive Chairman and Managing Director, OmniActive Health Technologies, while drawing attention to the possible scenarios of black market sales that could arise due to price control said, "Bringing nutraceuticals under CDSCO regulation and price controls could disrupt the market, discouraging the production of premium products due to reduced profitability. This scarcity may lead to black market sales, undermining consumer trust and increasing the burden on regulatory bodies. To address these challenges, it is essential to empower the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to streamline regulations, eliminate duplication, and ensure consistent enforcement. Such a balanced approach will maintain affordability while fostering innovation, preserving





consumer choices, and safeguarding the integrity of the nutraceutical industry.”

### Undermining ‘Make In India’

India's nutraceutical industry is experiencing significant growth, with a substantial number of startups contributing to this expansion. According to Tracxn.com, one of the leading startup data platforms, there are 382 nutraceutical tech startups in India as of December 2024. This thriving startup ecosystem is a key driver of growth in India's nutraceutical sector, positioning the country as an emerging hub in the global market.

Price caps could disproportionately impact smaller players, pushing them out of the market due to slim profit margins and consolidating power among a few big corporations. Moreover, newer entrants could face significant barriers, stifling entrepreneurship in the sector. Investors may shy away from the nutraceutical sector due to uncertain returns, making it difficult for startups and established players to attract funding. This would contradict Make in India's goal of empowering SMEs as key drivers of the economy.

“While making nutraceuticals more accessible is critical for everyone, it is also crucial to encourage industry growth and innovation. Strict pricing regulations may pose issues for smaller nutraceutical businesses, making investing in new items or even staying in business more difficult. This could jeopardise the 'Make in India' initiative by discouraging entrepreneurs. To truly build this industry, we need policies that strike a balance between consumer affordability and support for Indian enterprises, while also assuring safety and innovation. The government's decision to include nutraceuticals under the CDSCO is an excellent step towards ensuring that consumers receive safe, high-quality products. However, price control strategies must be properly prepared,” commented Dr Mandeep Singh Basu, Director, Jagat Pharma.

Another important objective of the Make in India initiative is boosting domestic manufacturing and making India a leader in high-potential industries. Price control on nutraceuticals can negatively affect this objective as well. Companies may shift focus to export markets, where prices and margins are less regulated, to sustain profitability and fund R&D. This would deprive Indian consumers of cutting-edge products developed locally.

### Striking a Balance

The debate over nutraceutical regulation and price control reflects a broader conflict between consumer welfare and free market principles. Policymakers must adopt a delicate approach that recognises the unique challenges and opportunities in the nutraceutical sector.

“Blanket price controls would discourage brands striving for excellence, as sourcing premium ingredients becomes financially unviable, squeezing margins for manufacturers and retailers. This would reduce profitability, discourage innovation, and stifle R&D in an industry that is critical for preventive healthcare in India.”

**Sahil Agarwal**, Co-founder, Dame Health



“It will require a huge infrastructure and manpower cost if price control needs to be implemented. Focus on self wellbeing is a consumer choice and it needs to remain with the consumer who can very well decide what they want to eat and whether they want to pay a premium for a top quality brand.”

**Nikhil Kelkar**,  
Joint Managing Director, Hexagon Nutrition



“Bringing nutraceuticals under CDSCO regulation and price controls could disrupt the market, discouraging the production of premium products due to reduced profitability. This scarcity may lead to black market sales, undermining consumer trust and increasing the burden on regulatory bodies.”

**Sanjaya Mariwala**, Executive Chairman and Managing Director, OmniActive Health Technologies



Also, not all nutraceuticals are created equal. While essential products like vitamin supplements could be subject to price controls, premium or niche products could be exempt.

While suggesting a balanced approach, Rashida Vapiwala, Founder, LabelBlind said, “The question of whether nutraceuticals should be brought under the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSO) is not a straightforward one. It demands a nuanced consideration of several factors that balance the growth of this nascent industry with the imperative of consumer safety. By selectively regulating life-critical nutraceuticals

### Alternatives to Price Control

Rather than imposing blanket price controls, policymakers could explore alternative strategies to balance consumer welfare and industry interests:

- **Tiered Pricing Models:** Companies could offer basic versions of their products at lower prices while premium versions cater to niche markets.
- **Subsidies for Essential Products:** The government could subsidise essential nutraceuticals, ensuring affordability without forcing companies to slash prices.
- **Tax Incentives:** Providing tax breaks to nutraceutical companies could offset production costs, enabling them to maintain quality without raising prices.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Collaborations between the government and industry players could drive down costs through shared infrastructure, research funding, and bulk procurement.
- **Gradual Implementation of Regulations:** A phased approach to regulation could allow the industry time to adapt while minimising market disruption.

under drug control while fostering innovation for the broader industry, India can achieve a balanced approach that benefits consumers and drives long-term sector growth. Critical health nutraceuticals—such as supplements for heart health, renal health and diabetic formulations—should be regulated under CDSO. This ensures they meet stringent quality standards and are backed by clinical evidence, with price controls to improve affordability.”

Adding to this, regular dialogue with industry stakeholders can help identify practical solutions that balance regulatory goals with business realities. Rather than penalising non-compliance, regulators could incentivise adherence to quality standards through rewards like tax breaks or fast-track approvals.

While emphasising on the alternate solutions instead of a regulatory shuffle, Arun Om Lal, Industrial Chair Prof., Centre of Excellence for Food Fortification, National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM), Kundali suggested, “The shift in the regulatory landscape in nutraceuticals will hamper the growth of the industry due to loss of investor confidence, change in consumer perception and additional costs to ensure compliance. It is suggested to keep nutraceuticals in the current FSSAI framework and in accordance with FSSAI’s inspection system,

“ Strict pricing regulations may pose issues for smaller nutraceutical businesses, making investing in new products, or staying in business, even more difficult.

This could discourage entrepreneurs and jeopardise the 'Make in India' initiative.”

**Dr Mandeep Singh Basu**, Director, Jagat Pharma



“ Industry is open to further discussion on additional measures like strengthening licensing systems, GMP practices, claims review, enforcement and surveillance, and collaboration in educational initiatives.”

**Arun Om Lal**, Industrial Chair Prof., Centre of Excellence for Food Fortification, NIFTEM, Kundali



“ By selectively regulating life-critical nutraceuticals under drug control while fostering innovation for the broader industry, India can achieve a balanced

approach that benefits consumers and drives long-term sector growth. Critical health nutraceuticals—such as supplements for heart health, renal health and diabetic formulations—should be regulated under CDSO.”

**Rashida Vapiwala**, Founder, LabelBlind



while building the capacity to better regulate the manufacturing practices and claims. This will enhance capacity building for effective enforcement. Industry is open to further discussion on additional measures like strengthening licensing systems, GMP practices, claims review, enforcement and surveillance, and collaboration in educational initiatives.”

The Indian nutraceutical industry stands at a crossroads. The path chosen today will determine its trajectory for decades to come. Will India emerge as a hub of innovation and growth, or will over-regulation stifle its potential? The answer lies in striking the right balance—one that benefits all stakeholders without compromising the sector’s transformative potential. **NS**

**Mansi Jamsudkar**  
mansi.jamsudkar@mmactiv.com

**Mansi Jamsudkar**



# F&B Industry Cuts Sugar Use for Optimal Wellness

Each year, Action on Sugar, a charity listed in the UK in 2014 organises a national Sugar Awareness Week (November 18-24) to help raise awareness of the damaging effect of too much sugars in our diet. It noted that various health organisations, including the World Health Organization, recommend the reduction of free sugars intake (not just sugar). An overconsumption of 'free sugars' can contribute a significant amount of nutritionally poor calories to a diet, increasing the risk of overweight and obesity, and various related-diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. Action on Sugar has been asking manufacturers to reduce the sugar in their products. In this story we provide the insights as to how the food and beverage (F&B) industry is responding to the public awareness on sugar reduction and regulatory changes on cutting down sugar in India.

In recent years, the global food and beverage industry has undergone a seismic shift, driven by the growing consumer demand for healthier options. Among the most significant changes is the move toward reducing sugar content in food and beverages. This shift is not merely a passing trend but a response to increasing awareness of the health risks associated with excessive sugar consumption, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. The World Health Organization recommends limiting free sugar intake to less than 10 per cent of total daily energy, with an additional suggestion to reduce it further to below 5 per cent for added health benefits. For many countries, including India, this has become a call to action.

Excessive sugar intake has long been associated with adverse health outcomes. Obesity, now a global epidemic, is one of the primary concerns linked to high sugar consumption. Sugary foods and beverages are calorie-dense but lack essential nutrients, contributing

to weight gain when consumed in excess. Furthermore, sugar's impact on metabolic health has been extensively documented, with studies linking it to insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

In India, the stakes are particularly high. The country is home to over 70 million people with diabetes, making it one of the diabetes capitals of the world. This alarming statistic has sparked a nationwide conversation about sugar reduction. Public health campaigns, medical professionals, and consumer advocacy groups are emphasising the need for a healthier diet, urging individuals to reduce their sugar intake. Additionally, the growing prevalence of cardiovascular diseases and dental issues has added urgency to the call for sugar reduction, not just in India but globally.

## Consumer Awareness and Changing Preferences

Today's consumers are more informed than ever, thanks to widespread access to information. Social media,

health blogs, and online forums have made it easier for individuals to understand the implications of their dietary choices. This heightened awareness is translating into changing purchasing behaviour. Shoppers are now scrutinising nutrition labels, seeking products with lower sugar content, and opting for healthier alternatives.

A study conducted by Nielsen revealed that 49 per cent of global consumers are actively trying to reduce their sugar intake. This trend is even more pronounced among millennials and Gen Z, who are not only looking for reduced-sugar options but also demanding transparency from brands about the ingredients used. In India, urban households are increasingly favoring low-sugar or sugar-free products, reflecting a shift in attitudes towards health and wellness.

The food and beverage industry has recognised this shift and is making significant strides to meet consumer demand. Some of the key strategies being adopted include

**Natural Sweeteners:** One of the most prominent trends is the use of natural sweeteners as sugar substitutes. Ingredients like stevia, erythritol, monk fruit extract, and allulose are gaining traction. These sweeteners offer the sweetness of sugar without the calories or glycemic impact, making them ideal for health-conscious consumers. For instance, stevia-based beverages and snacks have seen a significant uptick in demand, with major brands incorporating this natural sweetener into their product lines.

