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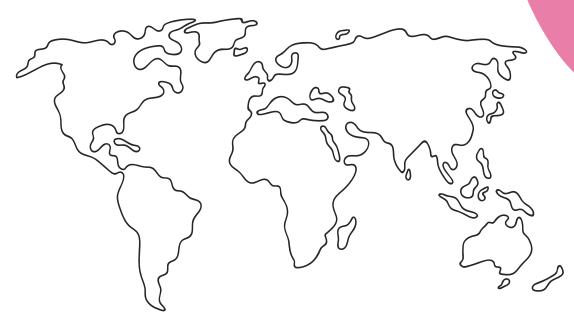


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Market overview: A rich tapestry of culinary traditions

India is vast and diverse, and its food and beverage industry reflects the subcontinent's varied demographics. With a population of 1.3 billion, it has a large youth population, and those aged 35 and under make up more than 65% of the market.¹ A burgeoning middle class with rising disposable income also has led to growing demand for a wide range of food options, from traditional and local delicacies to international cuisines. ²

Food preferences vary significantly across different regions. Some regional cuisines are characterised by strong, spicy flavours in dishes like kofta and butter chicken, while some others tend to use more coconut, rice and lentils, with dishes like dosa and idli. However, the country is a rich tapestry of culinary traditions, and each state and even sub-regions within states have their own unique ingredients, cooking styles, and flavours. ³

The result is a dynamic food and beverage market where regional specialities coexist with a growing appetite for global foods.⁴ Italian and Chinese cuisines are the most popular international foods in India, followed by Japanese, Mexican, American, and French.⁵

Alongside globalisation, rapidly increasing urbanisation also contributes to the evolution of the Indian food industry, with urban populations growing by 2.3% a year.⁶

Cities are witnessing a surge in the number of cafes, restaurants, and food delivery services.⁷ The influence of Western fast food, along with a growing awareness of health and wellness, has led to an increase in demand for diverse and healthier food options.⁸

This report looks at some of the most important trends affecting the Indian food and beverage market today and how companies can tap into them. These include growing demand for plant-based products and herbal botanicals, and it also explores the influence of regional flavours and local ingredients on new product launches.

The report identifies key factors that favour India for sourcing food ingredients, the challenges involved, and the potential benefits for businesses worldwide.







Spotlight on trends

Plant-based meat and dairy alternatives

An estimated 38% of Indians are vegetarians, a higher proportion than any other country in the world. As a result, the market for plant-based foods is dynamic and well-established, and interest has been steadily growing due to concerns about healthy eating, the health of the planet and animal welfare.

Referring specifically to plant-based alternatives to foods traditionally derived from animals, the Indian plant-based food market has seen a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 10.8% since the beginning of the decade, a rate that is expected to hold steady over the next five years. ¹¹

Even among meat-eaters, many Indians traditionally have consumed a plant-centric diet with very little meat. This creates opportunities for plant-based food makers, but also may present challenges specific to the Indian market, where some people avoid meat during certain seasons or festivities. ¹² The Indian market is also particularly price sensitive, meaning that domestic producers tend to be better placed to offer products at a price point acceptable to consumers. ¹³

According to a Good Food Institute (GFI) survey looking at what Indian consumers look for in vegetarian foods, opportunities for new product development include foods that cater to mixed groups of vegetarians and non-vegetarians, as well as those who wish to experiment with meat-like textures for the first time. ¹⁴

Milk alternatives

In recent years, the plant-based milk market in India also has surged in popularity, although it is dwarfed by the traditional dairy industry, worth about \$21 million a year, compared to dairy's estimated \$140 billion value. ¹⁵ As recently as 2016, there were few dairy alternative products available to consumers, but by 2023, at least 56 brands with more than 300 SKUs were operating in India, according to the country's Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM). ¹⁶

Almond, soy, coconut, and oat milk are among the alternatives gaining traction, from international brands like So Good and Nutra Vita, but a range of Indian-made brands is also available, including hybrid plant milks, such as GoodMylk's milk alternative that uses a combination of oats and cashews.¹⁷ Interest in plant-based milk alternatives coincides with increasing lactose intolerance awareness, environmental concerns, and a growing health-conscious population. ¹⁸

