

Key Highlights of FICCI Scientific Symposium on ‘Processed Foods for Purpose’

5th April 2024 | 10:00 a.m. to 04:00 p.m.

Physical Mode

Venue: 3rd Floor, Commission Room, FICCI Federation House, New Delhi

Inaugural session

Mr. Sanjay Khajuria, President, CIFTI-FICCI and Director Corporate Affairs, Nestle India Ltd said that Food Processing sector is considered as a sunrise sector and has achieved notable progress in terms of modernization and sustainable economic growth in recent years.

Mr. Siraj Hussain, Former Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries and Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt of India & Advisor, Food Processing Committee, FICCI said that food processing serves as a critical link between farm and fork. It acts as a catalyst for economic growth, generating employment opportunities and driving innovation across the food sector. “The role of food processing in providing safe, healthy and nutritious food has now taken centre stage” he added.

Dr. Seema Bathla, Professor, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi said that the Indian agriculture food system has four key elements which include production, consumption, ecology, and environment.

Ms. Anita Praveen, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing, Govt of India said that the Indian agriculture sector is witnessing a robust growth with record levels of production and Food Processing sector has become one of the priority sectors for the government. “We have already reached high levels of growth with the resources we have. There is a need now for another green revolution in the food processing sector with R&D as focus for taking the sector to the next level,” she added.

Further, the Secretary also emphasized on the collaboration of government and industry by highlighting the importance of reduction in food wastage. Ms. Praveen stated that “Wastage is an issue where we need to segregate the waste at farm level, transit and wastage after the processing is done. The post processing wastage is an area where we need to work on,” she noted.

Technical session

Ms. Petia Nenova, International Food & Beverage alliance, Belgium highlighted the role of Processed Foods in Sustainable Food System towards Food & Nutrition security (A Global Perspective). Through her presentation, Ms. Petia emphasized on the three pillars of sustainable food systems i.e. access to food, sustainable & healthy diets, and wise food production and distribution. She evolved the global discussion by prioritizing the healthfulness of products in terms of nutrient profile and level of processing including the food classification systems adopted in various countries. Ms. Petia touched upon the talks of ‘UPF’ and SIGA and concluded with the IFBA’s contribution to a balanced and meaningful debate concerning processed foods including the global campaign ‘Processed with Purpose’.

Dr. Sai Ram Challa, MBBS., M.D., Head, Division of Maternal and Child Health & Nutrition, National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad presented on the topic “Food Processing for Nutrition Security and Healthy India”. Dr. Sai attempted to objectively look at the SWOT analysis of Food Processing and its Public Health impact based on studies done across the world to find a balance between Public Health Needs and Industrial needs. He also projected research with reference to the classification systems in food processing for Indian population. Further, ICMR is conducting a nationwide survey involving nearly 2 lacs people across the country called the DABS (Diet and Biomarker Survey). The survey report will be shared with all the stakeholders including the industry.

Currently, the survey lies in the second phase, and it is expected to receive a preliminary report by November 2024.

Panel Discussion

Mr. Matt Kovac, Chief Executive Officer, Food Industry Asia, Singapore moderated the session on “Food Processing in context with balancing nutrition, innovation, food safety and sustainability” along with the panellists Dr. Jagmeet Madan, Dr. Eram Rao, Dr. Arpita Mukherjee, Ms. Lopa L Guha Majumder, and Ms Anuja Agarwal. The discussion began by relating food processing with a very focussed and specific approach with tangible outcomes. Dr. Madan & Dr. Eram emphasized the importance of food processing from farm to fork especially focussing on food processing technologies and employment generation. The discussion revolved around the given complexity of the Indian Scenario where the idea for collaboration between the academia and industries is the key to support economic growth. “India is not only large agricultural producer, but it is among the top agricultural exporter” said Dr. Arpita. Further, from a nutritionist point of view, Ms. Anuja said that food processing is the need of the day and must be included in the diet keeping in mind the dietary patterns of the population.

When it comes to form a constructive dialogue, collaboration between the entities is the key. A SWOT analysis on consumer preferences and changing dynamics could help in facilitating the collaboration and understanding the perspective at better. At the same time, Ms. Lopa said that understanding consumer choices and preferences are a long and continuous journey which are taken up by the consumer facing companies to provide them with various options as per their needs.

When it comes to labelling, the panellists highlighted lack of label interpretation by the consumer as a concern. The discussion included reformulation, investment, market growth, and employment generation. The panel also touched upon the role of food processing on food loss and wastage in the light of sustainable food systems.

Presentation on ‘Role of Processed Foods in Dietary & Nutrition Guidelines’

Prof. Pulkit Mathur, Professor and Head, Dept. of Food and Nutrition and Food Technology, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi began the session by throwing a light on Nova Food Classification System. Further, she touched upon various areas including dietary patterns, guidelines, implications, and positive solutions around processed food consumption.