**Reformulation:** Reformulating existing products to reduce sugar content while maintaining taste is another approach. This often involves combining different sweeteners, both natural and artificial, to achieve the desired sweetness profile. Companies like Nestlé, PepsiCo, and Coca-Cola have been actively working to reduce sugar in their flagship products. In India, dairy companies are reformulating flavoured milk and yogurt to cater to the demand for reduced-sugar options.

**Portion Control:** Portion-controlled packaging is a subtle yet effective way to limit sugar intake. By offering smaller serving sizes, companies can help consumers manage their calorie and sugar consumption without sacrificing the occasional indulgence. For example, confectionery brands have introduced mini versions of popular chocolate bars and cookies.

**Product Innovation:** Innovation in food technology has paved the way for entirely new product categories. From low-sugar ice creams to keto-friendly desserts, the market is brimming with options that cater to specific dietary needs. Indian startups like Epigamia and RAW Pressery are leading the charge, offering low-sugar or sugar-free alternatives that align with modern dietary preferences.

**Fortification and Functional Foods:** The trend toward functional foods is another avenue for sugar reduction. By fortifying products with vitamins, minerals, and probiotics, companies can enhance the nutritional profile of their offerings while reducing sugar. This approach not only addresses consumer health concerns but also adds value to the product.

In its annual report released in July 2024 the Indian fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) major Dabur India stated that it will work towards an average 3 per cent reduction in added sugars across two-thirds of its beverage portfolio.

In 2019, the company had adopted a phased reformulation approach to reduce sugar levels across its Real juice portfolio, and has "implemented three phases of sugar reduction in the top eight variants of juices by reducing a total of 20.95 per cent of added sugar." This equates to approximately 1,300 metric tonnes of reduced sugar consumption annually.

"In our Foods & Beverages division, we are committed to reducing sugar content in our products without compromising on taste or quality. This demonstrates our commitment to promoting healthier options for our consumers," the report stated.

Nestlé India has also made significant strides in reducing sugar content across its products.



**Suresh Narayanan, Chairman and Managing Director of Nestlé**

**India**, highlighted the company's progress, "In the last five years, we have reduced added sugar by almost 30 per cent. The journey continues; I am not stopping there. I am looking at

further ways of reducing the amount of added sugar." Additionally, Nestlé India has announced that 14 out of 21 variants of its Cerelac baby food will soon contain no refined sugar.

The beverage sector is expected to experience the fastest growth rate among all applications in the sugar substitutes industry. The industry faces pressure to reduce sugar content or replace it with healthier alternatives due to rising health awareness, legislative measures, and popular diets. In response, beverage brands are innovating with a broader range of sweetener options. For instance, Coca-Cola's Diet Coke is sweetened with aspartame, and they also offer Diet Coke with SLENDA (sucralose). Minute Maid provides Zero Sugar Lemonade sweetened with aspartame and Acesulfame Potassium, while PepsiCo's Tropicana has replaced its Light n' Healthy orange juice with Trop50, sweetened with Reb A stevia extract.

### Regulatory Landscape

The regulatory framework around sugar reduction is

evolving to support public health objectives. In India, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been at the forefront of promoting healthier diets. The Eat Right India campaign, launched by FSSAI, encourages food manufacturers to reduce sugar, salt, and fat in their products. Additionally, FSSAI has made it mandatory for packaged foods to display the amount of added sugar on nutrition labels, enabling consumers to make informed choices.

**Pawan Agarwal, former CEO of the FSSAI**, emphasised the importance of industry participation in promoting healthier food choices through the Eat Right Movement. He stated, "Businesses will have to take the first step and consumers have to become more aware of what they eat." This statement underscores FSSAI's commitment to encouraging food manufacturers to reduce sugar, their products, aligning with public health objectives.



Additionally, in July 2024, FSSAI approved a proposal requiring packaged food items to display nutritional information, including total sugar in bold letters and larger font sizes on their labels. This initiative aims to empower consumers to make healthier choices.

Globally, similar initiatives are underway. The UK introduced a sugar tax on sugary beverages leading to a significant reduction in sugar content across the soft drinks industry. Mexico's sugar tax and warning labels have also been effective in curbing consumption. Such measures not only incentivise manufacturers to reformulate their products but also raise awareness among consumers about the risks of excessive sugar intake.

### Challenges and Opportunities

While the shift towards reduced sugar is promising, it is not without challenges. One of the primary hurdles is maintaining taste. Sugar is not just a sweetener; it also plays a crucial role in the texture, colour, and shelf life of food products. Finding suitable substitutes that replicate these properties without compromising on taste is a complex task.

Cost is another significant barrier. Natural sweeteners like stevia and erythritol are often more expensive than sugar, which can impact product pricing. For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the cost of reformulation and compliance with new labeling requirements can be prohibitive.

Despite these challenges, the opportunities are immense. The market for reduced-sugar products is growing rapidly, driven by consumer demand and regulatory support. According to a report by Research and Markets, the global sugar reduction market is expected to

reach \$59 billion by 2026, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.4 per cent from 2021. In India, the trend is mirrored by the increasing availability of low-sugar and sugar-free options across retail and online platforms.

Several brands are setting benchmarks in the sugar reduction journey:

**Coca-Cola:** The global beverage giant has launched a range of low-sugar and sugar-free options, including Coca-Cola Zero Sugar and Diet Coke. In India, the company introduced Thums Up Charged No Sugar, catering to local preferences.

**Nestlé:** Nestlé has committed to reducing sugar across its product portfolio. In India, the company has reformulated its popular Maggi ketchup to include 25 per cent less sugar.

**Indian Startups:** Companies like Epigamia and Slurrp Farm are creating innovative products that prioritise health without compromising on taste. Epigamia's Greek yogurt and Slurrp Farm's millet-based snacks are excellent examples of reduced-sugar offerings.

### Road Ahead

The shift towards reduced sugar is not just a health trend but a fundamental change in how food is produced and consumed. As consumer awareness grows and regulatory frameworks become more stringent, the food and beverage industry will need to adapt to stay relevant. The focus will increasingly be on innovation—finding new ways to deliver taste and satisfaction while minimising sugar content. Collaboration between stakeholders, including governments, manufacturers, and consumers, will be key to driving this change. Public health campaigns, incentives for reformulation, and consumer education can create an ecosystem where healthier choices are the norm rather than the exception.

The journey towards reduced sugar is a collective effort that requires commitment from all sectors of society. For consumers, it means making informed choices and prioritising health over convenience. For manufacturers, it involves investing in research and innovation to create products that meet the demand for healthier options. And for regulators, it means crafting policies that encourage better practices without stifling growth.

As the industry continues to innovate and adapt, the future of food looks healthier and more sustainable. By redefining sweetness, we are not only addressing the immediate health concerns of today but also paving the way for a healthier tomorrow. The road may be challenging, but the destination—a world where reduced-sugar options are abundant and accessible—is well worth the effort. **NS**

**Abhitash Singh**  
[abhitash.singh@agrospectrumindia.com](mailto:abhitash.singh@agrospectrumindia.com)



**Nidhi Singh,**  
Co-founder, Samosa Singh

“Navigating regulatory frameworks can be complex, especially with evolving food safety standards and labelling requirements”

The Indian snacking industry, with its rich blend of traditional delicacies and contemporary innovations, is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the market today. From bustling street corners to modern Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs), the snacking culture in India has seen a remarkable transformation, driven by changing consumer preferences, increasing urbanisation, and a growing inclination towards convenience foods. Nidhi Singh, Co-founder, Samosa Singh, one of India's leading snack brands, shares her thoughts with NUFFOODS Spectrum around the evolving Indian snacking sector, emerging trends in QSRs, and how Samosa Singh is navigating the challenges and opportunities of a dynamic food industry. Edited Excerpts:

**What are the current trends and what was the gap in the Indian snacks market that you identified before starting Samosa Singh?**

The Indian snacks industry has undergone a significant transformation, driven by changing consumer preferences, urbanisation, and the growing demand for healthier and hygienic options. Key trends include the rise of premiumisation, health-focused snacking, and the incorporation of regional flavours in modern formats. Before starting Samosa Singh, we identified a gap in the market for traditional Indian snacks that could marry authenticity with innovation. There was a lack of standardised, hygienically produced samosas that appealed to both nostalgia and modern sensibilities. Our mission was to elevate this beloved snack while ensuring consistent quality and convenience.

**What regulatory or supply chain challenges do you encounter in the Indian snacks industry?**

Navigating regulatory frameworks, such as FSSAI compliance, can be complex, especially with evolving food safety standards and labelling requirements. On the supply chain front, maintaining the quality and freshness of raw materials, ensuring cold chain integrity, and managing logistics across diverse geographies

present significant challenges. Additionally, fluctuating input costs and dependency on local vendors can impact operations, necessitating robust supplier relationships and contingency planning.

**What untapped opportunities do you see in the Indian snacks market, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities?**

Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities present immense growth opportunities, with rising disposable incomes and an increasing appetite for branded, hygienic snack options. There is potential to introduce smaller, more affordable pack sizes, and regionalised flavours that cater to local tastes. These markets also offer opportunities for QSR expansion, leveraging the growing penetration of digital platforms and delivery services to reach a broader audience.

**Samosa Singh has recently expanded its manufacturing capacity. Can you tell us more about the scale, location, investment made, capacity, and features of this facility?**

In 2024, Samosa Singh significantly enhanced its manufacturing capabilities by setting up a new facility in Bengaluru.

This state-of-the-art unit represents a substantial investment, with a 5x increase in production capacity to meet growing domestic and international demand. The facility incorporates advanced



automation, ensuring consistency, efficiency, and scalability. It also adheres to stringent hygiene standards and sustainable practices, positioning us as a leader in the organised Indian snacks market.

