

# Food processing opportunities for India

## Government support and regional cooperation

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India is among the largest producers of many agricultural products and has great potential for food processing and export. Recent years have seen impressive growth of the Indian food processing sector in terms of R&D, technology advancement, development and applications. But most food processing industries are in the small and medium sector; so the Government of India has embarked on a series of policies and programmes for the growth of the industry. This article discusses the current status of the Indian food processing sector and governmental policies on technology transfer and intellectual property rights (IPR) issues.



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### Introduction

Until a few years ago, the Indian food processing industry in India had been dormant. Two factors then spurred growth in the industry.

### Change in lifestyle

The first was a change in Indian lifestyle. This was evident in many ways, like urbanization at the expense of the rural population, the entrenchment of television into homes, a substantial increase in overseas travel, and a newfound interest in other types of foods.

Urbanization led to growth in urban populations. In addition, construction activities swallowed up nearby fields and farms from where food produce used to come to cities. This increased the distances of food production centres from consumption centres, which made it neces-

sary to preserve and process foods to various degrees. Television opened up direct access to consumers for marketing of new foods. It also exposed Indians to western lifestyles, especially in matters of food products. Consumers were thus enticed to try newer foods, which opened newer markets. Indians visiting western countries as students, professionals and tourists got exposed to new foods, mostly processed. On their return, they carried their tastes back home and encouraged their friends and relatives to try these new foods. Finally, Indians became more adventurous in their food preferences and began trying something new. Since restaurants are often expensive, convenient processed foods were perceived to be the best alternatives.

Taking note of these developments, a recent McKinsey report predicted a very bright future for the Indian food process