



THEME: Building manufacturing excellence capabilities in Indian food processing operations

Day I: 28th October 2026

1230 hrs – 17:45 hrs

1230 hrs –1330 hrs: Panel Discussion - I

Proposed Topic I: How homegrown giants in peer industries have gone global – Learnings for Indian food processors

Proposed Discussion Points:

- Success stories of Indian brands in pharma, leather, apparel & textiles, and handicrafts that have crafted a successful global brand narrative
- Cautionary tales of Indian brands – Why they went from boom to bust
- Dealing with the unknown – Venturing into international markets & wooing a non-Indian audience
- Challenging yourself – First-person leadership accounts of adaptability, resilience and out-of-the-box thinking
- Grappling with adversity – Managing expectations in new markets & handling unfavourable outcomes with poise
- What family-led, food processors can learn from successful Indian cross-border forays

1330 hrs – 1430 hrs: Panel Discussion - II

Proposed Topic II: Road ahead for equipment modernization of Indian snack manufacturers' operations

Proposed Discussion Points:

- A look at India's fried savoury market revolution
- How HoReCa, QSR, coffee chains, bakeries are supporting growth of snack & RTE industries
- Industry drivers impacting adoption of modern processing technologies in snacks manufacturing
- Adoption of intelligent & continuous systems to minimize energy consumption and prepare healthier snack options
- Future of continuous frying systems in plant operations – Look at key technological advancements
- Role of smart processing technologies in optimizing productivity, increasing energy efficiency, prioritising sustainability, maintaining safety, quality, & compliance standards, and boosting profitability
- Examining successful deployments in Indian settings
- Best Practices in future-ready snack factories

1430 hrs – 1530 hrs: Panel Discussion - III

Proposed Topic III: Meeting global standards in Indian MSME food processor operations – Where we stand & where we need to go

Messe Muenchen India Pvt. Ltd.

Unit No. 1271, Solitaire Corporate Park, 7th Floor, Building No.12, 167, Guru Hargovindji Marg,
Andheri – Ghatkopar Link Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai – 400 093.

Tel.: +91 22 4255 4700 Fax: +91 22 4255 4719 E-mail: info@mm-india.in

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Proposed Discussion Points:

- Spotlight on food hygiene, material & engineering standards in India – Look at regulatory bodies shaping the future of food in India
- Scale & scope of Good Manufacturing Practices for plant operations
- Examining standards from product point of entry till point of exit from facility
- Discussing Indian food processor pain points impeding GMP adoption
- Challenges impacting adoption & development of standards in Indian food processing equipment sector
- Future of standards for food equipment manufacturers – Pivoting towards strict safety, IoT-driven traceability, & sustainability
- Market drivers shaping adoption of robust global standards amongst equipment manufacturers

1530 hrs – 1545 hrs: Networking Break

1545 hrs – 1645 hrs: Panel Discussion - IV

Proposed Topic IV: Addressing the bugbear of working capital financing in the SME sector

Proposed Discussion Points:

- Understanding nature of SME food processors: Highly unorganised, family-run & limited by challenges in financial awareness
- SME pain points – Raising capital to cover raw material, labour, & energy costs and investment in equipment, technology, and R&D
- Addressing access to credit concerns – Stringent lending criteria of banks and sluggish & burdensome loan-approval processes
- Role of fintech companies – Providing digital lending platforms & smart supply chain finance solutions
- Rise of DTC startups & role of VC funding
- Government initiatives & schemes to promote SME sector
- Policy suggestions to improve affordability & accessibility of credit facilities
- Roadmap to augment & improve credit facilities for SME sector

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1645 hrs – 1745 hrs: Panel Discussion - V

Proposed Topic V:

Debate – Is the time ripe for Indian food processors to adopt smart manufacturing technologies or is it currently a case of a bridge too far?

Motion –

On the one hand, India is well placed to emerge as a leader in technology-driven food innovation. Integration of technology across agriculture, manufacturing, retail, & distribution promises to catalyse growth for the food processing sector. There exists great scope for improvement in both plant and in-transit operations, helping processors optimise production processes & supply chains. Looking ahead, technology deployment in plant operations will allow SMEs to meet international standards, thereby positioning India as a reliable global supplier. Furthermore, the rise of the climate-friendly, eco-conscious, consumer bodes well for adoption of technologies that prioritise energy efficiency, water management, carbon footprint abatement, & waste reduction. On the flip side, the Indian unorganized & unregistered food processing sector represents ~98% of existing food processing units. Small in scale, nearly 66% of these units operate in rural areas & ~80% are family-owned operations. The typical processor faces a daily reality where arrangement of working capital is a more pressing concern. With new technologies requiring substantial upfront investments, on-demand training & talent development, aside from absence of strong safeguards for data privacy & security and cultural resistance to change, the time is currently not favourable for Indian processors to mainstream adoption of technology tools in the farm to fork experience.