**You aim to operate 100+ physical QSR stores in the next 18 months. Which cities or regions will you prioritise, and what factors influenced these choices?**

Our QSR expansion strategy focuses on metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Delhi NCR along with emerging urban centers in Tier 2 cities. These locations were chosen based on factors such as population density, food consumption patterns, and the growing popularity of quick-service dining. We aim to establish a strong presence in high-footfall areas such as malls, tech parks, and transit hubs to maximise visibility and accessibility.

**You also aim to expand globally very soon. Which international markets are you targeting, and why? Are there specific strategies or partnerships you are exploring to enter international markets?**

Our global expansion efforts target markets with significant Indian diaspora populations, such as the Middle East, North America, and Southeast Asia. These regions have a strong affinity for Indian cuisine and present an opportunity to introduce our unique offerings to a wider audience. We are exploring strategic partnerships with local distributors, retail chains, and foodservice operators to ensure smooth market entry and build brand awareness. Customising our product range to suit regional palates will also be a key focus.

**What are the possible challenges in entering international markets?**

Entering international markets comes with challenges such as navigating regulatory compliance, understanding local consumer preferences, and managing logistics for perishable products. Additionally, establishing a robust supply chain and competing with established global snack brands will require strategic marketing and operational excellence. We are currently in early nascent stages and not in a position to comment more around this.

**Samosa Singh started mainly as a B2B player. Then it ventured into physical QSR format in December 2024. Why this shift? And what are the recent trends in the Indian QSR sector?**

The shift to a physical QSR format was driven by the desire to create direct touchpoints with consumers, offering a more personalised brand experience. The QSR sector in India is witnessing rapid growth, fueled by

urbanisation, a young demographic, and the increasing popularity of dine-in and takeaway formats. Trends such as tech-enabled ordering, focus on hygiene, and fusion menus are shaping the industry, making it an opportune time to diversify our business model. Manufacturing and B2B still is our biggest strength and we continue scaling this alongside.

**Are you planning to experiment with new formats, such as cloud kitchens or kiosks, to complement your QSR model?**

Yes, we are actively exploring complementary formats such as food trucks and kiosks. Our recent food trucks are a big success, while kiosks offer a cost-effective way to establish presence in high-traffic areas. These models allow us to reach a wider audience without the overhead costs associated with traditional outlets.

**What role does technology play in scaling your manufacturing and QSR operations?**

Technology is central to our operations, from automating manufacturing processes to ensuring consistency and scalability. In our QSR model, technology enhances customer experience through digital ordering, real-time tracking, and personalised marketing. Data analytics helps optimise inventory, reduce waste, and improve demand forecasting, while IoT solutions ensure food safety and operational efficiency.

**What future trends do you foresee for the Indian snacks industry over the next 5 years?**

The Indian snacks industry is poised for continued growth, with trends such as health-focused innovations, plant-based options, and regional flavours gaining prominence. Sustainability in packaging and production will become increasingly important, along with the adoption of technology for personalised experiences. The rise of omni-channel retail and the proliferation of snackable formats for on-the-go consumption are also expected to shape the future landscape.

**What was the revenue of Samosa Singh in FY2024 and what do you expect in FY2025? Is there any specific growth percentage you are aiming for?**

Now with 5x manufacturing capacity, we are building to become one of the largest manufacturers of samosas in the country. The growth will be driven by our QSR expansion and entry into international markets. We will be opening 100+ stores in the next 18 months—with an unwavering focus on quality, we aim to solidify our position as a leading player in the Indian snacks industry. <sup>NS</sup>

**Mansi Jamsudkar**  
[mansi.jamsudkar@mmactiv.com](mailto:mansi.jamsudkar@mmactiv.com)



**Siddharth Saxena,**  
Chief Procurement Officer,  
iD Fresh Food

## “Building long-term, sustainable supplier partnerships is crucial for growth of fresh food sector”

iD Fresh Food, specialising in ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat products is at the cusp of expanding its supplier network with plans to invest Rs 100 crore in doubling the company's manufacturing capacity. In an interaction with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Siddharth Saxena, Chief Procurement Officer, iD Fresh Food, shared the importance of expanding supplier networks, fostering collaboration, and leveraging partnerships to drive growth and sustainability in the fresh foods segment. Edited excerpts:

### How are supplier partnerships evolving in the fresh food industry in India?

Supplier partnerships in the fresh food industry are becoming increasingly vital as we navigate challenges such as supply chain disruptions, fluctuating demand, and rising operational costs. In India, where the market is both dynamic and competitive, strong supplier relationships are crucial for improving operational efficiency, reducing delays, and ensuring product quality. Collaborating closely with suppliers allows us to streamline logistics, maintain consistency, and quickly address issues. As the market continues to grow, leveraging data and technology to enhance transparency and communication will be key to building long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships that can drive innovation and growth in the fresh food sector.

### As iD Fresh Food is planning to expand supplier partnerships, what criteria do you prioritise when selecting new suppliers and how do you ensure alignment with suppliers in terms of values, quality, and sustainability?

At iD fresh Food, selecting new suppliers is a thorough process where we prioritise key factors like quality, reliability, cost-effectiveness, and financial stability. Given our commitment to sustainability, we also focus on environmental practices and regulatory

compliance. It's crucial that suppliers share our values, particularly in maintaining product integrity and supporting ethical sourcing. We assess their capacity to scale with us and evaluate their cultural fit to ensure seamless collaboration. Our long-term vision emphasises building sustainable, transparent partnerships, ensuring that suppliers align with our core principles of quality, innovation, and responsibility, which are central to iD's mission and values.

### The company has recently expanded across 11 more cities. What are the key challenges in scaling supplier partnerships during this expansion, especially in the fresh food segment?

Scaling supplier partnerships during iD Fresh Food's expansion into 11 new cities presents several challenges, particularly in sourcing consistent varieties of fresh produce. The regional variability in crop availability and quality can make it difficult to ensure uniformity across geographies. However, our strong supplier development team plays a crucial role in addressing this. They actively identify and onboard reliable suppliers in new regions, ensuring that they meet our rigorous quality and sustainability standards. Additionally, by building close relationships with local suppliers, we can optimise supply chain efficiency, reduce costs, and maintain the high-quality products our customers expect.





**iD Fresh Food has recently marked its entry into the spices category. How do you see supplier partnerships evolving as you grow the spices category? What are the biggest challenges in managing supplier relationships for spices compared to your traditional categories?**

As we expand into the spices category, building strong, reliable supplier partnerships will be critical to maintaining the quality and purity our consumers expect. We've carefully selected our current spice supplier after extensive research and audits to ensure that we meet stringent quality standards. As the category grows, we plan to onboard additional suppliers to diversify and manage risk. One of the biggest challenges in this category is ensuring consistent purity, as well as navigating fluctuations in raw material prices, which can be volatile. We will continue to focus on building long-term relationships with suppliers to maintain stability and quality in this new venture.

**How do you address issues like supply chain disruptions or fluctuating costs while maintaining strong supplier relationships?**

To address supply chain disruptions and fluctuating costs, we maintain safety stock levels for most critical materials, ensuring we can manage short-term disruptions. In case of potential risks, we proactively increase these safety stock levels. Inflation, particularly on key commodities like rice, wheat, and edible oil, has been a significant challenge in recent years. To mitigate this, we adopt a mixed strategy of spot buying and forward cover, securing favourable prices when available. This approach not only helps manage costs but also strengthens our relationships with suppliers by providing them with clear demand signals, ensuring long-term stability and trust.

**What role does technology play in improving procurement and supplier collaboration?**

Technology plays a pivotal role in improving procurement and supplier collaboration at iD Fresh Food. Our internal software enhances transparency and accountability across the entire procurement process. By leveraging data analytics, we can accurately predict demand and share real-time insights with our suppliers, enabling them to plan their activities more effectively. This collaborative approach helps streamline the supply chain, reduces lead times, and minimises stockouts. Additionally, technology fosters better communication, allowing for faster issue resolution and improving overall efficiency, ultimately driving cost savings and stronger, more reliable partnerships with our suppliers. This synergy is key to scaling our operations.

**What suggestions would you give to aspiring businesses in the food processing sector on fostering long-term partnerships with their suppliers?**

For businesses in the food processing sector, building long-term, sustainable supplier partnerships is crucial for growth. While price is important, it shouldn't be the sole focus. Evaluate suppliers based on the overall value they bring to your business, including quality, reliability, and service. A strong supplier offers competitive pricing but also invests in the relationship, ensuring consistent quality and timely delivery. They understand that true value extends beyond cost—it's about creating mutual trust and collaboration. On the other hand, a supplier focused only on cost may compromise quality, which can harm your brand and customer satisfaction in the long run.

**The company is in talks to invest Rs 100 crore to double its manufacturing capacity. What are the investment company plans to make as it plans to expand supplier partnerships?**

As part of our Rs 100 crore investment to double our manufacturing capacity, iD Fresh Food plans to focus on sourcing from local suppliers across new geographies. This will not only support regional businesses but also align with our growth strategy, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships. By diversifying our supplier base, we aim to reduce costs, mitigate supply chain risks, and shorten time to market. Additionally, engaging with new suppliers will drive innovation, allowing us to enhance our product offerings and stay ahead of market trends. This approach ensures sustainable growth and strengthens the resilience of our supply chain.