Meat alternatives

Plant-based meat alternatives entered the spotlight in India with Beyond Meat's headline-grabbing IPO in 2019, spurring a handful of Indian brands to make their own meat-free products. ¹⁹

Home-grown brands like GoodDot and Veggie Champ have introduced plant-based meat substitutes made from soy, wheat protein, and pea protein that are used as substitutes in popular dishes like burgers, kebabs, and curries. However, plant-based meat still appeals to a niche market in India.²⁰



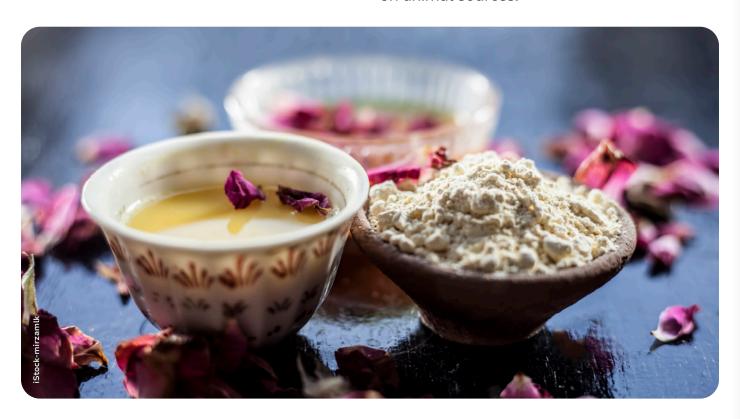
The Good Food Institute estimated the value of India's plant-based meat alternatives market at just \$12 million in 2022, a tiny fraction of the global market, which is thought to be worth more than \$5 billion. ²¹

According to ASSOCHAM: "Creating mass awareness about a new category of products like plant-based meats would require significant efforts towards creating brand awareness. In some cases, for D2C brands, Indian celebrities and cricketers have been promoting the idea of cruelty free, sustainable, and kinder innovations." ²²

In 2022, cricketer Virat Kohli and actor-wife Anushka Sharma invested in the alternative vegan meat brand Blue Tribe, for example, while Bollywood actors Genelia D'souza and Riteish Deshmukh founded their own plantbased meat company, Imagine Meats, in Mumbai in 2021. ²³ Health claims play a crucial role in the marketing strategies of plant-based food and beverage brands in India, and consumers say they are looking for products that are "nutritious" and high in protein.²⁴ Companies looking to tap into this highlight that their products are cholesterol-free, low in saturated fat, and rich in vitamins and minerals, and some may emphasise their positive impact on heart health and digestion.²⁵

Plant-based sports nutrition

The plant-based trend includes a nascent range of dairy alternatives, like butters, yoghurts, frozen desserts and cheese, but it also extends beyond packaged foods to include plant-based protein powders and supplements. Brands like OZiva, Plantigo, Fast & Go, and Boldfit offer protein supplements derived from sources like pea, hemp, brown rice, and soy, catering to fitness enthusiasts and athletes looking to meet their protein requirements without relying on animal sources. ²⁶



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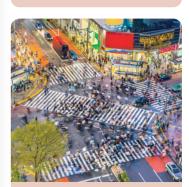
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Herbal and botanical ingredients for health

The use of herbal or botanical ingredients in food and beverage products in India is rooted in traditional practices like Ayurveda. The country offers diverse medicinal plants, herbs, and spices that not only add flavour to dishes but also promise improved health and well-being. ²⁷

The integration of traditional herbal remedies with modern dietary preferences has given rise to a burgeoning market for functional foods and drinks. According to a 2023 Mintel survey, 54% of Indian respondents said they looked for fruit and vegetable-derived ingredients in functional foods, while 26% sought Ayurvedic herbs. ²⁸

Ayurveda is an ancient system of medicine that plays a key role in the use of herbal and botanical ingredients in the country's food and beverage industry. It emphasises the balance of the three doshas (qualities or energies) – vatha, pitha, and kaptha – to maintain optimal health. Many botanical ingredients used in ayurvedic medicine are used in functional foods and drinks, aligning with the philosophy of promoting holistic wellness. ²⁹

Herbs like tulsi (holy basil) and ashwagandha, for example, traditionally have been revered for their adaptogenic properties, purportedly helping the body cope with stress and promoting resilience. ³⁰ Now a range of herbal teas, health drinks, and wellness shots feature these ingredients, catering to a growing consumer demand for stress-relieving and immunity-boosting products.

