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Report Highlights:

Growth opportunities for U.S. high-value agricultural product exports to India include a large and growing consumer middle class, steady transformation of the retail food sector, entrance of large Indian conglomerates in food retailing, growing number of fast food chains, luxury hotels, increasing exposure to Western products and lifestyle, increasing urbanization, and a growing food processing industry looking for imported food ingredients. However, high tariffs, dated food laws, unwarranted sanitary and phytosanitary restrictions, combined with poor infrastructure and restrictions on foreign direct investment in food retailing continue to temper prospects.

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SECTION I: MARKET OVERVIEW

India is a country of striking contrasts and enormous ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Its landmass is roughly one-third the size of the United States, it has a population of over 1.1 billion, and it is comprised of 29 states and six Union Territories (under federal government rule). The states differ vastly in resources, culture, food habits, living standards, and languages. Vast disparities in per-capita income levels exist between and within states. About 75 percent of the country's people live in its 550,000 villages, the rest in 200 towns and cities. There are 27 cities with a population above one million people.

India has a large number of poor people, with one-third of the population surviving on less than \$1 per day.¹ Nearly 51 percent of Indians' consumption expenditures go for food (54 percent in rural areas and 42 in urban areas)²; mostly for basic items like grains, vegetable oils, and sugar; and little goes for value added food items. In recent years, however, there has been an increased shift towards vegetables, eggs, fruits, meat, and beverages. Religion has a major influence on eating habits and, along with low purchasing power, supports a predominantly vegetarian diet.

Despite the many challenges, some observers of India's economic scene are optimistic about consumption growth potential, and believe that rising income levels, increasing urbanization, a changing age profile (more young people), increasing consumerism, and a significant rise in the number of single professionals, will push India toward a new growth trajectory. These segments of the population are aware of quality differences, insist on world standards, and are willing to pay a premium for quality. Nonetheless, a major share of Indian consumers have to sacrifice quality for affordable prices. Potential U.S. exporters should also bear in mind that India's diverse agro-industrial base already offers many items at competitive prices.

A McKinsey Global Institute study³ shows that as Indian incomes rise, the shape of the country's income pyramid will also change. Average real household disposable income will grow from Rs. 113,744 in 2005 to Rs. 318,896 by 2025, creating a 583 million – strong middle class, which include both *seekers* (with real annual household disposable income of \$4,380 to \$10,940 or \$23,530 to \$58,820 at purchasing power parity (ppp) basis) and *strivers* (with real annual household disposable income of \$10,940 to \$21,890 or \$58,820 to \$117,650 on ppp basis). Households with real earnings of more than \$21,890 (\$117,650 on ppp basis classified as *global*) will comprise of two percent of the population. Furthermore, middle-class growth will spread beyond top-tier cities to middle tier and smaller cities. Although the share of food, beverages, and tobacco will still be the highest category of Indian spending, its share will drop from the present 42 percent to 25 percent by 2025. According to the study, the upcoming changes in the Indian consumer market will create major opportunities and challenges for companies doing business in India.

On the demographic front, sixty-five million people are expected to enter the 20-34 year age group from 2001 to 2010. By 2025, 40 percent of Indians are expected to be urban dwellers.

¹ UNDP Human Development Report 2007/08
(http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_EN_Complete.pdf)

² Consumer Household Expenditure Survey 60th Round (January – June 2004), National Sample Survey Organization, GOI (http://mospi.nic.in/rept%20%20pubn/ftest.asp?rept_id=505&type=nsso)

³ The 'Bird of Gold': The Rise of India's Consumer Market, May 2007, McKinsey Global Institute.
http://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/reports/pdfs/india_consumer_market/MGI_india_consumer_full_report.pdf

Structural reforms and stabilization programs during the 1990s have contributed to India's sustained economic growth, which has been relatively strong over the past five years, averaging 6.8 percent annually. Since 1996, the Indian government has gradually lifted import-licensing restrictions, which had effectively prohibited imports. On April 1, 2001, all remaining quantitative restrictions were removed, putting India in compliance with its WTO commitment. Nonetheless, the government continues to discourage imports, particularly agricultural products, with the use of high tariffs and non-tariff barriers. Import tariffs on most consumer products, although declining, are still high, ranging from 36.1 percent to 59.1 percent. Some sensitive items, such as alcoholic beverages, poultry meat, raisins, vegetable oils, rice, etc., attract much higher duties. However, concerns about food inflation has prompted the government to recently lower or abolish the import duty on several bulk food items such as wheat, rice, corn, vegetable oils, and cotton. Non-tariff barriers include unwarranted sanitary and phytosanitary restrictions and onerous labeling requirements for pre-packaged foods. Other factors adversely affecting imports include a poorly developed infrastructure (transportation and cold chain), a predominantly unorganized retail sector, and outdated food laws. However, some positive factors are:

- Rising disposable income levels
- Increasing urbanization and exposure to Western culture
- Growing health consciousness among the middle class
- "Aspirational" lifestyles
- Changing age profile
- Enacting of an integrated food law
- Increasing Indian conglomerates' interest in food retailing

Advantages	Challenges
● Large and growing middle class	● Divergent food habits
● Increasing exposure to Western products and lifestyle	● Preference for fresh products and traditional foods
● A slow but steady transformation of the retail food sector in cities	● Difficulties in accessing vast untapped rural markets
● Growing number of fast food chains	● Poor infrastructure
● Increasing urbanization and growing number of working women	● Diverse agro-industrial base offering many products at competitive prices
● A growing food processing industry looking for imported food ingredients	● High tariffs, dated food laws, and unscientific sanitary and phytosanitary restrictions
● Improved Indo-U.S. relations	● Competition from countries with better geographic proximity

SECTION II: EXPORTER BUSINESS TIPS

A. Food Preferences

India is well known for its tradition of vegetarianism. Among those who are not vegetarians, beef is still generally taboo to most Hindus (80.5 percent of the population), Sikhs (1.9 percent of the population), and Jains (0.4 percent of the population), all of whom consider cows sacred. Many Indians are vegetarians because they cannot afford a non-vegetarian diet. As India has been at the crossroads of many peoples and cultures over the centuries, some foreign elements have invariably seeped into the local culinary culture. Thus, India's culinary tradition is constantly changing. Nonetheless, Indians have a strong preference for fresh products and traditional spices and ingredients, which has generally slowed the penetration of American and other Western-type foods. However, with urbanization, rising incomes, more working women, the arrival of some agribusiness multinationals, and a proliferation of fast food outlets, the acceptance of packaged and ready-to-eat food products is increasing, especially among the urban middle class. These products, nonetheless, are usually tailored to Indian tastes. Many Indians are quite willing to try new foods, but often return to traditional fare. While Western foods have a reasonably good chance of succeeding in casual dining, integrating them into the main family meal will be more difficult.

Demand for specialty and high-value food items, including those imported, such as chocolates, dry fruits (almonds, cashews, pistachios, etc.), cakes, pastries, exotic fruits, and fruit juices, typically peaks during the fall festive season, especially at *Diwali* – the Festival of Lights. Hence, from October to December is the best time to introduce new food products into the Indian market.

Typical imported food items that can be spotted in retail stores in cities include chocolates and chocolate syrups, biscuits, cake mixes, fruit juices, canned soups, pastas, popcorn, potato chips, canned fish and vegetables, ketchup, breakfast cereals, and fresh fruits such as apples, pears, grapes, and kiwis, etc.

B. Shopping Habits

Lacking home refrigeration and purchasing power, most Indians shop daily at neighborhood *kirana* shops (small retail outlets) or roadside vendors. Most consumers regard shopping as a chore, and few are familiar with alternatives to traditional formats. Convenience to one's home is important, since daily shopping and sensitivity to food freshness is an integral part of shopping habits. Indians buy fruits and vegetables in one shop, dairy products in another, groceries in a third, and meat and fish in yet another. Quality is important, but there is a reluctance to pay a premium. Trust in the retailer, especially with regard to quality of food and replacement of defective goods, is important. Although added services such as home delivery are welcome, most consumers are unwilling to (and do not have to) pay a premium for this service. Women do most of the shopping and make most of the food purchasing decisions. Households able to afford Western imports usually have servants who buy, clean, and prepare foods. Availability of many fresh foods, particularly fruits and vegetables, is seasonal, and people are accustomed to adjusting their diet to the season.