**What do you think will be the implications of the recent plans of expanding supplier partnerships on the FY2025 revenue of iD Fresh Food?**

Expanding our supplier partnerships as part of our geographic manufacturing expansion will significantly impact iD Fresh Food FY2025 revenue. By sourcing from local suppliers, we not only support regional growth but also optimise our supply chain, reducing costs and mitigating risks associated with disruptions. This diversification will enable us to shorten time to market, ensuring faster delivery to customers and a stronger competitive position. Additionally, engaging with new suppliers will drive innovation in our product offerings, attracting more customers. Overall, these strategic moves will enhance operational efficiency, expand our market reach, and contribute to substantial revenue growth in FY2025. **NS**

**Mansi Jamsudkar**  
mansi.jamsudkar@mmactiv.com

# “The underdeveloped cold chain infrastructure and distribution facilities can affect the quality and safety of frozen food in India”



**Saurabh Saxena,**  
President & Executive  
Director, Sumeru

Sumeru, a leading player in India's frozen food industry, has carved a niche for itself through its innovative approach and commitment to delivering authentic, nutritious, and convenient food solutions. From its origins as a clearing and forwarding agent for Hindustan Lever Limited to becoming a trailblazer in the frozen food segment, Sumeru has continually adapted to evolving consumer demands. With its advanced technology, focus on sustainability, and a diverse range of products catering to regional tastes, the brand has emerged as a household name. In a conversation with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Sumeru's President and Executive Director Saurabh Saxena shares insights into the journey, challenges, and future plans for both domestic and international markets, offering a closer look at its strategies for staying ahead in a competitive industry. Edited excerpts;

## Let us know more about the inception of Sumeru?

We do not have any specific founders as Innovative Foods Limited was started as a clearing and forwarding agent for Hindustan Lever Limited's ice-cream business. From 1989 onwards, the company was promoted by Amalgam Foods Ltd (AFL) in association with multinationals like Mitsubishi Corporation, Saudi Fisheries Company, Gourmet Club Corp, Ristic GmbH, etc. In the late 90s, the concept of frozen foods business in domestic retail came up. That was the time the promoters were aggressive in seafood exports through value-added frozen seafood in the US and the EU markets. It was felt that the retail trends would follow in India. Hence, one unit in Kochi was dedicated to domestic business. We started with the brand named 'Snowboy', but this had trademark issues. So, we switched to Sumeru, which is a mythological mountain standing at the centre of four continents.

## How do you see the demand for convenience-driven yet healthy meal options evolving in India?

India's health food market has been rapidly growing, particularly in urban areas where consumers are actively seeking organic, natural and fortified food options. The demand for low-sugar, low-salt, zero-carb, gluten-free, high-on protein and oxidant foods is on the rise. There is an increase in health-awareness, rise in disposable income and also a conscious lifestyle shift. All of this is happening due to a very important factor, i.e., easy access to information. It is indeed an exciting time to be in this business. Sumeru is keenly following this shift and experimenting with alternative food products.

## What factors do you think have contributed most to the shift in consumer preferences toward frozen and ready-to-eat foods?

The Indian frozen food and ready-to-eat market has



significantly grown over the last few years and market prediction says it will continue to do so. This is primarily driven by evolving lifestyles, increasing disposable income, growing urbanisation and burgeoning middle-class population. The offering remains key here, that is convenience and time efficiency. Additionally, due to Q-commerce and enhanced distribution networks have also helped greatly in dissemination of awareness towards frozen food.

### **How do you ensure a balance between convenience and nutrition in your offerings?**

Sumeru uses the most advanced IQF technology to freeze products. One of the biggest advantages that IQF offers is that the food items stay separate after they've been frozen. This is a great plus to the consumer. Fresh vegetables normally produce enzymes that cause the loss of colour, flavour and nutrients. Simple freezing leads to the formation of large ice crystals in the cells of the product, thereby leading to loss of nutrients, texture and taste. IQF freezes the products individually and deactivates the enzymes. This ensures the produce remains as fresh and nutritious as it was initially. The process works the same way in the case of meat and seafood. Our strict quality measures ensure food is frozen under highly-regulated and quality-controlled environments. This kind of technique keeps packed food fresh and healthy till the time it is defrosted and consumed.

### **Could you share some of your key innovations in the frozen food category?**

One of our key innovations this year has been Frozen Millet Paratha. It is a common knowledge that millet holds a significant social importance by fostering nutritional diversity, providing food security, and empowers environmental diversity. Keeping this fact in mind and also our keenness to be able to provide convenience to our consumers, our R&D teams were able to come up with a product that is simply heat and eat. Otherwise, we are all aware how fragile it is to handle millet flour at households and turn it into a finished product.

### **How does your company incorporate modern technology and research to maintain the quality and taste of its products?**

Sumeru has always been an innovator in nature and the key to innovation is to have a strong R&D and product development team. We have ensured that our teams are driven with the mindset to constantly focus on building solution oriented products.

### **India is known for its diverse culinary preferences. How do you cater to such a wide variety of tastes?**

We have been championing innovation and have

introduced regional preferences time and again with products such as millet khichadi, an array of parathas (stuffed and non-stuffed), kebabs, rolls, chicken-based recipes, South Indian breakfast range to name a few.

### **What steps do you take to ensure authenticity in regional flavours and recipes?**

As mentioned already that innovation is in our DNA, we have never let our strong R&D mindset out of sight. Each of our products are made from locally sourced ingredients with no added colours or flavours.

### **Are there any specific challenges you face in adapting frozen food products to the Indian market?**

Yes, there are several challenges that persist in the Indian market with regards to adapting or adopting frozen food. Even though the frozen food segment is growing, there is still a lack of awareness. Consumers still perceive frozen food as less fresh than fresh food and additionally, the fresh food market in India is large and provides constant competition. Add to these, the underdeveloped cold chain infrastructure and distribution facilities that can affect the quality and safety of frozen food in the country.

### **What are the biggest challenges the frozen food industry faces in India, and how are you addressing them?**

Thankfully, a lot of government initiatives have helped in scaling up the category specially by focusing on growing the cold storage infrastructure in various states and also, quite a few startups have proffered in cold storage logistics which is actually helping grow the category. At Sumeru, we are looking at region level depots to reduce timelines and fuel the growth.

### **How do you view the role of sustainability in the frozen food segment?**

We are building categories which are very innovative and focused on convenience. As a brand we are trying to build solution-oriented health products that will ensure sustainability and growth.

### **What are your future plans for expanding Sumeru's footprint in both domestic and international markets?**

We are aggressively looking to expand our footprint in the USA keeping in mind the Indian diaspora in the country. We are focusing on ambitious growth in Tier-2 towns in the Indian market by simply driving distribution. **NS**

**Abhitash Singh**  
[abhitash.singh@agrospectrumindia.com](mailto:abhitash.singh@agrospectrumindia.com)



**Dr Abhishek Chandra,**  
Assistant Professor,  
School of Health Sciences and  
Technology, UPES

## “Application of robotics, smart sensors, AI, IoT & Big Data are enablers of the future food processing innovations”

In an era where the food and beverage industry is at the crossroads of innovation and sustainability, Dr Abhishek Chandra, Assistant Professor at the School of Health Sciences and Technology, UPES, shares valuable insights with NUFFOODS Spectrum on transformative trends shaping the global food technology landscape. From alternative proteins and personalised nutrition to reducing food waste and embracing cutting-edge technologies like 3D food printing, Dr Chandra delves into how these advancements address critical challenges such as food security and environmental sustainability. Edited excerpts:

### **What are some of the most transformative trends currently shaping the food technology landscape?**

Innovative technologies like nutraceuticals, alternative proteins, and other emerging food technology trends offer practical solutions by lowering the cost and increasing the accessibility of nutrient-dense food. In contrast to conventional animal-based food, alternative proteins, for example, provide sustainable and less resource-intensive sources of nutrition. Even in lower income regions, nutraceuticals—fortified foods and supplements—improve diet quality while preventing nutritional deficits. These developments not only improve environmental sustainability but also food security.

### **Can you elaborate on innovations in food waste reduction and upcycling? How are these practices being adopted by industries worldwide?**

Technologies like smart food packaging with sensors

to track freshness, dynamic pricing based on nearing expiration dates, using food waste to make new products like baked goods or protein powders, and designing anaerobic digestion systems that convert food waste into biogas are examples of innovations in food waste reduction and upcycling. Businesses are embracing these practices by incorporating them into their supply chains, collaborating with food recovery organisations, and marketing and upcycled products to consumers as a sustainable choice. Emerging technology, however, is an integral part of the solution. Currently, many technologies are being used to manage food waste, such as AI to optimise food distribution and consumption patterns, IoT devices to monitor and reduce waste in the supply chain, and composting systems. Food waste is effectively separated and processed for recycling or energy production by smart bins and waste sorting technologies.



**What unique career opportunities are available for B.Tech. graduates in food technology, particularly in roles like sustainable food technologist or food data scientist?**

A B.Tech. in Food Technology opens doors to unique career paths like sustainable food technologist, food data scientist, food process engineer in food processing companies, quality control laboratories, regulatory affairs specialists for sustainable food labelling, research scientists in areas like alternative protein development and they can even establish their food-related ventures. As a sustainable food technologist, they may develop food production processes that minimize waste, reduce water usage, and utilise renewable energy sources.

Analyse the life cycle impact of food products and identify areas for sustainability improvement. Also, they can collaborate with farmers and food manufacturers to implement sustainable practices. A food data scientist can apply data analytics to predict consumer trends, explore areas for efficiency enhancements, and optimise food manufacturing processes. They also work on developing predictive models for managing inventory levels and estimating food demand. They also analyse large data sets on sustainability, quality, and food safety metrics.

**With innovations like 3D food printing and personalised nutrition, what opportunities exist for entrepreneurial ventures in food technology?**

Innovations like 3D food printing could be advantageous for every entity involved in the food chain, including on-demand food production, consumer-centric approach adoption, innovative food perceptions, satiety control, food loss reduction, customised sensory products, digital food manufacturing transition, and new business creation. Numerous food technology-related entrepreneurial ventures may arise from it, such as space food, elderly food, decentralised food production, innovative food design, sustainable food production, personalised nutrition, and commercial innovation.

**What specialised skills or certifications should food technology students acquire to enhance their employability in emerging sectors?**

To enhance employability in emerging food technology sectors, food technology students should focus on acquiring specialised skills in areas like food safety and quality assurance (including HACCP certification), Knowledge of international food safety standards like BRC, SQF, FSSC 22000, expertise in allergen management, proficiency in laboratory techniques like HPLC, GC-MS, PCR, and near-infrared spectroscopy, sensory evaluation and consumer testing skills, food product development, nutritional labelling.

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**How is UPES collaborating with the food industry to provide practical exposure and real-world problem-solving opportunities for its students?**

To collaborate with the food industry, UPES offers an industry-aligned curriculum in its Food Technology programme. This curriculum ensures graduates possess the necessary skills to readily contribute to the food sector. This provides students with practical exposure through industrial training, internships, and on-site visits to food processing plants, enabling them to solve real-world problems and gain firsthand experience in the food sector. Additionally, UPES partners with leaders in the food industry and research institutes to bring in expert guest lectures and mentorship opportunities for students to learn from professionals in the field.

