

India's food processing industry is expected to achieve a valuation of \$535 billion by the year 2025-26



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Anita Praveen emphasizes the crucial importance of research and development in the advancement of the food processing industry in India during the FICCI event. She points out that implementing waste management techniques, fostering collaboration between farmers and the industry, and ensuring quality control are essential for increasing exports

Anita Praveen, the secretary of the Ministry of Food Processing, underscored the essential importance of research and development (R&D) in advancing the Indian food processing industry. During her address at the FICCI Scientific Symposium on 'Processed Foods for Purpose', Praveen pointed out the considerable growth potential within the sector and its classification as a vital area in India's agricultural framework. Praveen remarked, "The Indian agriculture sector is experiencing strong growth with unprecedented production levels, and the Food Processing sector has emerged as a key area for development." She further noted, "We have already achieved substantial growth with the resources at our disposal. Now, it is crucial for the food processing sector to concentrate on R&D in order to elevate the industry to the next stage."

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"The food processing sector is a significant generator of investments, especially for the micro and small enterprises, and has the capacity to attract more private funding," noted Praveen. The Secretary highlighted the strategic benefits of the food processing industry, pointing to the plentiful availability of raw materials at competitive prices and the rising consumer demand both locally and globally. "This sector benefits from a high availability of raw materials at lower costs and strong consumer demand in both domestic and international markets. Now is the moment to enhance support for the food processing industry," Praveen remarked. She emphasized the need for direct collaboration among industry stakeholders, farmers, and micro-level processing units to improve efficiency and reduce waste. "Now is the perfect opportunity to connect these micro units with larger industries. This downward linkage strategy will help larger firms manage quality, uphold standards, and ensure a stable supply chain," she stated. "The industry should prioritize consumer education, and we need to take a well-rounded approach to this educational effort. It is crucial for consumers to understand what they are consuming, and ensuring the quality of food production lies within the industry's responsibility," she continued. To enhance exports, Praveen called for greater cooperation between large businesses and smaller units, stressing the significance of quality control and maintaining strong supply chains.

She emphasized the obligation of the industry to educate consumers, advocating for clear communication and a balanced method to enhance understanding regarding food quality and safety. Siraj Hussain, who serves as an advisor to the FICCI Food Processing Committee and is a former secretary of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, supported Praveen's views, stressing the vital role of food processing in maintaining food safety and nutrition. "Food processing functions as an essential connector between farm and fork. It plays a pivotal role in stimulating economic development, creating job opportunities, and fostering innovation within the food sector. The importance of food processing in delivering safe, healthy, and nutritious food has now become a central issue," Hussain remarked. He highlighted the sector's capability to drive economic progress and innovation. Sanjay Khajuria, president of CIFTI-FICCI and director of Corporate Affairs at Nestle India Ltd, referred to food processing as a 'sunrise sector,' praising its advancements in modernization and sustainable economic development. "The food processing industry is recognized as a sunrise sector and has made significant strides in modernization and sustainable economic growth in recent times," he stated. Dr. Seema Bathla, a professor at the Centre for the Study of Regional Development at Jawaharlal Nehru University, pointed out four essential components of the Indian agricultural food system: production, consumption, ecology, and environment.

"The food system in Indian agriculture consists of four main components: production, consumption, ecology, and the environment," she stated.

Forecasts suggest a continuous increase, with the output of India's food processing industry anticipated to exceed USD 600 billion by the fiscal year 2025-26.