Processed/packaged foods in great demand include ketchup and sauces, jams and jellies, table butter and *ghee* (melted butter), cooking oils, various *masalas* (spice mixes), pickles, wheat flour, noodles, snack foods (mostly Indian types), and health drinks. Most packaged food items are sold in small containers, due to customers' limited purchasing power. Only in the past few years have Indians, mostly in cities, been exposed to supermarkets in the Western sense. Semi-urban, non-metropolitan, and rural areas have yet to feel the impact

of large-scale retailing. Most people, even in cities, still associate supermarkets with “expensive” rather than “cost effective.” However, in recent years, the “shopping mall” culture has caught on in India, with many large malls being built in large cities and suburbs. Modern supermarkets are often anchor stores in large urban malls.

C. Distribution Systems

Domestic consumer goods are distributed through a multi-level distribution system. With the cost of establishing warehouses nearly prohibitive, clearing and forwarding agents (CFAs) are fast becoming the norm. Typically, the CFAs transport merchandise from the factory or warehouse to “stockists” or distributors. While the CFAs do not take title to the product, they receive 2 to 2.5 percent margins, then invoice the stockists, and receive payment on behalf of the manufacturer. The stockists have exclusive geographical territories and a sales force that calls on both the wholesalers and on large retailers in urban areas. They usually offer credit to their customers and receive margins in the range of 3 to 9 percent. The wholesalers provide the final link to those rural and smaller retailers who cannot purchase directly from the distributors. Sales to these retailers are typically in cash only and the wholesalers receive a margin of 2 to 3 percent. Margins for retailers range from 5 to 15 percent, and the total cost of the distribution network represents between 10 and 20 percent of the final retail price.

Most imported food products are transshipped through regional hubs such as Dubai and Singapore, due to their more liberal trade policies and efficient handling facilities. Major importers are located in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata, and Chennai. Although a large share of imported foods enter India through gray channels, regular imports are also increasing in volume and value.

D. Infrastructure

With a coastline of nearly 4,000 miles, India has 11 international and 139 minor ports. The international ports are Kandla, Mumbai, Mundra, Jawaharlal Nehru, Cochin, Murmagoa, and New Mangalore on the west coast, and Chennai, Tuticorin, Vizagh, Paradeep, and Kolkata on the east coast. Container handling facilities are available at most major ports and in several major cities. India has a vast railway network connecting most major cities and towns. Refrigerated warehousing and transportation facilities are limited and costly, resulting in high storage losses in perishable food items. An inadequate and erratic electric power supply constrains cold chain development. Whereas infrastructure projects were previously reserved for the public sector, private investors are now being encouraged to participate in developing roads, markets and transportation links. Telecommunications, in particular, are benefiting from privatization and strong foreign investor interest. The pace is much slower, however, for power generation, roads, and other infrastructure needs, where the returns on investment take longer to materialize.

E. Finding a Business Partner

It is essential to survey existing and potential markets for products before initiating export sales to India. Market research firms in India can assist new exporters. If aspiring U.S. companies have products with promising sales potential in India, they can either set up a base in India or appoint a distributor or an agent. If possible, setting up a base is preferable, because Indians like to see foreign companies investing in their country rather than only selling from abroad. Generally speaking, U.S. companies should avoid the temptation to establish a relationship with an agent/distributor merely because he/she is the most persistent suitor. Consider the following before selecting an agent/distributor:

- ✓ Determine who their potential customers are, and where in India these customers are located, through surveys.
- ✓ Recognize that agents with fewer principals and smaller set-ups often are more adaptable and committed than those with a large infrastructure and established reputations.
- ✓ There may be a conflict of interest where the potential agent handles similar product lines, as many agents do.
- ✓ U.S. firms should examine all distributor prospects, and thoroughly research the more promising ones. Check the potential agent's reputation through local industry/trade associations, potential clients, bankers, and other foreign companies/missions.

Franchising is another way of introducing Western products. Companies with franchises in the food sector in India include McDonalds, KFC, Domino's Pizza, Baskin Robbins, Wimpy's, TGIF, Ruby Tuesday, and Pizza Hut. Indian companies with strong brand recognition also franchise. Direct marketing, although becoming more popular, is still limited.

F. Advertising and Sales Promotion

Advertising and trade promotion are highly developed in India, and most major U.S. advertising firms choose local partners, as they know India and Indians well. In addition to government-controlled television in various regional languages, there are several popular national, international, and regional privately-owned channels. Most urban households have televisions, and they are increasingly present in rural areas.

