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REJIG REBOOT REFRESH: Indian F&B Brands Go Global

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In supermarket aisles abroad, Indian food and beverage brands are claiming their space—not just on the shelves, but in the hearts and palates of global consumers. No longer confined to diaspora-driven ethnic aisles, Indian products like dosa batter, masala snacks, and ayurvedic beverages are being reimagined and reengineered to suit the world's tastes, formats, and lifestyles. The surge in demand is being propelled by evolving food trends—plant-based preferences, holistic wellness, and clean-label movements—all of which naturally align with India's traditional food wisdom.

This new wave of exports isn't just about volume but vision. Indian F&B players are innovating at every level: taste profiles, packaging, shelf stability, and regulatory compliance. Powered by institutional support from APEDA, strategic private partnerships, and strong digital infrastructure, the sector is scaling with ambition. From heritage giants like ITC, Amul, and Dabur to dynamic disruptors like iD Fresh, Slurrp Farm, and Paper Boat, India's food exports are evolving into globally recognised brands. But the journey isn't without hurdles- SMEs still grapple with financing, market intelligence, and supply chain complexity. Let's explore how India is cracking the global code with flavour, innovation, and resilience.

While walking into a supermarket in London, Dubai, or New York, we are likely to come across familiar Indian names—Haldiram's crunchy snacks, Paper Boat's nostalgic beverages, or iD Fresh's ready-to-cook idli and dosa batter. These aren't just exports neatly placed on ethnic aisles; they are symbols of India's rich culinary legacy being repackaged, reimagined, and reintroduced to the world. Today's Indian food and beverage (F&B) exporters are not merely shipping products overseas—they're building global brands, adapting to diverse consumer palates, navigating complex regulatory landscapes, and leveraging innovation to resonate with international audiences. Indian cuisine has always held a special place on the global stage, thanks to its bold flavours, diverse ingredients, and rich history. But now, a new wave of global interest is propelling its reach further than ever before. This surge is powered by the rising popularity of health-conscious choices, vegetarianism, and plant-based diets—domains where Indian food naturally excels.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has emerged as a driving force behind India's growing success in global F&B exports. With a sharp focus on market expansion, product diversification, and value addition, APEDA has consistently empowered exporters through financial assistance, infrastructure support, and strategic promotional efforts. A recent example includes facilitating the export of the GI-tagged Dalle Chilly from Sikkim to the Solomon Islands—an initiative that not only spotlighted India's unique regional produce but also economically uplifted local farmers. In the beverage space, APEDA backed the global launch of Goli Pop Soda, reviving India's iconic Goli Soda for international consumers with modern packaging and branding.

Furthermore, the organisation enabled the first-ever sea shipments of Indian pomegranates to Australia, marking a significant stride in diversifying export destinations and enhancing fruit exports. “India’s agricultural export landscape is growing at an unprecedented pace, with fresh fruit exports surging by 29 per cent year-on-year. Pomegranates alone have seen a 20 per cent growth, demonstrating the immense potential of this segment. The successful shipments of premium pomegranates to Australia mark India’s ability to supply high-quality fresh produce to discerning international markets. Through advanced traceability systems like ANARNET, we ensure that Indian agricultural products meet the highest global standards, enhancing consumer trust worldwide. We are committed to supporting Indian farmers and agri-entrepreneurs by expanding into new and emerging markets. This success story paves the way for further collaborations and increased export volumes in the future,” Abhishek Dev, Chairman APEDA, emphasised.

APEDA’s impact is most evident in the numbers, with its financial assistance schemes contributing to a 47.3 per cent rise in fruit and vegetable export volumes and a 41.5 per cent surge in value between 2019-20 and 2023-24, including the addition of 17 new markets. Through these efforts, APEDA continues to position India as a trusted and innovative global supplier in the F&B sector, ensuring Indian products reach international shelves with quality, authenticity, and competitiveness.

Taste and Format Innovations

Innovation in taste and format has played a pivotal role in propelling Indian food and beverage (F&B) brands onto the global stage. By modernising traditional offerings to suit international palates—without losing authenticity—Indian brands have struck a balance between nostalgia and novelty. This innovation isn’t just about flavour; it encompasses changes in packaging, portion sizes, preservation techniques, and nutritional profiles, allowing products to meet global consumer expectations around health, convenience, and transparency. From ready-to-drink Ayurvedic beverages to millet-based snacks tailored for kids, Indian companies are reimagining age-old recipes for new-age markets.

iD Fresh Food, known for its idlis and dosa batters, faced the challenge of preserving freshness during transit. Their R&D team introduced natural preservation techniques and eco-friendly

packaging that extended shelf life without compromising on quality. Today, their batters are available in the Middle East and are soon to enter North American markets. As part of its growth strategy, the company will also appoint dedicated business heads and chief executive officers for each International market. The company is in the process of hiring its US chief executive officer. Currently, over a third comes from revenues outside India. Recently, the company announced its foray into the Rs 5,000 crore ready-to-eat market with the launch of instant and authentic homestyle Sambar. The company also launched four new specialty batters in January 2025– Protein-rich idli dosa batter, Ragi Millet Idli Dosa Batter, Multigrain Idli Dosa Batter, and Mallige Idli Batter.

