

FoodCon 2010: The retrospect

Tamil Nadu Technology Development & Promotion Center (TNTDPC) of CII in partnership with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) - Michigan State University (MSU) - Indian Horticulture Development Alliance (IHDA) organized the **FoodCon 2010: Conference on Latest Trends in Food Processing and Preservation Technologies** on 9th of July 2010 at the Hotel Taj Coromandel, Chennai.



The conference provided private entrepreneurs with technical information for product development, information on new technology, best practices, and an opportunity to get introduced to valued food industry knowledge and networks. The conference updated the progress of research activities and their adoption by industries in the field of preparation and size reduction technologies, process technologies, storage, handling and packaging Solutions,

technology for compliance in the agro-food chain, performance and productivity analysis of the agro-food sector.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Prof K V Thomas, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India said that the Government is proposing to introduce the Food Security Bill with an aim to ensure Food Security for all and the proposed Bill would address specific concerns of the people in the Below Power Line. Prof Thomas also said that poor infrastructure in terms of cold storage coupled with inadequate quality control and testing infrastructure, high transportation cost and inefficient supply chain are the major constraints in the food processing industry. He urged the farming community to adopt modern technology in farming, storage, transportation and also to create value addition in food products to enhance profitability.

The minister said that food grains in large quantity is still stored in open spaces in our country which is unsafe and also lead to enormous wastage of food grains. He invited the private sector to join hands with Government to work towards improving the entire value chain in the food processing sector starting from farm-yard to end consumers.

Mr. Pradipta K Mohapatra, Past Chairman, CII – Southern Region and Chairman, Executive & Business Coaching Foundation India Ltd in his address said that in the past few years certain industries in the food sector have grown tremendously like the dairy industry which has been a key driver of growth of the food processing industry. He attributed the success of the dairy and other ready to eat meal products to their credible brand value and product innovation. He also urged the food processing industry to invest in branding, marketing and more importantly to upscale the business with global reach. He also said that the food laws in India need to nurture the food processing industry.



Dr. Saikat Datta Mazumdar, Technical Director, NutriPlus Knowledge Centre, Agri-Science Park, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in his address said that the challenges that lie before us are Climate Change, Land Degradation, Loss of Biodiversity, Food Crisis, Energy Crisis and Population Explosion. Enhancing crop productivity through innovative methods would improve food availability to all and also reduces poverty. Catalyzing strategic partnerships, building research and development capabilities in the agriculture sector would help us to boost farm productivity, he said.



Mr. A Padmasingh Isaac, Event Chairman, FoodCon 2010 & Chairman, Aachi Group of Companies in his address said that 80% of the food processing industry in India is in the unorganized sector. He urged the food processing industry to move up in the value chain by adhering to quality standards on food safety. Food safety and standards are key for growth of the organised sector in food processing, he further added. The one-day conference presented by eminent speakers attracted more than 200 industry participants.

Key Points Discussed

- The amount of fruits and vegetables wasted in India is larger than the total consumption of the same in the UK. More than 35% is wasted and only 6% is processed. This is at a time when various institutions of the government is to alleviate the situation of the over 50% of farmers who continue to be in starvation.
- Several thought leaderships developed over the years have not helped. The reason for the non development of the Food Processing sector is the lack of a culture of taking packaged food. Also, there is a need for feasible innovations.

- Food schemes implemented by the government can be taken forward by linking them with the processed food industry to improve their distribution effectiveness and also to encourage entrepreneurship.
- Unlike other sectors, due to large population that is dependant on agriculture, there is an opportunity for the development of a large number of entrepreneurs. Right from food production, storage, value addition, packaging and distribution.
- In several aspects, the technology levels of India are at par with any other developing nation. But the key to success would be effective branding and packaging.