India also has a diverse and growing number of newspapers and magazines appealing to various social, cultural, and gender groups. According to the National Readership Survey 2006⁴, the reach of the press medium (dailies and magazines combined) has increased to 222 million people in 2005 (110 million rural and 112 million urban) from 216 million a year ago. Satellite television has grown explosively to reach 230 million people. Radio's reach has increased from 23 percent of the population to 27 percent, with FM radio driving this growth. The Internet as a medium grew from 7.2 million users who logged in every week in 2005 to 9.4 million in 2006. Among the fast growing tribe of mobile phone owners, 22 million people access value-added features like downloads, news, SMS, etc.

Delhi's Annual Food Exposition AAHAR⁵, and smaller food shows in Delhi and other cities (International Food Expo India, Indian Food and Wine Show, etc.) provide opportunities for U.S. exporters to showcase their food products to potential clients.

⁴ National Readership Studies Council – <http://www.auditbureau.org/nrspress06.htm>

⁵ See: <http://www.aaharindia2008.com/>,

G. Business Etiquette

Although Hindi is India's leading national language, most Indian officials and business people have an excellent command of English. Most Indian businessmen have traveled abroad and are familiar with Western culture. Business is not conducted during religious holidays that are observed throughout the many regions and states of India. Verify holiday information with the Consulate or Embassy before scheduling a visit. Indian executives prefer late morning or afternoon appointments between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Indians often have longer meetings, so be sure to leave plenty of time between appointments.

The climate in India can be very hot for most part of the year, so it is advisable to wear lightweight clothing to avoid discomfort. Men should wear a jacket and tie (and women should wear corresponding attire) when making official calls or attending formal occasions. Always present a business card when introducing yourself. Refer to business contacts by their surname, rather than by their given name. Use courtesy titles such as "Mr.", "Mrs.", or "Miss." Talking about your family and friends is an important part of establishing a relationship with those involved in the business process. Hospitality is a key part of doing business in India; most business discussions will not even begin until "chai" (tea), coffee, or a soft drink is served and there has been some preliminary "small talk." To refuse any beverage outright will likely be perceived as an insult. While an exchange of gifts is not necessary, most businessmen appreciate token mementos, particularly if they reflect the subject under discussion. Business lunches are preferred to dinners. Try to avoid business breakfasts, especially in Mumbai. The best time of year to visit India is between October and March, so that the seasons of extreme heat and rains can be avoided. Although Delhi (the capital) has a cool, pleasant winter (November - February), summers (April - July) are fierce with temperatures of up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Mumbai (the business hub) and most other major cities have a subtropical climate – hot and humid year around. Most Indian cities have good hotels and are well connected by domestic airlines.

The following websites were found to be informative and user-friendly in providing information on Indian business culture and business etiquettes. These websites are mentioned for readers' convenience; USDA/FAS does **NOT** in any way endorse, guarantee the accuracy of, or necessarily concur with the information contained in the below sites:

http://stylusinc.com/business/india/cultural_tips.htm

www.executiveplanet.com/index.php?title=India

H. Import Duties

Imports into India are subject to a high and often confusing array of duties, which include the following: a "basic" duty, an Additional Duty (AD), also known as "Countervailing Duty (CVD)," and an Education Cess (a special surcharge on all direct and indirect taxes at 2 percent introduced in the July 8, 2004 Budget, which was increased to 3 percent in the 2007 Budget). A special Countervailing duty (SCVD) of 4 percent was introduced in the 2005 GOI Budget on all imports (agricultural and non-agricultural) with a few exceptions. This was done to account for the VAT and other taxes applicable only to domestic products. Agricultural products exempted from the CVD include fresh vegetables and fruits, seeds, raw wool, poultry and cattle feed, pulses, rice, wheat, and coarse grains.

The basic duty on most processed food products is 30 percent. Exceptions in the agriculture/food group include "sensitive" items such as wine, liquor, poultry meat, wheat, rice, corn, coffee, tea, vegetable oils, cigarettes and tobacco, and several dairy products,

which attract much higher basic duties. However, due to food inflation, the import duty on wheat, rice, corn and crude vegetable oils currently remains zero. The CVD equals the excise duty on similar products produced domestically (16 percent on most consumer food products), and is levied on the total of the assessed value plus the basic duty. The calculation of the CVD on packaged goods is based on the Maximum Retail Price (MRP), minus the abatement notified for similar domestic goods in India, which makes the calculation more difficult. Total import tariffs on most consumer food products range from 36.1 percent to 59.1 percent.

