

Bold Actions For Food As A Force For Good: Pre-event in support of the UN Food Systems Summit and National Food Processing Conclave

As the India partner, CII organised a Pre-event in support of the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 and the National Food Processing Conclave 2020, on 23 November 2020 over a virtual platform. The main UN event scheduled to be held in fall 2021 aims to identify and recognise the Game changing innovations across the globe and the interventions on Policy & Governance, Research & Innovation, Finance, empowerment of women and youth, consumer engagement and partnerships, which can help unlock further progress of such initiatives.

In line with the theme – Bold Actions for Food as a Force for Good, the India event was aimed at deliberating upon the ambitious new actions, innovative solutions, and plans to transform food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all of the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and pursue five specific objectives in support of its broader vision of delivering progress on these SDGs. It focussed on raising awareness and shape commitments that will help transform India food systems to resolve hunger, reduce diet-related diseases and restore the planetary health.

As a build up to the 2021 fall event, the Game innovations and the interventions that were projected from India included - strengthening finance availability for FPOs hence making them resource rich, by NABARD; using a 360 degree approach through the Eat Right Initiative, to ensure food safety and hygiene and handle food waste and loss, by FSSAI; deepening the fortification quality agenda, by making it an integral strategy within the larger nutrition agenda, by GAIN; aligning to make food system more smart and predict demand side, building a strong supply chain infrastructure, by Ninjacart; and reduction of environment externalities of Agriculture (stubble burning), by the Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) were the key highlights that would have a significant impact on the food systems in India. The session was Chaired by Mr Seane De Cleene, Head, Food System Initiative and Member, Executive Committee, World Economic Forum (WEF).

Given the context that rebuilding of economies after the COVID-19 crisis offers a unique opportunity to transform the global food system and make it resilient to future shocks, it is important to ensure environmentally sustainable and healthy nutrition for all. At the same time, the challenges of “New Normal” for the Food processing industry requires a holistic and coordinated approach. Many food security and nutrition challenges are complex problems whose solutions are contested and which transcend disciplinary, divisional, and institutional boundaries. Broadly, as we move forward, the food systems will see four (4) key broad shifts - Resilient food supply chains - Healthy diets/ access to good nutrition - Regenerative farming - Conservation.

Aligned to this background, a Special session on Food Systems in India and the way forward was Chaired by Dr Martin Frick, Deputy to the Special Envoy, for the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 and was aimed at discussing new pathways of convergence that need to be in place, as we shift to sustainable consumption patterns. The high powered panel for the session includes Secretaries to the Government of India from the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, Special Secretary, Logistics – Ministry of Commerce and CEO, NRAA, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, besides industry CEOs - Mr Suresh Narayanan, Chairman, CII National Committee on Food Processing Industries & Chairman & Managing Director, Nestle India Ltd, Mr Sanjiv Puri Chairman, CII National Council on Agriculture; and Chairman ITC Ltd and Mr Sudhir Sitapati, Co-Chairman, CII National Committee on Food Processing Industries & Executive Director – Foods and Refreshments, HUL.

Ms Pushpa Subrahmanyam, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India in her address shared that as far as the Food industry is concerned – 95% of food industry in India is in micro and unorganized sector, a tectonic shift is seen in handling the sector with focus on value chain development, focus on reducing wastage, identify one product in one district from 700 districts, working on quality of products and increasing access to formal markets.

Mr Pawan Agarwal, Special Secretary – Logistics, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India– shared about the success of the Eat right India movement where 300 – 400 million people have voluntarily enrolled for the program and working closely with under state and national governments. He shared that voluntary fortification of milk and oil has worked as successful intervention in India, which is highly successful as compared to in any other country in the world.

Mr Sudhanshu Pandey, Secretary, Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, in his address shared the successful implementation of One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) that seeks to provide an option to all eligible ration card holders/beneficiaries covered under National Food Security Act (NFSA) to access their entitlements from anywhere in the country, enabling the distribution of food grains through nation-wide portability of ration cards.

This was followed by a concluding session that focussed on Emerging Trends in the Food processing industry such as – Direct to consumer models that will be preferred by the consumers given the concern for safety and benefit of convenience; Product formulations and transformation of the Product portfolios in line with the consumer preferences; Innovations in Ingredients for food and health industries.