**With the anticipated population growth of 9.7 billion by 2050, what role will food technologists play in achieving food security on a global scale?**

To feed the projected 9.7 billion people by 2050, food technologists will play a critical role in developing innovative technologies that will increase food production, improve food quality and nutritional value, minimise food waste, and adapt to changing climate conditions. The developments in various food technologies for industries include digital transformation and process automation of the food processing industry. Application of robotics, smart sensors, Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, and Big Data as the main enablers of the future food processing innovations. It offers advantages in terms of production efficiency (using Big Data to estimate demand), safety (using the Internet of Things to connect sensors and devices), and quality control (using robotics and artificial intelligence, for example, to sort during processing).

Key areas where food technologists can contribute include Alternative protein sources, Food preservation and waste reduction and Nutritional fortification and enhancement. **NS**

**Abhitash Singh**  
[abhitash.singh@agrospectrumindia.com](mailto:abhitash.singh@agrospectrumindia.com)



**Srishtii Rastogi**, Assistant Manager, Health and Nutrition, Microsave Consulting

## Exploring India's Untapped Potential of Fish-based Products

**India's nutrition scenario encounters major obstacles, especially concerning women and children. Among women aged 15–49, 18.7 percent possess a body mass index (BMI) under 18.5, signifying prevalent undernutrition. Lack of protein exacerbates malnutrition issues in India. In comparison, fish provides high-quality protein that is easily digested and contains essential amino acids. Growing dietary trends in India further emphasize fish's potential as a vital food source. This transition towards healthier eating habits offers a chance to establish fish as a fundamental food that fits both traditional dietary practices and contemporary health objectives.**

**T**he global seafood market is undergoing unprecedented growth, driven by increased recognition of seafood as a nutritious protein source, high production, and increased consumption across countries. The market is valued at \$386.73 billion in 2023 and is poised to grow to \$837 billion by 2032, with an annual growth rate of 11 per cent. The Asia-Pacific region is at the forefront of this surge as it dominates global seafood production and consumption.

In this landscape, aquaculture has outpaced traditional capture fisheries and emerged as the driving force of growth. While capture fisheries have largely stabilised, aquaculture production has surged to a record 130.9 million tonnes (MT). This includes 94.4 MT of aquatic animals, which constitutes 51 per cent of total aquatic animal production. This shift highlights aquaculture's vital role in meeting the rising global demand for seafood and addressing critical protein gaps worldwide.

The South Asian region produces 23.83 MT of fish, which represents 12.14 per cent of the total global fish production and 14.89 per cent of aquaculture animal production. India is a crucial contributor to the blue economy, with a market size of more than 20.7 MT of fish in 2023. Yet, the Indian domestic market has an untapped potential, which is driven by evolving dietary habits, urbanisation, and an increasing preference for convenience foods.

The Indian seafood market is unique. On one hand, fish is deeply ingrained in some regional cuisines. It is celebrated for its taste and versatility. On the other hand,

rising urbanisation and health awareness drive demand for convenience foods that combine nutrition with ease of preparation. This has resulted in the rise of imported fish and fish products by almost 534 per cent since 2005. This mix of traditional and modern preferences makes India's fish market lucrative for fish-based products.






While domestic fish consumption accounted for 83.65 per cent of production in 2019-20, the per capita fish consumption at 8.89 kilograms (kg) annually remains far below the global average of 20 kg. Fish consumption for the urban population is 7.2 percentage points higher than consumption for the rural population. This urban-rural divide in consumption patterns highlights the need for targeted strategies to make fish more accessible and affordable across demographics. India's growing need for value-added products includes dried fish, surimi, and marinated fish, which cater to specific regional tastes. Products, such as fish jerky and wafers that combine taste with convenience and shelf stability, are gaining traction.

### **Why do fish deserve a larger portion of the Indian plate?**

India's nutrition landscape faces significant challenges, particularly for women and children. Among women aged 15–49, 18.7 per cent have a body mass index (BMI) below 18.5, which indicates widespread undernutrition.

Protein deficiency worsens malnutrition in India. The average daily per capita protein supply is just 70.5 grams, which is below the global average of 90 grams. Only 20 per cent of the population meets their daily protein requirement, and just 10 per cent are aware of

## Macro-nutrients obtained across protein-rich sources of food

	 Fish (Silver carp)	 Eggs	 Cooked Dal	 Mutton	 Chicken
Per 100g					
<b>Protein</b>	18g	13g	7.2g	20.6g	27g
<b>Fat</b>	5.6g	11g	2.6g	21g	13.5g
<b>Calories</b>	127 Kcals	143 Kcals	138.6 Kcals	109 Kcals	237 Kcals
<b>% protein of RDA<sup>#</sup></b>	33.33%	24.07%	13.33%	38.14%	50%
<b>Est. price</b>	₹150 - 180/kg	₹7/piece	₹150 - 250/kg	₹600-1000/kg	₹ 300 - 400/kg

<sup>#</sup>RDA: Recommended Dietary Allowance based on adult weighing 65kgs (ICMR, NIN 2024)

their daily protein needs. While aquatic food consumption is gradually increasing, many Indian diets still rely on legumes, yogurt, and cottage cheese as primary protein sources. However, traditional Indian cooking methods for legumes can lead to reduced protein retention.

In contrast, fish offers easily digestible, high-quality protein with essential amino acids. A 150-gram serving of fish can meet 50–60 per cent of an adult’s daily protein requirement. Additionally, fish is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, and essential minerals. This makes it vital for brain development, immunity, and overall health—especially for children and pregnant women. Emerging dietary trends in India further underline fish’s potential as a key food source. The “Eat Healthy, Live Healthy” perspective has gained traction—22 per cent of Indians identify as “health seekers,” and 35 per cent reduce unhealthy ingredients actively in their diets. This shift toward healthier eating habits presents an opportunity to position fish as a staple food that aligns with traditional dietary habits and modern health goals.

### Promoting fish for nutrition

Government programmes are already using fish to address malnutrition. In Odisha, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme introduced fish powder in meals for children under six and pregnant and lactating women. This initiative used low-cost (Rs 100/kg) dried anchovy fish powder that helped improve the nutritional status of children and provided livelihood opportunities for fishing communities. About 100 grams of this fish powder provided around 70 grams of protein and high Vitamin A, B2, and calcium. A similar pilot in Assam’s Kamrup district added fish powder to Anganwadi Centres (AWC) beneficiaries’ meals. Within seven months, the

proportion of underweight children decreased from 13.79 per cent to 8.33 per cent, and severely stunted children fell from 14.39 per cent to 10.76 per cent. Studies suggest that the consumption of dried fish powder has proven to be nutritious, particularly for children. These examples show fish-based products’ potential to improve nutrition outcomes.

These initiatives represent a chance for private firms to collaborate with governments to scale such efforts. Partnerships can address malnutrition and create business opportunities, such as the following:

**Product innovation and standardisation:** Companies can develop and standardise nutritious, culturally relevant fish-based products, such as fortified powders and ready-to-cook meals, for government nutrition programmes.

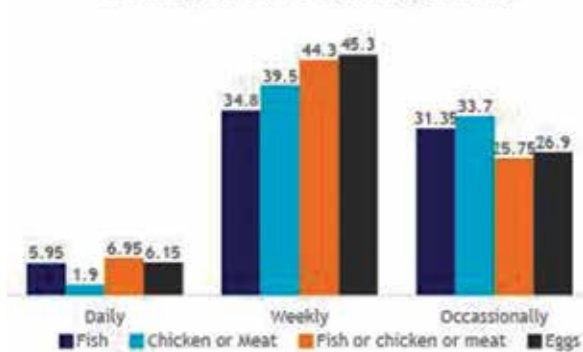
**Supply chain strengthening:** Companies can establish decentralised production units near fishing communities and improve cold chains to enhance efficiency and reduce costs while creating local livelihoods.

**Pilots and expansion:** Private players can co-invest in pilot programmes with state governments to introduce fish-based products in new regions. They can use successful models from Odisha and Assam to assess market size and establish their brands through nutrition supplementation programmes, such as ICDS and PM POSHAN.

### Opportunity window for the private sector

The demand for fish and fish-based products has grown in India by about 9.2 percentage points from 2005 to 2019-21. This growth presents a captivating opportunity for private-sector firms to innovate and expand in this evolving market. Several factors make this sector ripe for investment, such as increased domestic consumption and

Frequency of non-vegetarian food consumption 2019-21 (% of population)



Source: World Fish Center

the untapped potential of value-added products tailored to Indian tastes.

About 40 per cent of Indian consumers eat fish at least once a week. The annual fish consumption among fish-eating populations has grown by over 17 per cent since 2015 till 2021. While the northeastern states, Kerala and West Bengal, lead in fish consumption, urban areas across the country are witnessing a rising preference for fish as a protein source. The government's ICDS programme and the PM POSHAN mid-day meal programme present a potential market to enter the private sector. These programmes cater to pregnant and lactating women, children aged one to six, and adolescent girls. The top 15 fish-consuming states require nearly 20,000 tonnes of dried fish powder monthly to meet the programmes' nutritional needs. This highlights the significant potential for market investment in processed fish products.

By 2029-30, per capita fish consumption is expected to reach 14 kg annually, driving the demand for an additional 10.5 MT of fish to meet domestic needs. Despite this growing demand, the market for processed aquatic foods remains low as most seafood is either consumed fresh or with minimal processing, which involves drying or freezing. Most value-added fish products are exported, which leaves a gap in the domestic market. This opens the door for private players to create innovative offerings that cater to the health-conscious and convenience-seeking segments of Indian consumers. Ready-to-eat (RTE) fish curries and ready-to-cook (RTC) marinated and coated fish

have shown potential. Similarly, fish-based snacks, such as fish wafers, fish jerky, coated fish fillets, and soups tailored to Indian palates, can attract a broader audience.