I. Food Laws

Food exporters will have to grapple with India's varied food sector laws, particularly those pertaining to the use of additives and colors, labeling requirements, packaging, weights and measures, shelf-life, and phytosanitary regulations. Following the removal of quantitative restrictions on imports of food products in 2001, the GOI issued several notifications to make imported food products comply with domestic laws. Details on India's food laws are available in our "Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards Country Report 2008" (IN8082), which can be accessed via the FAS/USDA website: www.fas.usda.gov. On August 24, 2006, the GOI notified, in the official gazette, the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 to bring about an integrated food law. The new Food Safety and Standard Authority has been formulated and has initiated the rule making process.

Some of the major food laws affecting Indian food importers are:

● **The Prevention of Food Adulteration (PFA) Act, 1954, and PFA Rules of 1955**, as amended. This is a basic statute established to protect consumers against adulterated foods, and it encompasses food colors and preservatives, pesticide residues, packaging, labeling, and regulation of sales. This is similar to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act of the United States' Food and Drug Administration. Standards and regulations of the PFA apply equally to domestic and imported products. The PFA Act and Rules, and recent notifications are available at: <http://mohfw.nic.in/pfa.htm>

● **The Standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1976, and the Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977**, as amended. This Act established standards for weights and measures to regulate interstate trade and commerce in goods that are sold or distributed by weight, measure, or number. The Rules formed under the Act require labeling regarding the nature of the commodity, the name and address of the manufacturer, quantity, date of manufacture, best-before date, and the MRP. These labeling requirements apply equally to imported and domestic packaged foods.

● **The Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order, 2003, and amendments**. These legislative measures regulate imports of planting seeds and agricultural products into India. These can be accessed from: www.plantquarantineindia.org/PQO_amendments.htm

SECTION III: MARKET SECTORS: STRUCTURE AND TRENDS

A. Food Retail

Food retailing in India is largely unorganized, mostly resulting from the sheer size of the country, its regional diversity, and the fairly limited infrastructure support. According to some experts, food and beverage retailing in India has market sales of over \$168 billion (Source: Technopak), of which the organized retail sector has been able to capture only a fraction of a percent. India has very few hypermarkets in the Western sense of the word, and few supermarkets. While several larger stores and specialty shops in major cities cater to the less price sensitive, wealthy segment of the population, virtually all other retailers are small, independent, owner-managed grocery stops (mainly “Mom & Pop” or, more accurately, “Pop & Son” stores). Most of these outlets have very basic offerings, fixed prices, no information technology, and a poor, crowded ambience.

Supermarkets are a recent phenomenon in India. Those in existence are basically larger grocery and convenience stores located in and around major cities. These “Indian supermarkets” are typically 3,000 to 5,000 square feet, and are self-service stores stocked with a wide range of Indian and, more recently, imported groceries, snacks, processed food, confectionary, personal hygiene, and cosmetic products. Imported items in the supermarkets consist mainly of almonds and other dry fruits, fruit juices, ketchup, chocolates, sauces, specialty cheese, potato chips, canned fruits/vegetables, cookies, and cake mixes. These shops generally are open from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., six-seven days a week. They stock most national brands, regional and specialty brands, and sometimes their own brand of packaged dry products, and some international brands. Many have a small bakery/confectionary section, and some have fresh produce and dairy products. A few sell small quantities of frozen foods, as cold storage availability is limited and the electric power supply is erratic. A typical supermarket carries about 6,000 stock-keeping units. Most, however, have no item-based inventory control. Their margins typically range from 14 to 16 percent. These higher margins are largely due to the ability to get somewhat better prices from suppliers on bulk purchases, and from the ability to generate income from selling advertising space and special in-store promotions to manufacturers.

There are only a few multi-unit supermarket chains in India. Most Indian supermarkets cater to the segment of the population that seeks wider selection and has financial means, storage space (including refrigerators), and their own transportation. Although the exact size of this population segment is not available, roughly 20 percent of the urban population is estimated to shop in these supermarkets, and this percentage is growing.