“Fresh packaged food segments such as batter and parotta are steadily shifting from loose to branded formats, indicating a strong and sustainable long-term opportunity. Similar trends have played out in other categories, where brands like MTR and Haldiram have successfully tapped into the Indian diaspora and expanded globally,” stated Rishav Jain, Managing Director and Consumer & Retail Lead at Alvarez & Marsal.

Paper Boat, another innovator, reimagined nostalgic Indian drinks in slick, convenient packaging. To meet the expectations of global consumers, they reduced sugar content and eliminated artificial additives, aligning with the global ‘clean label’ movement. Products like Aam Panna, Jaljeera, and Chikki are now resonating with wellness-conscious millennials abroad. Slurrp Farm, focusing on millet-based snacks for children, is expanding into global markets, riding on the International Year of Millets campaign and a growing interest in ancient grains. Their adaptation of taste, texture, and format ensures that the Indian grain finds favour among international families. The company has already launched its products in the UAE and Singapore, and they are eyeing other markets like the UK and the US. They are also focusing on a direct-to-consumer approach, where they sell products directly to consumers through their website. The company is aiming for Rs 500 crore in FY2026.

The Compliance Labyrinth

One of the largest hurdles Indian exporters face is navigating international food safety and labelling standards. Compliance involves adherence to country-specific rules regarding ingredients, nutritional claims, packaging materials, allergens, traceability, and certifications,

often requiring significant investments in technical expertise and infrastructure.

Haldiram’s, for instance, has invested in a dedicated compliance team that ensures every batch shipped to the U.S. meets FDA norms. This includes precise labelling, non-GMO declarations, and adherence to permissible levels of food additives. The company has proactively addressed the U.S. FDA regulations by enhancing its compliance protocols. Following a 2017 FDA warning letter concerning its canned food facility, the company has since implemented rigorous measures to ensure adherence to FDA standards. These efforts have facilitated smoother exports to the U.S. According to Volza's India Export data, India exported 117 shipments of Haldiram Snacks from Oct 2023 to Sep 2024 (TTM). These exports were made by 26 Indian Exporters to 27 Buyers, marking a growth rate of -46 per cent compared to the preceding twelve months. Most of the Haldiram Snacks exports from India go to Nigeria, Vietnam, and Singapore.

Another big player in the market, Amul, has embraced blockchain technology to enhance transparency and traceability in its supply chain. By integrating AI with blockchain, Amul can track the provenance of milk from farms to processing plants and retail outlets, ensuring product authenticity and safety. This initiative supports compliance with international standards and bolsters consumer trust in global markets.

Furthermore, ITC Foods has demonstrated its commitment to global food safety standards by launching a world-class export-oriented spices processing facility in Palnadu, Andhra Pradesh. This facility is designed to offer the finest quality spices conforming to global food safety export norms, thereby strengthening ITC's footprint in international markets. Commenting on the launch of new facility, *Sanjiv Puri, Chairman and Managing Director, ITC Limited said, "In line with our commitment to strengthen our footprint across the 3 sectors of the State's economy- agriculture, manufacturing and services, we have invested in setting up a world-class export-oriented spices facility in Palnadu that will offer the finest quality of spices to the world conforming to global food safety export norms, whilst anchoring local agri-value chains. We are indeed delighted that the Unit will also be a flag-bearer of sustainability and inclusion, owing to its 360-degree initiatives that will support enhanced farmer incomes, foster women empowerment, support large-scale livelihoods as well as promote extensive use of renewable energy.”*

In markets like the EU, exporters must also manage European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) approvals, while halal certifications are critical for the Middle East. Many exporters also pursue organic, kosher, and gluten-free certifications to access health-conscious markets. The cost of compliance is high, but the long-term payoff is global credibility. Government agencies like APEDA offer partial subsidies for testing and certification, but awareness and accessibility remain limited, especially for MSMEs.

Partnerships and Local Insight

Collaborating with local players remains one of the most effective ways for Indian F&B exporters to gain quick and reliable access to global markets. These partnerships serve as critical bridges, enabling Indian brands to navigate the maze of local regulatory frameworks, cultural preferences, distribution logistics, and retail dynamics. Local partners bring on-ground expertise that can make or break a product's success, be it through suggesting the right shelf placement, assisting in obtaining regional certifications, customising packaging and labelling as per local laws, or fine-tuning product formulations to match taste preferences.