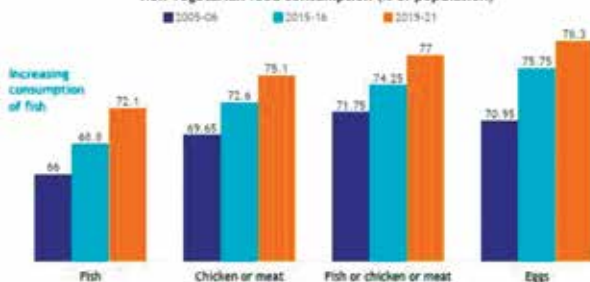
Fish powder is another nutrient-rich product made by drying and grinding small fish, which retains nutritional value and extends its shelf life. People can easily add it to dishes without significantly altering the flavour. For children and families, fish powder mixed with spices offers nutrition and taste and addresses concerns about fish bones that often deter younger consumers. This untapped avenue of fish powder is currently being used as fish meal primarily in animal, poultry, or fish feed. Studies have shown its nutritional benefits, particularly for children. This low-cost, high-impact product can be positioned for malnutrition programmes or branded as a premium offering for health-conscious consumers. Nutraceutical companies, too, can explore options, such as fortified fish powders or fish-based protein supplements, and use their existing distribution networks to reach health-focused customers.

India's fragmented cold chain significantly limits the availability of fresh fish in non-coastal and landlocked regions, where logistical constraints often result in inconsistent supplies and higher costs. Investments in cold storage facilities, refrigerated transportation, and efficient distribution networks can strengthen cold chain infrastructure. Improved cold chain systems would enable year-round availability of fresh and frozen fish, which mitigates the seasonal fluctuations that often affect supply. In regions where fish consumption is traditionally lower due to limited access, such infrastructure could help create consistent markets by ensuring affordability and quality. This can enhance fish consumption countrywide, as urban centers in landlocked states could benefit from timely and fresh deliveries. The private sector's involvement in the development of cold chain systems could help cater to evolving consumer preferences for convenience and freshness, which would further drive demand.

### Growth potential of fisheries

The growing seafood market in India reflects more than just economic potential—it highlights the evolving preferences of a rising middle class that seeks nutritious, sustainable, and convenient food options. Private firms have a huge opportunity to fill gaps in product availability and consumer awareness, from fortified fish powder to dried fish snacks and innovative nutraceuticals beyond fish oil. Businesses can capitalise on a growing market if they tap into these opportunities and align themselves with public health initiatives. Along the way, they can address malnutrition, enhance protein intake, and promote sustainable fisheries. **NS**

Non-vegetarian food consumption (% of population)



Source: World Fish Center





**Richa Jaggi,**  
Co-founder & CMO, Awshad

## Future of Indian Edible CBD Market

The Indian edible Cannabidiol (CBD) market is poised for a record-breaking year in 2025. Owing to the escalating demand for these products worldwide and in India, where the products are seeing more acceptance and the growing industry is set for supercharged growth. However, challenges are inevitable including regulation, stigma, and lack of structures.



2024 has been a landmark year for the CBD industry in India. As the global market for CBD rises daily, India has started experiencing the same increment and people now are showing immense interest in CBD edible products such as gummies, capsules and oils as tinctures. These products meet the needs of customers that do not wish to use allopathic medicines to deal with stress, anxiety, chronic pain, and insomnia.

One of the major reasons for it is that people today know much more about CBD and its effectiveness than ever before, thanks to social media, people's endorsement, and an increasing number of doctors recommending CBD. This is mainly driven by the urban millennials and Gen Z who regard CBD as a natural medicine.

In addition, India's legalisation of hemp and medical cannabis as agricultural products has provided a push to businesses to enter the CBD market. There are already several companies in the sector and numerous foreign CBD companies are looking at India as a future market.

The same is anticipated to continue in 2025 and pave the way for a good growth.

### India's Geographical Advantage

CBD in India has tremendous opportunities because of its geographical position and favourable climate. Variety of soil types and good climate makes it suitable for growing medicinal cannabis plants. States like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh are seen to be slowly gaining importance for medicinal cannabis farming

Cannabis plants have been part of Indian culture from ancient times, being utilised for its medicinal properties in Ayurveda. This historical relationship makes India a natural leader in the medical cannabis sector. Moreover, its geographical position could easily provide entry into the large Asian markets such as China, Japan and South East Asia where the demand for CBD products is expected to grow. India's low labour cost and attractively priced CBD edibles and raw materials may propel the country to become an export hub.

### Predictions for 2025

Looking ahead, The Medical Cannabis market in India is projected to grow by 3.66 per cent (2024-2029) resulting in a market volume of \$270.40 million in 2029. This growth can be fueled by several factors like expanding consumer base with awareness and proper knowledge dissemination, technological advancements in the methods used in extraction, along with improvements in the ingredients of edible CBD products, global collaborations between Indian companies and overseas CBD brands to grasp technology and investments.

### Challenges Hindering Growth

However, the Indian medical cannabis is facing some crucial challenges, that could hinder the market:

**Regulatory Ambiguity:** India's cannabis and CBD industry is relatively underdeveloped in terms of legal formalisation and regulation. Although products made of hemp-derived CBD with THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) content are technically legal, the absence of clear rules leads to misunderstanding. Getting licenses is a challenge for many businesses and due to legal prosecution risks, many do not invest in the market. A more systematic and integrated policy, on the lines of policies in Canada or a few states in the United States could go a long way in offering much required certainty.

**Stigma and Misconceptions:** CBD is associated as a recreational drug due to which CBD is often mistaken only for its psychoactive effects. Remarkably, educated consumers are equally affected by this perception making it very difficult for business entities to market their commodities. This is a major obstacle since most people continue to associate CBD with cannabis' psychoactive effects; therefore, attention in social marketing and scientific literature to the fact that CBD is not psychoactive and can have medical benefits is a major aid.

**Supply chain and Infrastructure issues:** The edible CBD market depends a lot on sustainable hemp supplies and quality crops to accommodate the growing market demand. However, the cultivation of hemp has not really taken root in India and therefore poses some problems with quality assurance and quantity production. These problems require investments in new agricultural facilities and infrastructure, personnel training of farmers, and the development of fixed cultivation practices.

### Breakthroughs That Help Design the Future

CBD in India is an evolving market, and firms are trying to set out their unique selling proposition and trying to meet the new trends that have emerged internationally.

- **Diverse Product Offerings:** The market is witnessing

a diverse range of CBD products, including oils, tinctures, capsules, topicals, and edibles. These products cater to various consumer preferences and needs, some examples are:

- **Functional CBD Edibles:** An emerging trend of combining CBD products with other healing agents such as ashwagandha, mushrooms, turmeric and valuable ingredients is growing to match the demand for healthy diets.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Sustainability is becoming a popular trend in the business sector. Companies are using environment friendly material in packaging processes and obtaining their hemp from purely organic farms.
- **Personal Wellness Profiling:** Personalised CBD products are also possible now. There is an emergence of platforms that use data about an individual's health to suggest and prepare a personalised CBD-based product.
- **Focus on Quality and Authenticity and Emphasis on Transparency:** Consumers are increasingly seeking high-quality, authentic CBD products, as well as transparency in product labeling, which includes information on CBD product ingredients, extraction techniques, and third-party testing.

### Strategies for Success

For the edible CBD market in India to reach its full potential, stakeholders need to adopt a collaborative approach. The government and other authorities must design the legal environment, which would promote investments and the development of new technologies at the same time as protecting customers. Myths are especially prevalent when people are not informed adequately. Planning awareness campaigns to correct these misconceptions, and announcing the benefits of CBD is important. Moreover, it is also important to create a reliable supply chain that could guarantee that would focus on quality supply systems that are also scalable. Lastly, it is especially important to work with different CBD companies from around the world thereby increasing the pool of knowledge.

For the edible CBD market, the year 2025 is full of great potential. The problem is that further growth of this market will depend on the resolution of various challenges, such as regulation, stigmatisation, and infrastructure. By addressing these issues and leveraging innovations in technology, product development, and marketing, India can establish itself as a global leader in the edible CBD space. For businesses, consumers, and policymakers alike, the future of India's edible CBD market represents a unique opportunity to unlock the full potential of this natural, wellness-focused industry. **NS**

## The Coca-Cola Company names Henrique Braun EVP and COO

The Coca-Cola Company announced Henrique Braun has been named Executive Vice President (EVP) and Chief Operating Officer (COO), effective January 1, 2025. In this expanded role, Braun will be responsible for all of the company's operating units worldwide. He will report to Chairman and CEO James Quincey. Braun currently serves as EVP and President, International Development, overseeing the company's operating units for Latin America; Japan & South Korea; ASEAN & South Pacific; Greater China and Mongolia; Africa; India & Southwest Asia; and Eurasia and Middle East. As COO, Braun will add oversight of



the North America and Europe operating units. Prior to his current role, Braun served as President of the Latin America operating unit from 2020 to 2022 and as President of the Brazil business unit from 2016 to 2020. From 2013 to 2016, he was President of the company's Greater China & Korea business unit. Braun, 56, joined The Coca-Cola Company in 1996 in Atlanta and progressed through roles of increasing responsibilities in North America, Europe, Asia and Latin America. Those positions included supply chain, new business development, marketing, innovation, general management and bottling operations. Braun has served in regional, business unit and corporate functions.

## Zomato's global finance head Hemal Jain to step down by January 2025



Zomato's Global Finance Head, Hemal Jain, has announced her resignation and will officially leave the company on January 31, 2025, to pursue other opportunities. The food tech giant notified the stock exchanges about her

departure, marking the end of her six-year tenure with the organisation. Hemal, who also served as the CFO of Hyperpure, Zomato's B2B supplies arm, played a pivotal role in Zomato's journey, including its initial public offering (IPO) and the financing of its largest acquisition, Blinkit, as well as overseeing its transition process. Her resignation comes shortly after Zomato received a Rs 803 crore GST demand notice from the tax authorities. In her resignation letter, she stated "I hereby tender my resignation as Head – Business Finance of the Company. Please accept my last working day as 31st Jan 2025. I have had the privilege of being part of the Zomato journey and its dynamic team over the past 6 years. However, after much reflection, I have taken this tough decision to move on and explore a different path."

