



We lay stress on practical knowledge



Classroom teaching, coupled with field experience, is the best education, says Dr Ajit Kumar, Vice Chancellor, National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM), which is focusing on giving its students practical experience of working with the farmers to better serve the food processing industry. Excerpts from an interview with Smart AgriPost:

What was the idea behind setting up an institute for food processing industry?

As a country, we are the largest producer and consumer of food products. Food processing industry is one of the largest industries in India and is ranked fifth in terms of production, consumption, and export. In such a scenario, food processing can be considered as the sunrise sector, which is evolving as a driver of the Indian economy. As the buying capacity of young generation continues to improve the demand for good quality food



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will never go down, so the sector is bound to grow manifold in future.

NIFTEM was set up as a one stop solution provider by the government of India, for various problems faced by the food industry sector in order to meet the requisite demands, who worked as an apex body. It also works for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Development for this sector.

Our institute is playing a pivotal role in developing food standards, quality, accreditation and certification keeping a repository of international and national standards and also advising the Government



on matters related to international food standards. NIFTEM is an apex information resource centre on aspects of food processing including information on products, technologies, management practices, food standards and markets. We specifically focus on providing comprehensive information to exporters in the food sector. Unlike the existing food technology institutes in India, NIFTEM functions as a centre for integrated education, research, enterprise incubation and outreach in the area of food science, technology and business. Also, we provide intellectual backing for regulations, governing Food Quality and Safety and in promoting cooperation and networking among existing institutions within India and Abroad.

How do you ensure practical exposure for your students?

NIFTEM has carved out a unique concept of Village Adoption Programme (VAP) as a project for its students with an aim to sensitise and educate the rural youth at the grass root level. This would also help the Indian food processing sector in accomplishing all-inclusive growth

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and integrating the underprivileged sections with the main stream economy. We started this in 2012 as a compulsory credit course for B.Tech & M.Tech students. Till now we have adopted 39 villages across 19 states in the country.

NIFTEMs Village Adoption Programme team engages the rural youth through imparting training on basic food production process and value addition techniques for enhancement of shelf-life, etc.



encouraging them to become entrepreneurs establish micro and small food processing enterprises and units. We provide vocational training for uplifting livelihood resources along with vital linkages, micro credits and Government policies to the youth.

Do you focus on research activities?

The curriculum and research at NIFTEM are essentially driven by the needs of industry and entrepreneurs. While the B.Tech curriculum is a hybrid between food technology and business management, the M.Tech curricula have been designed precisely on the current needs of the food sector. The thesis research is driven by the practical, technological and management issues of the food industry and trade. There are 30 research projects at NIFTEM today which have direct relevance to the issues flagged by the food industry.

How could agriculture and food processing industry be sustainable?

With a view to prevent post harvest losses and add value to the horticulture produce, two Frontline Demonstration Centres (FLDC) cum-Primary Processing Centre are being set up one at Manauli Village and another at NIFTEM Campus. The Plants will be equipped with appropriate tools for sorting, washing, grading, value addition



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and packaging. In addition, there will be storage facilities to provide training and demonstration to villagers, entrepreneurs and students related to primary processing, secondary processing and storage of agricultural produce using hybrid renewable power sources. These 2



projects are established under PPP model, where all the equipment will be provided under NHB and NHM funds. These centres will be run through the local villagers and students under the guidance and management of faculty members of the Dept. of Food Science Technology and Food Engineering and will be self sustaining units. Similar effects are being expanded under other initiatives as well.

What are the challenges in food processing industry?

Affordability, quality and safety, energy and water intensiveness, nutrition, losses and wastages, packaging, harvest and handling are some of the serious concerns of the food processing industry in India. A sustainable food processing industry must be environment friendly, well integrated with agriculture and marketing.

This immense agenda requires NIFTEM to work closely with farmers, industry and Government. Much greater glow of funds in food

processing education and research is needed for realising the full potential and goals.

What are the new initiatives you have undertaken to add value to the food processing industry?

NIFTEM believes in inculcating its students the value of real Indian rural scenario by providing first hand information to them. They are given insight of the villages, farmers and traditional food processing practices at the grass root level. These students further help the villages and farmers in uplifting them to mainstream level.

We should also reach the farmers in our country. The farmers need to be told about cost effective measures to improve the shelf life of their produce, or to preserve their produce which is not happening. The farmer is suffering on that account. Nearly 92,000 crore worth of produce gets wasted in our country every year. It is a huge loss to the farmers. We would like NIFTEM to go across to the farmers and tell them how to preserve their produce, how to value-add, or convert them into some form to have better and longer shelf life and improve their income.