Turmeric, also a staple in ayurvedic medicine, is another ingredient that has gained in popularity not only for its culinary uses but also for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. ³¹ Turmeric-infused beverages, functional shots, and snacks have become commonplace. ³²

A Mintel survey of 3,000 Indian adults found the most sought-after benefits for functional foods and drinks were energy (53%), immunity (52%), sleep (51%), digestive health (51%), and mood (50%) – and about two in five consumers preferred products that offered multiple benefits. ³³

Food and drink analyst at Mintel India, Anamika Banerji, said: "The growing focus on health is likely to give impetus to the interest in functional foods as a means to achieve holistic well-being. Indian consumers expect functional food and drink products to deliver all-round health benefits, addressing both the physical and mental or emotional aspects of well-being." ³⁴ The incorporation of herbal botanical ingredients is not limited to beverages alone. The trend has extended to snacks, breakfast items, and even desserts. For instance, products like Ayurvedic granola bars, ³⁵ herbal-infused nut butters, ³⁶ and functional chocolates enriched with adaptogens ³⁷ are becoming increasingly prevalent. These products often blend traditional wisdom with modern taste preferences, making them attractive to a broad consumer base. ³⁸

Alongside increased awareness of foods and ingredients for health and wellness, the perception of functional products in India has shifted in recent years. Consumers are seeking functional products that offer both nutritional benefits and a touch of tradition, and they demand transparency on product packaging. ³⁹

"Manufacturers, retailers, and advertisers are under scrutiny and need to address the lack of information on their labels, even substantiating the claims they make," said Mintel's Banerji. "This reflects a broader consumer expectation of transparency and detailed information about the products they consume." ⁴⁰



Regional flavours, local ingredients: How CPG brands deliver authentic products

Indian consumers seek authenticity and a connection to their roots in the food and beverages they consume, often through products that showcase regional flavours and use locally sourced ingredients. These not only reflect the diversity of the country, but consumers also perceive them as a way to support local farmers and businesses. ⁴¹

India's culinary heritage is as diverse as the nation itself. Each region's cuisine features unique spices, herbs, and cooking techniques with its own specific flavours and ingredients, and it is vital that food and beverage manufacturers understand the variety of tastes, traditions and preferences that exist throughout the country, and offer regional language support where necessary. 42 43

Meanwhile, there is growing demand for convenience, and the average Indian consumed nearly 12 kg of ready-to-eat meals in 2023.⁴⁴ Frozen meals have emerged as an important category for manufacturers looking to appeal to the dual demands of authenticity and convenience, particularly since the era of Covid-19 lockdowns. ⁴⁵

Over the past few years, companies in the ready-to-eat meal category have embraced regional flavours, with meal kits from brands like Kohinoor and Golden Harvest intended to simplify cooking recipes like Sindhi Biriyani, and Punjabi Dal Makhani.⁴⁶ Chutnefy is another company with a regionally inspired range, including products like Chettinad





Chutney, which it describes as "rich in tradition, loaded with spice", and South Indian Vada Curry, described as "bringing back that Madras emotion". ⁴⁷

In the snack category, too, companies are introducing products that reflect regional tastes. For instance, Delhi-based brand New Tree has introduced a range of muri (puffed rice) snacks for eating on the go, sold in a cone-shaped packaging, just as it is served when eaten as a Bengali street food. ⁴⁸

International brands also are taking notice. Nestlé's Maggi, for example – already known for its instant noodles in India – has launched a poha (flat rice) range, based on Maharashtra's famous breakfast dish. ⁴⁹

Condiments and sauces are also an important category for regional flavours, with manufacturers increasingly producing region-specific ranges, such as Andhra Avakaya Pickle and Rajasthani Garlic Pickle from the Bangalore-based brand Postcard, which showcases the spice profiles of different states. ⁵⁰ Another well-known sauce brand is Chutney Collective, a family-owned brand that promotes its use of locally sourced ingredients and authentic regional flavours.