## Jayen Mehta's leadership extends as Amul MD till 2030



Jayen Mehta, the driving force behind the iconic Amul brand, has been granted a five-year extension as Managing Director of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF). This extension ensures his leadership will guide

the cooperative giant until 2030, solidifying his role in steering Amul's continued growth and global influence. With a stellar career spanning 34 years at GCMMF, Mehta has risen through the ranks, holding crucial positions such as Brand Manager, Group Product Manager, and General Manager of Marketing. His journey reflects a deep understanding of the dairy industry and a relentless commitment to elevating the Amul brand. Mehta's impact goes beyond domestic boundaries. As a member of the Standing Committee of Marketing at the International Dairy Federation (IDF), he has contributed to shaping global dairy marketing strategies. Recently, his accomplishments earned him a spot on Campaign Asia's Asia Pacific Power List 2024, a prestigious recognition of the most influential marketing leaders in the region.

## Swiggy appoints Sidharth Bhakoo as Chief Business Officer Food Marketplace

Swiggy has appointed Sidharth Bhakoo as the Chief Business Officer for its Food Marketplace, a decision Bhakoo shared on LinkedIn. In this role, he will oversee Swiggy's food marketplace operations, focusing on enhancing the company's market leadership and driving sustainable growth. With his renowned strategic expertise and operational skills, Bhakoo is anticipated to lead the next phase of innovation and expansion for the food delivery giant. Bhakoo's journey at Swiggy has been characterised by significant contributions. Previously, he held the position of Vice President and National



Business Head, where he played a vital role in improving Swiggy's operational efficiency and driving growth across India. His success in scaling regional operations and developing innovative strategies for customer engagement and market penetration has been instrumental in solidifying Swiggy's competitive position in the food delivery industry. Before joining Swiggy, Bhakoo built an impressive career across various industries. He began his journey at GE Money as a Product Manager, where he focused on financing for consumer durables and two-wheelers.

## Nikos Kalaitzidakis to join Carlsberg as Regional EVP for Central & Eastern Europe and India



Nikos Kalaitzidakis will join the Carlsberg Group as the Regional Executive Vice President (EVP) for Central & Eastern Europe and India (CEEI) by March 2025 at the latest. With 30 years of experience in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, Kalaitzidakis comes to Carlsberg from The Olayan Group, an international conglomerate, where he served as Vice President for the Food & Beverages division. Before his time at The Olayan Group, he spent 18 years at Coca-Cola HBC, where he held various executive positions, including Regional Director for Southeast Europe at the company's headquarters and General Manager in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Croatia. Additionally, he worked in commercial roles at Philip Morris International, focusing on the Duty-Free market in Eastern Europe, Kazakhstan, and Greece.

## iD Fresh appoints Gaurav Kwatra as Chief Marketing Officer



iD Fresh, India's leading and most loved consumer fresh food brand, announces the appointment of Gaurav Kwatra as its new Chief Marketing Officer (CMO). Kwatra will be responsible for spearheading iD Fresh's marketing and brand-building strategies, accelerate market expansion and drive greater customer engagement. Kwatra is an accomplished marketing and business leader with over two decades of experience in building and leading iconic global and Indian brands. His expertise spans diverse categories in food and beverages over his 20 years at Nestle and Britannia. Throughout his career, Kwatra has led high-impact marketing campaigns, driving disruptive growth and profitability. Before joining iD Fresh, Kwatra held leadership positions at Nestlé. Kwatra's ability to turn around brands, accelerate growth, and successfully launch new ventures has earned him a reputation as a results-driven leader.

## IIT Roorkee researchers develop millet-based edible straws



Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IIT Roorkee) have developed an innovative solution by creating edible straws made from barnyard millets. This new product provides a healthier and more sustainable alternative to traditional plastic and paper straws. The initiative, led by research scholar Tejaswini Dhanaji Patil under the guidance of Prof. Kirtiraj K. Gaikwad from the Functional Food Packaging Lab in the Paper Technology Department, addresses two significant challenges: reducing plastic waste and providing a safer, eco-friendly option for everyday use. While paper

straws have gained popularity as an alternative to plastic, recent studies have revealed that they may contain harmful chemicals known as PFAS, or "forever chemicals." These substances are added to make paper straws water-resistant, but they can persist in the environment and pose health risks. In contrast, the millet-based straws developed by IIT Roorkee are completely biodegradable, free from harmful chemicals, and even edible, making them a groundbreaking solution in the fight against single-use plastic pollution.

## YourDOST's well-being study says nearly half of startup founders lack community support

YourDOST, India's leading Emotional Wellness Platform has published a comprehensive survey titled "Emotional Wellbeing of Entrepreneurs 2024" with the latest numbers on founder mental health. The report is an effort in collaboration with INK, Tie Global Summit, Upekkha and NSRCEL



cell of IIM Bengaluru and YourDOST. In a landscape where 68 per cent of Indian entrepreneurs report experiencing severe stress (ASSOCHAM, 2023), and startup founder burnout contributes to nearly one-third of venture failures,

understanding the emotional well-being of founders has become critical to India's entrepreneurial success story. The report revealed that 61 per cent of founders experience high well-being, but 33 per cent struggle with low well-being, highlighting a stark divide in emotional health. Imposter syndrome affects 31 per cent of entrepreneurs, with early-stage founders reporting significantly higher levels.



## GFI unveils report highlighting opportunities for plant-based alternatives in India

The Good Food Institute India (GFI India) released its latest report, *The Next Course: Reimagining Smart Protein: Insights from the Food Service Industry and Brands in the Plant-Based Meat Sector*, in a closed-door gathering with representatives from various industry stakeholders like the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), McDonald's, Tibbs Foods, Rebel Foods, ProMeat, Blue Tribe, Prot, GoodDot, Plantaway, Intercontinental and independent restaurants such as Mesa, Gracias Granny, Plural, among others. The report sheds light on the untapped potential of plant-based meats in India's growing food service industry and provides actionable insights to drive adoption and collaboration across the sector. The report underscores that despite the nascent stage of the plant-based meat market in India, India's vibrant food service industry, projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 8.1 per cent to reach Rs 7.6 trillion by 2028, offers a unique avenue for accelerating the category's growth.



## BASF to sell food & health performance ingredients business to Louis Dreyfus Company

BASF has signed a binding agreement to sell its Food and Health Performance Ingredients business, including the production site in Illertissen, Germany, to Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC), a leading global merchant and processor of agricultural goods including high-quality, plant-based ingredients. BASF's Food and Health Performance Ingredients portfolio plays a vital role in addressing growing trends in human nutrition. However, the business has limited synergies and integration into BASF and is no longer a strategic focus area. The food and health performance ingredients business includes food performance ingredients such as aeration and whipping agents, food emulsifiers and fat powder grades; health ingredients such as plant sterols esters, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), omega-3 oils for human nutrition and some smaller product lines.

## Cargill transforms Singapore Innovation Center to meet evolving Asian food consumption needs

To advance innovation and further contribute to Asia's vibrant food ecosystem, Cargill is bolstering the capabilities of its Singapore Innovation Center, supported by the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB) and Enterprise Singapore. Expected to be completed by early 2025, the enhancements will enable Cargill to better collaborate with its food manufacturing, foodservice and retail customers in Singapore and across the region to develop innovative foods that meet Asian consumer trends. By establishing and augmenting new and existing innovation capabilities, as well as strengthening external innovation with customers, suppliers and other partners, the transition of the center will also provide opportunities for customers to grow and expand, be it locally, regionally or globally, by leveraging Cargill's extensive network and regional strength.



## Tate & Lyle and BioHarvest to drive future of ingredients through botanical synthesis technology

Tate & Lyle PLC, a world leader in ingredient solutions for healthier and tastier food and beverages, and BioHarvest Sciences, leaders in botanical synthesis, announce a pioneering new partnership to develop the next-generation of proprietary plant-based molecules to address increasing consumer desire for affordable, nutritious and more sustainable plant-derived food and beverage ingredients. BioHarvest's proven Botanical Synthesis platform produces non-GMO plant-derived ingredients in a more sustainable and economically viable way, helping to scale up the production of highly beneficial botanical ingredients. This proprietary



process delivers patentable molecules by growing targeted plant cells which can mirror and magnify the phyto-nutrients contained in specific plants, delivering all the benefits of the plant, without having to grow the plant. The new partnership between Tate & Lyle and BioHarvest will focus on developing the next generation of sweeteners – botanical sweetening ingredients using plant-derived molecules. Along with the BioHarvest proprietary platform, this will meet consumer desire for a sugar-like taste – with no after-taste – and enable a wider population to have more choice when it comes to accessing ingredients that help make products healthier.



## GNT Ventures seeks cooperation with startups to shape colour innovations

EXBERRY colour supplier GNT has officially launched an independent investment firm to accelerate innovation and boost sustainability at every stage of the value chain. GNT Ventures was created to invest in startup companies that have the potential to help pioneer new and improved plant-based colouring solutions. Its focus is on four key areas: raw materials and fermentation, processing, food ingredients, and upcycling. It is part of GNT's long-term strategy to reshape the plant-based colour landscape with innovative new products that can drive a healthier future for the people and the planet. GNT Ventures has already executed some investments, including the recently announced partnership with Plume Biotechnology to create new plant-based EXBERRY colour solutions using unique fermentation technologies. The firm is now aiming to significantly step up its investment activity and is actively seeking out new collaborations with further startups worldwide.

## dsm-firmenich unveils 'Milky Maple' as the Flavor of the Year 2025

dsm-firmenich, a global leader in nutrition, health, and sustainable innovation, announced 'Milky Maple' as its Flavor of the Year for 2025. This unique creation taps into two beloved trends: the creamy softness of milk mixed with the rich, natural sweetness of maple. The blended flavour provides a sense of calm and contentment and can be incorporated into a wide range of applications. Maple, long cherished as a North American dietary staple, is rapidly expanding its presence worldwide. Since early 2019, dsm-firmenich's trend analysts have observed maple transcending geographic and cultural boundaries, gaining popularity as a versatile ingredient across Europe, Asia and beyond. Maple's adaptability is evident as it moves beyond syrup to influence an array of culinary creations, from baked goods to savory dishes. The creamy allure of milk is also enjoying a surge in popularity, especially in Asia, where its smooth taste and texture provide a perfect pairing for maple's sweetness.