In recent years, larger discount stores/hypermarkets (with floor area of 25,000 – 100,000 square feet) are being set up in major metropolitan cities, offering increased value to price-conscious middle income consumers. Large Indian corporate groups such as Reliance, ITC, Birla, Tata and Bharti have entered or are planning to enter into retailing. The government has not yet made a decision on foreign direct investment in the retail sector, but a lively debate rages within Indian political and economic spheres.

The concept of shopping malls and hypermarkets are beginning to take shape in India's major cities. Space and cost constraints are prompting shopping areas to move to city suburbs. Proliferation of shopping malls in the major cities is revolutionizing the way the Indian middle class shop. For a detailed report on the [Indian retail sector, please see Post's GAIN report IN6111](#). Also please refer - “India: Road to Success” – a report prepared by the Florida Department of Agriculture (http://app2.florida-agriculture.com/pubs/pubform/pdf/India_Road_To_Success.pdf)

Convenience stores at petrol pumps (gas stations), which sell all sorts of “impulse buys” like chocolates, soft drinks, cakes and cookies, potato chips, etc., have made some inroads in major metropolitan areas.

B. Food Service

India has some excellent hotel chains, including Indian Hotels Ltd. (Taj Group); East India Hotels Company Ltd. (Oberoi Group); ITC Ltd. (Welcome Group); Asian Hotel; and Leela Venture. Several international chains such as Radisson, Best Western, Hilton, Marriott, Country Inn and Suites By Carlson, and Quality Inn have also established a presence through franchising. The premium segment (including 5 star deluxe and 5 star hotels) dominates the hotel business in India and accounts for roughly 65 percent of total revenues to the industry. Hotels in this segment are concentrated in major metropolitan cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Kolkata, and are now spreading to middle-tier cities and along major tourist circuits. Most of the 5-star business is generated from business travelers, and most of those are international. The mid-market segment (comprised of 3 and 4 star hotels) caters to a mix of business and leisure travelers and is mostly concentrated in second-tier cities and in major tourist locations. The budget segment (2 star ratings or below) is present in most towns and cities and places of tourist interest.

Premium and mid-market hotels source their food and beverage imports mostly through their agents who work with consolidators located in Dubai, Amsterdam, Singapore, and Australia. Because of the high freight costs and small quantities involved, very little is directly imported from the United States. While leading hotels appreciate the excellent reputation of U.S. food products, the higher cost is a constraint. Nevertheless, the Indian hotel and tourism sector (which is booming) provides opportunities for U.S. exporters to position themselves in the market.

After a slow start, the fast food industry has shown impressive growth in recent years. Most U.S. chains, such as McDonald's, Dominos, Pizza Hut, TGIF, along with local chains, are doing well in the major urban areas and are spreading into smaller cities. To “curry” favor with Indian diners, pizza, burger, and other fast food makers have developed a range of Indianized products to suit local tastes. Some outlets serve exclusively vegetarian food, catering to the country's large vegetarian population. Although fast food chains source most of their raw materials locally, several products, such as french fries, specialty cheeses, some meat and fishery products, flavors, condiments, and ingredients, are often imported. In the past few years, the “coffee shop” culture has spread throughout major cities and seems poised for further growth, which should provide an opportunity for U.S. companies to supply products such as syrups, specialty coffees, etc. For a detailed report on HRI Food Service Sector, please see Post's GAIN report [IN7114](#).

The ready-to-eat (RTE) industry, while still nascent in India, is growing fast. The growing number of nuclear families (where the family group consists only of a father, mother, and children) vis-à-vis joint families, an increase in household incomes, and a significant rise in the number of single men and women professionals in recent years, have opened opportunities in the RTE segment. Presently, there are only a few Indian companies like ITC Ltd. and MTR Foods Ltd., focusing on this segment.

C. Food Processing

India's food-processing sector, although still in a nascent stage, has undergone important changes over the last six to seven years. The types, variety, quality, and presentation of products have all improved, mainly as a result of economic liberalization, which led to foreign

direct investment (FDI) in this sector. Several multinational companies, including U.S. companies like Pepsi, Coca Cola, ConAgra, Cargill, Heinz, ADM, and Kellogg's have invested in the Indian food-processing industry.