In the beverage category, craft breweries have introduced beers infused with regional spices and herbs. ⁵¹ Notable examples include Goa-based brand Maka di, which uses ingredients from the regions where they are best known, such as wild organic honey from Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand, and fresh coriander and cumin from Karnataka and Maharashtra; and Great State Ale Works, which makes two beers with jeera, black salt, and kokum to reflect the coastal flavours of Goa. ⁵²



Sourcing ingredients from India

Which ingredients and commodities?

In recent years, sourcing food ingredients from India has gained traction in the global market, spurred by government initiatives to promote exports of agricultural products. ⁵³

The country is a significant global producer of spices, grains, pulses, and tea. It is among the world's top five tea exporters, accounting for about 10% of total exports, ⁵⁴ and its share of global grains exports more than doubled from 2010 to 2022, up from just 3.38% to 7.79%. ⁵⁵

India is the world's top producer, consumer, and importer of pulses, and the second-biggest exporter after Australia, accounting for 17% of the total, more than half of which are chickpeas. ⁵⁶

However, the country is probably best-known for its spices. It produces 75 of the 109 varieties listed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and is the world's leading exporter of many spices, including chilli, cumin, turmeric, ginger, mint products, and coriander. ⁵⁷



Benefits and challenges of sourcing from India

Several factors favour India as a sourcing destination:

Biodiversity and climate:

India's huge geographical expanse allows for diverse agro-climatic conditions, supporting the cultivation of a wide range of crops. From the plains of Punjab for wheat and rice to the tropical climate of Kerala for spices, the country offers a broad spectrum of ingredients.⁵⁸ ⁵⁹

Cost-Effective Production:

The cost of production in India is often lower compared to many Western countries, making it an economically attractive option for businesses seeking to optimise their supply chain and reduce production costs. ⁶¹

Traditional Farming Practices:

Many of India's farmers employ traditional and organic farming methods, now recognised as sustainable practices, which align with growing global demand for ethically sourced and environmentally friendly products. ⁶⁰

Quality Assurance and Standards:

India has made strides in implementing quality assurance standards in the food sector. Various certifications such as those from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are intended to provide reassurance that the sourced ingredients meet international quality benchmarks. ⁶²



Challenges in sourcing from India include:

Logistical Challenges:

India's sheer size presents transportation and infrastructure challenges. ⁶³
However, the government is investing in infrastructure and supply chain management in an effort to mitigate these challenges, and 3.3% of the nation's GDP has been earmarked for infrastructure projects in 2024. ⁶⁴

Cultural Differences:

Understanding and navigating the cultural landscape can be challenging for foreign businesses. ⁶⁵ Companies are urged to take time to develop contacts, and to be sensitive to potential cultural differences. ⁶⁶

Quality Control Challenges:

A limited number of food safety officers, lack of funds with state governments and shortage of quality laboratories can make quality control a challenge. ⁶⁷ The FSSAI has responded by increasing the number of food testing labs from 12 in 2014 to 22 in 2023 and number of scientific panels in FSSAI has grown from nine in 2013 to 21, covering an entire spectrum of standards for food items. ⁶⁸

While challenges exist, the benefits of diverse products, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability make India a competitive player in the global food ingredients market. ⁶⁹ As the country continues to invest in infrastructure and regulatory improvements, there is potential for mutually beneficial partnerships between global businesses and Indian suppliers.