Thoughts on Technologies

- Advances in evaporation systems through the use of forced flow and falling film technology in a mixed flow can enable savings in energy cost.
- Hot fill technology can be adopted as an effective alternative to aseptic packaging.
- Size reduction technologies should have the ability to maintain consistency, be efficient and at the same time preserve the nutritional value of the foods.
- Sterilization of spices is important due to stringent norms established by importing countries.
- Steam Water Spray method and Retort technologies can help in sterilization of pouches.
- Food packaging can make a big difference and can be a game changer in foods and it makes both consumer sense and business sense. The trend is towards increasing customization and reduction in cost and not in value. This can be done by the 3Rs, Reduce, Recycle and Regenerate.
- Solar drying is the best solution to the energy crisis that India is facing today. Solar hot air technology can be a game changer in food and agro applications.
- The key to success in operating food plants is in delivering the quality at the right cost while maintaining efficiency.
- Emerging technologies for processing like enzyme processing need to be increasingly used.
- Cold chains are a necessity in the agricultural value chain. Evaluation of cold storage capacity, assessment of refrigeration load, selection of refrigeration systems, correct stacking methods, all of these are important while deciding on how to handling a refrigeration requirement for the Food Industry.

Conference on Agro Food Processing Technologies Quality and Safety in Fruits and Vegetables Processing

Technology transformation is not a matter of quick fixes but requires visionary planning and long-term scientific commitment. Food processing technologies meet the current demands for added value and guaranteed safety, with specific applications dedicated to high pressure, pulsed electric fields, microwave applications, freezing and packaging methods, and predictive microbiology.

However, issues relating to food safety, traceability, rapid detections methods and treated foods require greater understanding of food processing operations, better utilization of existing technologies and adoption of new innovative technologies.

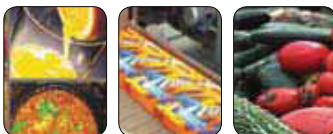
The Tamil Nadu Technology Development & Promotion Center (TNTDPC), an autonomous society of the Government of Tamil Nadu and CII, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Michigan State University, and the Indian Horticulture Development Alliance jointly organized a conference on Agro Food Processing Technologies with the theme of 'Quality and Safety in Fruits and Vegetables Processing' on 24 July in Chennai.

The conference updated the progress of research activities and their adoption by industries in the field of fruits and vegetable processing, and post-harvest technology of fruits and vegetables.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Mr Veerapandi S Arumugam, Minister, Agriculture, Tamil Nadu, said his Government would provide a subsidy of Rs.40 crore for the proposed terminal market project. He urged the private sector to actively participate in infrastructure projects, especially on post harvest and cold storage technologies, to benefit the farming community, and said that the government would support such initiatives by way of subsidies and grants.



Atul Anand, CEO, Tamil Nadu State Agricultural Marketing Board; Veerapandi S Arumugam, Minister, Agriculture, Tamil Nadu, and P C Duraisamy, MD, Sakthi Masala Private Ltd



Mr. Atul Anand, CEO, Tamil Nadu State Agriculture Marketing Board described the Government of Tamil Nadu's initiatives in promoting the agro processing sector. He said that venture capital funds upto

Rs 75 lakh would be provided for entrepreneurs setting up food processing industries in the state. Further, the government is providing training to farmers in handling post harvest agricultural products and also on export of fruits and vegetables.

Mr P. C Duraisamy, Immediate Past Chairman, CII Erode, & Managing Director, Sakthi Masala Pvt Ltd said that R & D has become increasingly important to sustain the growth momentum and also to meet emerging challenges.

Mr. Sunil Gupta, Head QA and Food Safety, Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd, regretted that though India today is the largest producer of agricultural products, only 2.2 % of it is processed, deterred by poor storage facilities, improper handling, and high transportation costs. India needs to achieve a breakthrough in technology and R&D to process food items that meet international quality standards and norms, he said, calling for the development of infrastructure facilities, eco-benefits, and financial support, particularly in areas such as processing and ripening, optimizing harvesting time, pre cooling etc.

The Recommendations

- Industry should come forward to make use of the opportunities created by the government and set up new ventures for successful commercialization of new technologies developed through R & D.
- CII has to play an important role in the facilitation of the establishment of food processing industries by identifying potential raw materials available locally and working with various stakeholders.
- More collaboration is required between industry / academia / research labs for successful translation of knowledge creation into wealth creation especially in the areas of agriculture, post harvest technologies and modern food processing techniques.
- Government must relax the import / export regulations for processed foods and consider this sector as a priority sector in trade. ■