For the Motion: The Indian SME food processor is not prepared yet to manage technology integration into manual & traditional day-to-day plant operations

Against the Motion: The Indian SME food processor stands to benefit immeasurably from the deployment of technology in plant, productivity, process & product passage operations

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Day II: 29th October 2026

1000 hrs to 1700 hrs

1000 hrs – 1100 hrs: Panel Discussion - VI

Proposed Topic VI: Trends shaping the future of baking operations in India

Proposed Discussion Points:

- Impact assessment of clean label, high protein, reduced sugar & functional bakery ware sectors on plant operations
- How current production realities are shaping adoption of automation & digitalization in bakery operations – Managing tight labour markets, product complexity & rising inputs costs
- Why sustainability imperatives are driving bakery operations to prioritise energy efficiency, water management, zero-waste measures, and improved transparency
- Role of innovation in product development & smart manufacturing operations
- How automation & process optimisation are neutralising material, labour, & energy costs with focus on manufacturing excellence
- Examining use-case illustrations in AI & IoT integration, automation & robotics, sustainability & energy efficiency, and blockchain
- Global Best Practices of Smart Bakery operations

1100 hrs – 1200 hrs: Panel Discussion - VII

Proposed Topic VII: Role of innovation in sparking growth of Indian food processing industry

Proposed Discussion Points:

- Decoding the typical Indian SME food processor – How the family-led business environment operates & prioritises non-essential spends
- Impact potential of cutting-edge predictive technologies in improving plant operations & in-transit experiences
- Challenges facing cash-strapped processors in integrating technology – Initial seed cost, payback duration, and market acceptance
- Understanding implementation bottlenecks in processor operations – Lack of skilled manpower, cybersecurity risks, and compatibility of legacy equipment with new-age technologies
- Real-world advantages of technology adoption in processor operations – Food safety, quality & hygiene management; Production Process & Supply chain optimisation; waste reduction
- Industry use-cases of data science, sensor, simulation, and geospatial technologies in Indian SME operations Policy enablers as drivers for adoption of advanced technologies
- Best Practices in Indian context – Leadership narratives on early-adoption use-cases & successful integration illustrations

1200 hrs – 1300 hrs: Panel Discussion - VIII

Proposed Topic VIII: Envisioning the future of energy conservation in Indian food processing operations

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Proposed Discussion Points:

- Demand analysis for HVACR in food processing operations – Examining the coming 10-year horizon
- SME sentiment on impact of innovation in HVACR solutions over coming decade
- How greater thrust on food preservation, safety, quality, hygiene, handling & movement is driving innovation in thermal processing equipment, cold storage & industrial refrigeration
- Assessing economic, energy & environmental impact of HVACR operations in food processing industry in decade ahead
- Technology trends & innovations in HVACR industry
- Promise for alternative energy technology adoption in food processor operations
- Role of tightening food safety regulatory compliance, audits, & EPR guidelines on energy management in processor operations
- Glimpsing Indian & international energy conservation Best Practices in processor operations
- Role of government subsidies & grants to drive long-term sustainability & net-zero target realization.

1300 hrs – 1400 hrs: Networking Break

1400 hrs – 1500 hrs: Panel Discussion - IX

Proposed Topic IX: Where is the Indian F&V processing equipment market headed over the next decade?

Proposed Discussion Points:

- Demand drivers for F&V processing equipment market in India
- Processing-as-a-Service – Rental of modular & mobile units to access process technology minus heavy upfront investment
- Role of automation, freeze drying, & advanced preservation technologies in supporting shelf stability for domestic consumption & export growth
- Prioritising export competitiveness – Competitive edge derived from compliance-driven technology adoption & export-oriented processing
- How smart processing technologies are shaping the future of breeding, growing, distributing & marketing fresh produce
- Market opportunities for specialized equipment for niche product categories
- Government-backed infrastructure expansion & incentive schemes
- Case studies of successful technology deployments in F&V processing operations
- Global Best Practices sharing

1500 hrs – 1600 hrs: Panel Discussion - X

Proposed Topic X: Material handling in food processing - A role beyond logistics

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Proposed Discussion Points:

- What material handling means in food processing – Product handling from moment of entry into facility to time of exit from facility
- What it means to create a well-designed material handling system – Spotlight on product safety & hygiene, quality, efficiency, and unit economics
- Material handling in modern food plants – Analysing traditional-vs-automated, data-driven systems
- Choosing the right material handling equipment – Beyond technical specifications & measuring dimensions
- Role of product type, volume & speed, facility layout, sanitation needs, & modularity in choosing the right tools, boxes & machines
- Challenges facing modern food processors – Wet & cold conditions; Fragile item handling; Allergen-sensitive product management; Hygiene inspections; Statutory compliances; and Workforce modernization
- Future of material handling – No longer movement of product but securing strategic brand advantage

1600 hrs – 1700 hrs: Panel Discussion - XI

Proposed Topic XI:

Debate - Is the growth of the clean label industry mirrored by the rise in the number of natural & organic ingredient manufacturers or is it a case of smart positioning

Proposed Discussion Points:

Motion –

The future is promising for Indian ingredient suppliers who embrace clean label principles. A 2023 NielsenIQ study found that 64% of Indian consumers actively seek clean-label food. Moreover, the clean-label ingredients market is projected to grow at over 9% annually through 2029, marking the shift towards healthy living unmistakable. Additionally, online grocery platforms reported a 35% rise in organic and natural food sales between 2023 and 2024. However, as buyers become more skeptical of traditional processed foods, there has risen a debate over what is 'clean', 'natural', and 'organic'. With nutritional positioning becoming just as important as flavour or price, some argue that manufacturers & brand owners are walking a tight rope between technical compliance & consumer perception. In the wake of tightening FSSAI regulations & health-oriented consumer sentiment, the question arises whether we are genuinely witnessing a supplier-led revolution towards organic, natural & plant-based manufacturing or are we victims of specious brand positioning. The debate echoes a wider tension within the global food industry where processors market products through the lens of transparency while using terms defined loosely in regulation. This leads to situations where technically accurate claims can be deemed misleading if they craft the wrong impression in consumer minds. This begs the question, "are these products a case of old wine in new bottle?"

For the Motion Statement: The rise in number of clean label manufacturers is more a case of smart product marketing as opposed to product innovation

Against the Motion Statement: The supplier-led clean label revolution is thriving with innovation in clean, natural, & organic food and ingredient manufacturing

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