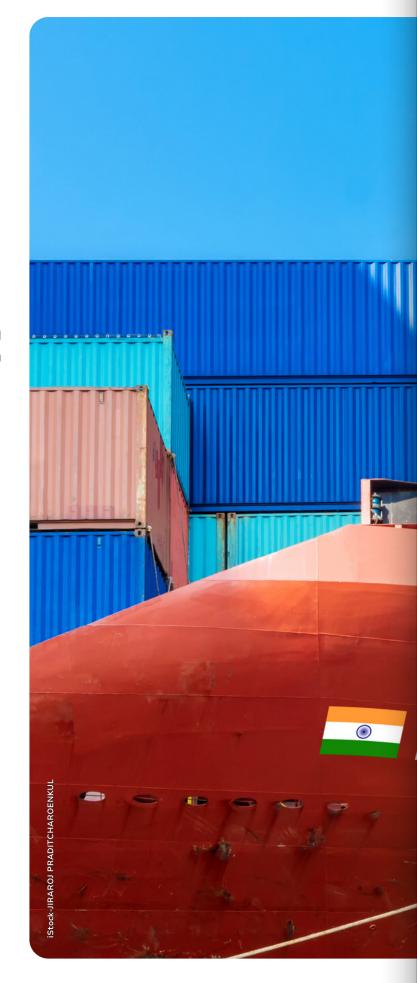
Import/export regulations

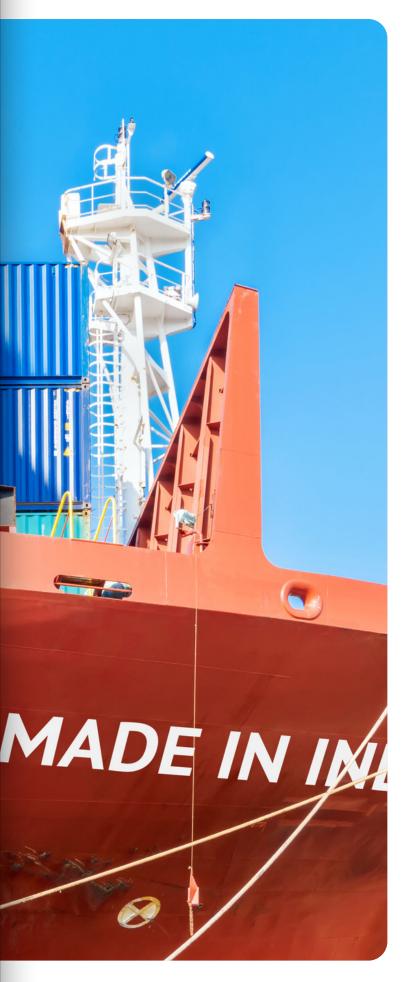
Food import and export regulations are overseen by several government bodies, primarily the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), and the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. ⁷⁰ These regulations are intended to ensure food safety, quality standards, and to promote fair trade practices.

For imports, the FSSAI plays a crucial role in setting standards for food products entering the country. Importers are required to obtain an Importer Exporter Code (IEC) from the DGFT and comply with FSSAI regulations, including obtaining necessary licenses and adhering to labelling requirements. ⁷¹

Export regulations focus on ensuring that Indian food products meet international standards and specifications to access global markets. Exporters must adhere to quality control measures, obtain necessary certifications, and comply with labelling and packaging requirements set by importing countries. ⁷² The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) plays a significant role in promoting and regulating the export of agricultural and processed food products from India. ⁷³

Overall, these regulations aim to safeguard public health, promote trade, and uphold India's reputation as a reliable supplier of quality food products in the global and domestic market.





Key takeaways

- India has a large youth population, with nearly two-thirds aged 35 or under.
- Manufacturers must consider local preferences and consumer needs in new product development. Authentic regional flavours, and healthy, convenient foods are in high demand but value for money is a primary concern for many Indian consumers.
- Plant-based meat and dairy alternatives are growing fast and present opportunities for both local and international brands in this country that counts the highest number of vegetarians in the world.
- However, for now, the meat and dairy alternatives market remains small, and innovative marketing is needed to reach more consumers.
- More than half of Indian consumers seek functional foods and drinks to improve their health and wellbeing. Herbal botanical ingredients are well-established in mainstream foods and beverages and most consumers prefer healthy products with multiple benefits.
- Locally sourced ingredients are valued for their taste and as a way to support sustainable production and local farmers.
- The benefits of sourcing ingredients from India include cost-effective production and sustainable farming practices.



Fi India: Inspiring India's health and food ingredients industry

<u>Fi India</u> is an annual three-day trade show, taking place this year at the **Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC)** in Bengaluru. Co-located with ProPak India, the event offers a single platform for sourcing new ingredients, finished product innovations, and packaging solutions. In addition, the free-to-attend conference programme provides opportunities to stay up-to-date on the latest industry trends, cutting-edge technologies, and best practices.

With an attendance of more than 15,000 industry professionals from India and around the world, the event is the region's most comprehensive food and beverage industry event, tailored to India's unique requirements. Fi India brings together manufacturers and suppliers and helps them make meaningful connections, establish long-lasting partnerships, and find inspiration for new product development.

Taking place from **25 – 27 September 2024**, Fi India is a driving force for India's processed food sector, recognised as a central meeting place for the industry.

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