## Onego Bio submits formal GRAS notification to FDA for Bioalbumen

Onego Bio, a Finnish-U.S. food ingredient company, announced the submission of its Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) notification to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its non-animal ovalbumin, produced through precision fermentation using *Trichoderma reesei*, and branded as Bioalbumen. This



milestone marks a critical step toward bringing the first non-animal egg protein with an amino acid sequence identical to the natural protein, to the global food market. Ovalbumin, the primary protein found in egg

white, is known for its exceptional nutritional, functional, and performance properties. Onego Bio's breakthrough Bioalbumen offers a sustainable solution, leveraging precision fermentation to produce ovalbumin outside of the poultry supply chain. This ingredient was created to address supply chain challenges of the

\$300 billion global egg market. The GRAS notification process is an important step in demonstrating that Onego Bio's Bioalbumen complies with the FDA's safety standards for its intended uses.

## Duravant acquires Canadian equipment manufacturer POSS

Duravant LLC, a global engineered equipment and automation solutions provider to the food processing, packaging and material handling sectors, has acquired POSS Design Limited, a leading manufacturer of protein processing solutions headquartered in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Canada. POSS designs and builds innovative mechanical separation equipment, ancillary products and turnkey systems that maximise recoverable protein yields for high volume processors of beef, pork, chicken, turkey, and other meats. POSS represents a strategic acquisition for Duravant as the company expands its investments in the rapidly growing protein sector. The best-in-class products and services offered by POSS are



highly complementary and enhance Duravant's capabilities to offer integrated automation solutions. Since 1978, POSS has been designing and building industry-leading separating solutions that increase throughput,

minimise waste, and meet the growing capacity and efficiency needs of processors. Exclusively specialising in high quality mechanical separation technology, POSS has a broad range of products that provide custom solutions for a wide range of processing capacities. With engineering expertise to design turnkey systems that connect upstream and downstream equipment, POSS has established trusted relationships with many of the world's leading protein processing brands.



## Cedo acquires Plasta Group

Following its acquisition last summer of Vinatic, one of the leading flexible plastic recyclers in Vietnam, Cedo, a leader in sustainable FMCG private label solutions, announced another milestone in its strategic journey with the acquisition of Plasta Group, one of Europe's largest polyethylene recyclers, producers, and suppliers of sustainable plastic products. This acquisition positions Cedo as the largest integrated circularity platform for flexible plastic films servicing Europe, enhancing its leadership in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Scandinavia. The combined organisation has an annual capacity to recycle more than 200,000 tonnes of plastic waste from which to produce plastic bags made with recycled contents, as well other film-based products. Going forward Cedo will be able to offer an expanded range of innovative, sustainable solutions to meet the growing demand for circularity in flexible plastics. Plasta Group, headquartered in Vilnius, Lithuania, operates modern manufacturing plants located in Lithuania and Sweden, employs more than 500 skilled professionals, and has an impressive legacy of 60 years in the industry.

## INEOS Styrolution announces yoghurt cups contain mechanical recycling of polystyrene

INEOS Styrolution, the global leader in styrenics, announced the successful completion of a first project with mechanically recycled polystyrene in a yoghurt cup. This milestone achievement was possible by the collaboration of multiple partners along the value chain. The process of mechanical recycling of polystyrene takes place in multiple steps from sorting (deep NIR sorting including object recognition) across hot washing and flake sorting to melt filtration and pelletising. Key in the process is INEOS Styrolution's "super clean process" which has been registered as a novel technology according to the EU regulation 2022/1616. With this process, INEOS Styrolution achieves food contact quality recyclates which before were only known from PET bottle recyclates. The recycled material offers the same physical properties as conventionally produced polystyrene, enabling a perfect circular solution. Intensive quality controls were performed on both the material and the cups.





## Sidel introduces bottle washer with Hydra Ultrasonic technology

Sidel has launched its new bottle washer which combines chemical and ultrasound technology for the highest performance. Sidel will unveil Hydra Ultrasonic for the first time at the international trade show, BrauBeviale. The growing focus on the environmental impact of packaging, combined with reuse targets set by legislation, is driving increased demand for returnable glass and PET bottle solutions. These options significantly reduce the need for primary raw materials while ensuring products are delivered safely to consumers. As the beverage industry



further embraces the benefits of refillable returnable glass bottles, manufacturers require bottle-washing technology to safely ensure bottles are hygienically cleaned before being returned to consumers. To eliminate dirt and debris from bottles the washing process requires a precise balance of temperature, concentration of chemical detergents and time. Identifying the need for a high-performing bottle-washing solution while achieving substantial energy, water and chemical savings, Sidel has developed the Hydra Ultrasonic.

## Circus and Vytal forge partnership to pioneer sustainable packaging system



Circus SE, a global leader in AI robotics, and Vytal, the leading provider of reusable packaging solutions, have partnered to launch a reusable bowl system for the Circus Autonomy One (CA-1) food production robot. This sustainable innovation replaces disposable bowls, advancing a shared commitment to zero waste and circular economy principles. Integrating Vytal's reusable packaging into CircusAI solutions offers CA-1 customers a default eco-friendly option, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production. The partnership reduces reliance on single-use packaging and addresses food waste through AI-driven precision, promoting sustainability across the food service industry. CircusAI optimises demand prediction, portioning, and production to achieve near-zero food waste while mitigating inefficiencies like overproduction and cold chain mishandling. The reusable bowl system enhances this zero-waste model, minimising packaging waste and resource use.

## Tetra Pak and Yellow Dreams join forces to boost carton recycling capacity in EU

With a joint investment of around €3 million by Tetra Pak and Yellow Dreams, a new recycling plant is set to start operations in Ittervoort (The Netherlands) in the second half of 2025. The facility will handle the non-fibre component (polyAl) from used beverage cartons, boosting the recycling capacity in the European Union (EU). Strategically located near the Belgian and German borders, the plant has the potential to process the entire volume of polyAl from beverage cartons recycled in Belgium and The Netherlands, and part of the volume from Germany. Featuring an annual capacity of 20,000 tonnes, this second Dutch plant complements the existing 8,000-tonne capacity at Recon Polymers' facility in Roosendaal, marking a significant increase to the region's recycling capacity. It also adds to the existing and well-established recycling infrastructure in the EU, where beverage cartons are recycled in 20 specialised paper mills, with polyAl currently processed by ten facilities.



# Boosting the Booming Food Processing Sector

The food processing industry has emerged as a significant contributor to India's economy in recent years, owing to forward-thinking policy initiatives by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI). The sector significantly contributes to boosting farm income and generating off-farm employment, diminishing post-harvest losses in agriculture and related production by means of both on- and off-farm investments in preservation and processing facilities. Consequently, the ministry has launched various initiatives to boost the growth of the food processing sector in the nation and has achieved notable success in its programmes throughout 2024. An initial step is securing increased budget allocation. The ministry successfully secured additional budgetary aid of Rs 3290 crore in the Union Budget for 2024-25, which marks an increase of about 30.19 per cent from Revised Estimate (R.E.) of Rs 2527.06 crore in 2023-24.

Additionally, the sector has drawn Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) totaling \$608.31 million in 2023-24. Singapore led the FDI rankings for the year, attracting \$262.44 million, followed by British Virginia with \$71.89 million, Switzerland with \$50.93 million, Ireland with \$42.05 million, Australia with \$30.01 million, the U.S.A with \$29.51 million, and Mauritius with \$20.65 million. As of September 2024, the sector has garnered \$368.37 million in investments, with Ireland (\$83.84 million), the U.S.A (\$38.60 million), and Mauritius (\$41.65 million) at the forefront of the FDI rankings. This signifies a rise compared to the last year, reflecting optimism in the sector's growth narrative in the nation.

The MoFPI has approved a total of 46,643 loans through the credit linked subsidy aspect of the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PMFME) since January 2024. A total of Rs 254.87 crore has been approved as seed capital support for 71,714 members of Self Help Groups (SHGs). Since January 2024, the ministry has authorised two incubation centres, while 11 incubation centres have been finished/inaugurated/commissioned to support product development for grassroots micro enterprises. Furthermore, four Marketing and Branding proposals have been authorised to offer branding assistance to the micro enterprises.

Exports of processed fruits and vegetables increased by 9.34 per cent year-on-year in April-February (2023-24) while exports of livestock products increased by 12.72 per cent and exports of other processed foods increased by 6.32 per cent during the same period. During April-March 2023-24, processed fruits and Juices accounted for \$682.58 million, processed vegetables accounted for \$787.28 million, dairy products accounted for \$272.64 million, poultry products accounted for \$184.58 million, and miscellaneous processed items accounted for \$1,326.24 million. In 2024-25 (April-June) export of processed fruits and vegetables stood at \$459 million, livestock products at \$702 million and other processed foods stood at \$911 million.

Exports of processed fruits and vegetables accounted for 8.19 per cent of total exports in 2022-23 while exports of livestock products and other processed foods accounted for 14.75 per cent and 18.78 per cent, respectively. India exported \$1,113.17 million worth of Ready-to-Eat products, \$497.87 million worth of Ready-to-Cook products and \$537.84 million worth of Ready-to-Serve products from April to December in 2023-24. The major destinations of RTE export during this period were the U.S.A, U.A.E, and Canada while the major export destinations for RTC export were Bangladesh, U.S.A, Nepal, and U.A.E.

The sector boasts of over 3,300 recognised startups, employing 33,000 people, spread across 425 districts. Supported by incubators, accelerators, and funds, startups hold immense potential to drive innovation and economic growth in the food processing industry. There are several food and agriculture value chain funds like the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, Startup India Tax Exemption Benefits, etc. that support the startups in the food processing industry.

Hopefully the Finance Minister, who has announced financial support in her seventh consecutive budget speech for the setting up of 50 multi-product food irradiation projects and 100 food quality and safety testing labs with NABL accreditation on July 23, 2024 will provide the food processing sector more budgetary allocations in her 8th budget speech on February 1, 2025. **NS**

**Narayan Kulkarni**  
Editor

narayan.kulkarni@mmactiv.com



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