Parle Products, a prominent Indian FMCG brand, has effectively expanded into African and Southeast Asian markets by establishing local manufacturing units and partnering with regional distributors. In countries like Nigeria and Ghana, Parle has set up manufacturing facilities to cater to local demand, optimise costs, and ensure product freshness. These facilities enable Parle to produce select products locally under technical collaboration, allowing the company to adapt its offerings to regional tastes and preferences while maintaining its Indian brand identity through strategic branding initiatives. This approach not only enhances supply chain efficiency but also fosters stronger connections with local consumers. Parle's commitment to global expansion is evident in its presence in seven countries outside India - Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Nepal- as part of its efforts to increase its international footprint.

Leading Ayurvedic and natural healthcare products company, Dabur India, exports its juices, Ayurvedic supplements, and personal care products to over 100 countries. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Dabur operates through its wholly-owned subsidiary Dabur International, which works closely with local distribution and retail partners. In the US and

Europe, Dabur’s food products like honey and chyawanprash are retailed through Indian and natural wellness stores, supported by regional compliance teams for labelling and certifications.

Reliance Consumer Products has revived its home-grown cola brand, Campa Cola, and launched it in the UAE very recently. The brand was once a prominent soft drink in India during the 1970s and 1980s, but it declined after PepsiCo and Coca-Cola entered the Indian market in 1991. The relaunch in the UAE aims to resonate with the Indian expatriate community and target the $1 billion soft drinks market in the region. Reliance partnered with UAE-based Agthia Group for this launch, marking the brand's first venture into the global market. Agthia’s local market expertise, distribution network, and regulatory knowledge can ensure smooth market entry of Campa Cola. The collaboration may enhance brand visibility, consumer trust, and long-term growth, positioning Campa Cola for further regional and global expansion. Commenting on the partnership, *Agthia’s chief executive officer, Alan Smith, said, “With our robust distribution network and market expertise, we’re excited to reintroduce Campa Cola to a new generation of consumers in the UAE. This iconic brand holds deep nostalgia for many, and we believe it will strongly resonate with the significant Indian expatriate community in the UAE and local consumers alike. This partnership further strengthens Agthia’s diverse beverage portfolio and reinforces our leadership in the region’s dynamic market.”*

Such global-level collaborations often offer established supply chains, warehousing capabilities, and retail relationships that significantly reduce time-to-market and operational risks. In regions where consumer trust hinges on familiarity and consistency, the credibility of local distributors or co-packers can accelerate brand acceptance and customer loyalty. Especially for startups or mid-sized companies looking to test international waters, these alliances provide a low-capital, high-impact route to validation, visibility, and volume. Whether it’s co-branding opportunities, in-market marketing support, or compliance know-how, local partnerships are increasingly becoming a cornerstone strategy for global F&B expansion from India.

Overcoming Export Barriers

Despite the remarkable success of several Indian F&B exporters, many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) continue to face significant challenges in expanding globally. These hurdles include a lack of international market intelligence, making it difficult for SMEs to identify growth

opportunities and target the right consumers. Additionally, accessing working capital remains a major issue, as many exporters struggle to secure funding for their operations and investments. High logistics and shipping costs also eat into profits, while limited brand recognition prevents small players from competing with established global names. Moreover, the complexity of international documentation and regulations often causes delays and legal complications, making it hard for SMEs to navigate the export landscape effectively.

“Within the landscape of global economics, micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) emerge as foundational drivers of prosperity, forming the largest and most impactful segment across economies. Representing around 90 per cent of businesses worldwide, they contribute to over 50 per cent of global employment and play a vital role in fostering economic growth and innovation. Despite their dominant presence in terms of numbers and their crucial role in job creation, MSMEs remain significantly underrepresented in Global Value Chains (GVCs) when compared to larger enterprises. This limited participation stems from barriers such as restricted access to finance, insufficient market intelligence, regulatory complexities, and weaker integration into international supply networks. Addressing these challenges is essential for building more inclusive and resilient global trade systems,” opined Dr Amit Kapoor, Honorary Chairman, Institute of Competitiveness, Haryana.

To address these challenges, experts emphasise the need for greater public-private partnerships to help build export readiness, particularly for SMEs. By offering guidance on market trends and export strategies, these collaborations can bridge knowledge gaps and assist with smoother international transactions. Furthermore, investing more in R&D and product localisation is essential for ensuring Indian products appeal to foreign consumers. Improving cold-chain infrastructure and providing digital export facilitation platforms can streamline logistics and reduce costs, especially for perishable goods. Finally, creating Indian food clusters in major export destinations would help optimise warehousing, streamline supply chains, and improve last-mile delivery, ultimately driving greater success for Indian F&B brands in international markets.

As we go stronger with our SMEs by mastering the art of storytelling, innovation, and compliance, the dream of making ‘Brand India’ a global supermarket staple would be closer than ever. With strategic vision, smart execution, and unified support from policy to packaging,

Indian F&B exports are poised to claim their rightful place on the global table.

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