

FoodCon 2011: Conference on Technologies for Value Added Food Products: 29th July 2011; Hotel Park Sheraton, Chennai

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 2011: Conference on Technologies for Value Added Food Products** on 29th July 2011 at the Hotel Park Sheraton, Chennai.

The conference highlighted the need for infrastructure industry status to the food-processing sector for the actual flow of the estimated investment demand for over \$35 billion from national and international entrepreneurs into the sector. This was needed to create the projected nine billion jobs, stability in agricultural prices and returns to the farmers and investors, increase in world market share of processed foods from the current two per cent and food security of the emerging new urban middle class.

Mr. A Padmasingh Isaac, the Event Chairman and Chairman Aachi Group of Companies said, the food processing industry should be considered as an infrastructure industry. "Otherwise even its take-off will be a problem", he said. With the infrastructure status the investors would get bank loans at reduced rate, investment subsidies and fiscal sops. This would attract investments and there would be orderly development of the markets for processed foods. The reduced cost of production would enable the industry to reduce prices of processed products, which in turn would increase market demand and farmers would get better returns. "This will be a win-win situation for all", he said.

Mr Isaac said Rs 100,000 crore worth of agricultural produces were wasted in the country. Saving this huge quantity alone would be enough to feed the increasing population, he said.



Dr. P Thangaraju, Ex-Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS) speaking at the inaugural session in the FoodCon 2011 (From L – R) Mr. A. Padmasingh Isaac, Event Chairman, FoodCon 2011 & Founder & Chairman, Aachi Group of Companies, Mr. S Chandramohan, Co-Chairman Agriculture Forum, CII (SR) & Chief Financial Officer, TAFE Limited, Mr. G K Moinudeen, Head-TNTDPC, CII

Dr. P Thangaraju, Ex-vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University said processing of increased quantity of the food Indian produced was the only means to bring down losses, ensure food security of all. He said the demand for processed food was increasing from the over 1000 million consumers willing to pay for value-added products. Dr Thangaraju said the food processing industry was dominated by the small and unorganized sector which accounted for 70% of the volume and 50% of value. The industry needed support from the government on all fronts, he said.

Mr. S Chandramohan, Co-chairman Agriculture Forum,CII, Southern Region and Chief Financial Officer TAFE Ltd, said, the cold chain, including cold storage and refrigerated trucks, was the backbone of the food processing industry. Though there were over 330 million tones of perishable goods that were to be transported, studies have shown that only 100 million tonnes were transported. Of this only 4% goods were transported in refrigerated trucks. He said there were only 25,000 refrigerated trucks in the country and 80% of them were used by the dairy sector.

“It is a capital-intensive industry with low rate of return on investment. The Government has to offer fiscal sops and interest subsidy to encourage this vital sector of the food processing industry”, Chandramohan said. The present 50% subsidy for cold storage and warehouse construction was not attractive as the subsidy was disbursed only after the completion of the project, he said.

The theme paper of the conference said that, “in the years to come, the Indian food and beverages market is projected to grow at a cumulative annual growth rate of 9% and reach \$580 billion by 2013. This has been due to rapid changes in the demographics of the population and the changing lifestyles. Consequently the 11th Five year Plan has chartered an investment of \$900 million. To match up with the market needs, the industry structure, its supply chain, and standards will have to match up with global standards at a rapid pace. With its unique food habits, India has to develop its own systems in many cases all of which make technology the prime mover for the Indian food processing industry”.

The paper added that, “huge improvements are needed in the areas of food canning, dairy processing, cooking, thermal processing, refrigeration, packaging and other specialty and emerging processes”. The conference in different sessions discussed about the technologies for food processing and preservation, including drying, energy efficient refrigeration, food freezing, techniques and methods in food safety, globalisation of ethnic taste and consumer preferences, and new, growing trends in packaging. Conference was well attended by more than 300 delegates from all over India.