Much of India's food-processing industry is small-scale and involves little value addition, although in recent years several multinational food-processing companies have started operations in India. A plethora of internal restrictions, including: (a) prohibition on foreign direct investment in retail, (b) small agricultural holdings and prohibitions on contract farming, (c) barriers to interstate commerce based on revenue and food security concerns, (d) some of the highest taxes on processed foods in the world, and (e) inefficient infrastructure and marketing networks seriously constrain growth of the sector.

The almost year-round availability of fresh products across the country, combined with consumers' preference for fresh products and freshly cooked foods, has dampened demand for processed food products. However, with the changing lifestyle of consumers and rising disposable income of the growing middle class, there is increasing demand for convenient and hygienic foods. This is expected to increase demand for processed food products, giving a boost to the domestic food-processing industry, and providing opportunities for increased imports of processed foods and food ingredients. The Indian food-processing industry has started looking outward to acquire the latest food ingredients and technology.

The level of processing varies across segments: ranging from less than 2 percent of production in the case of fruits and vegetables to over 90 percent in non-perishable products such as cereals and pulses. In the latter segment, however, processing involves very little value addition, and is mostly confined to grading, cleaning, milling, and packing; with negligible use of additives, preservatives, and flavors. Only about two percent of India's fruits and vegetable production is further processed. Although the quality tends not to be world class, domestic production is the primary source of competition for foreign suppliers.

The Indian government is in the process of formulating a "processed food development policy" which seeks to create an appropriate environment for entrepreneurs to set up food processing operations to spur growth in the food processing sector. It includes an Integrated Food Law, named the Food Safety and Standards Act (See: <http://mofpi.nic.in/fsnstds.pdf>), which is a far-reaching legislation that would provide a single window providing guidance regarding marketing, processing, handling, transportation, and sale of foods ([India's Food Safety Standards Act - Status and Outlook - IN7033](#)). It also will establish food safety standards applicable to domestic and imported food products. For details about India's Food Processing Industry, see Post's GAIN report IN8030.

SECTION IV: BEST HIGH-VALUE PRODUCT PROSPECTS

Product Category	Imports 2006/07 \$ million	Expected Avg. Annual Import Growth	Import Tariff 1/	Key Constraints	Market Advantages for USA
Apples	32.51	20%	51.5%	Competition from domestic and foreign suppliers like China, Chile and New Zealand (for apples) and Australia and Chile (for grapes)	Seasonal shortages and high prices; increasing interest in quality fruits among India's middle class and growing organized retail.
Grapes	2.25	25%	30.9%		
Cocoa & cocoa products	29.82	10%	36.1%, 56.2%	Competition from domestic suppliers and other suppliers like E.U. and South Asia	Consumer preference for imported products/brands and shortage of quality domestic product
Almonds	196.05	8%	Rs.35/kg	Competition from Iran and Afghanistan	High seasonal demand; increasing use; health consciousness
Pistachios	40.25	8%	30.9%		
Fruit juices	15.21	10%	36.1 %	Competition from nearby suppliers and domestic production	Increasing health awareness among middle class and shortage of local quality products
Wine, Whiskies and other alcoholic beverages	41.492	15 %	160%	High import duty; competition from other suppliers	Growing consumption and poor quality domestic products
Pasta			36.1% to 59.1%	Competition from domestic suppliers	Increasing popularity; growing food processing sector and fast food sector
Sauces, spreads, salad dressings, condiments			36.1 % to 56.2%		

1/ Total import duty includes basic duty, countervailing duty, Special Countervailing duty, and education cess.

Note: Post analysis based on trade data and information from market sources.

SECTION V: KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

The following reports may be of interest to US exporters interested in India. These, and related reports prepared by this office, can be accessed via the FAS Home Page: www.fas.usda.gov by clicking on "Attaché Reports" and searching by the report number.

Report Number	Subject
IN8082	Food & Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards Report
IN7090	Export Certificate FAIRS Report
IN6111	Retail Food Sector
IN7033	Food Safety Standards Act
IN7114	HRI Food Services Sector
IN8030	Food Processing Ingredients Sector

The Country Commercial Guide prepared by the Commercial Section of the US Embassy will also be of interest to exporters. This can be accessed through <http://www.buyusa.gov/india/en/ccg.html>

For additional information and guidance please contact:

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