

Stress on food processing



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Mowsam Hazarika 24 February 2017 7612 views

Food processing sector has immense potential to uplift Assam economy. It can bring an economic revolution in the [state](#). This was more or less of what the speakers said participating at a PHD Chamber sponsored meeting in Guwahati on Thursday.

Industry commissioner Ravi Kapoor said, "Assam is a goldmine for food processing sector. Now we should [start](#) a mass movement of food processing in Assam. "

In his speech [as](#) a Chief Guest in the [Conference](#) on Make in [India](#) and FDI in Retail: Opening Bright Avenues for Food Processing Sector, he said no other industries are necessary to boost the economy if the [state](#) extensively sets up food processing industries. According to him, the Government has decided to establish 500 Primary Processing Plant for farmers to initiate food processing movement in the [state](#) apart from five food parks in the pipeline to support the primary processing plants.

During the conference, the welcome address presented by Gautam Sarma, Co-Chairman, PHD Chamber, NER Guwahati. In his theme address, Mowsam [Hazarika](#) who is an [assistant](#) director with horticulture and food processing department, said, "Assam is in the midst of two important bio diversity hotspots i.e. the Eastern Himalayas and the Indo-[Myanmar](#). The State is endowed with favorable agro climatic conditions that offer wide range of options for farming [as](#) well [as](#) investment for [marketing](#) in horticulture sector."

He said the contributing factors include Suitable agro climatic condition with abundant natural resources for cultivation of diversified horticultural crops in all the seasons. Proximity to emerging markets in [India](#) [as](#) well [as](#) in South East Asian countries, he said is another crucial side to be noticed.

[Hazarika](#) said, "Guwahati being the gateway of the [North East](#) may be a hunting ground for those who consider the State [as](#) an ideal strategic location for investment in [marketing](#) sector including value addition covering of horticultural crops and produces."

"The important fruit crops in the [state](#) are banana, pineapple, citrus, jackfruit, guava and litchi. Coconut, areca nut and betel vine are predominant plantation crops. Potato, sweet potato, tapioca, colocasia and yams cucurbits, peas, beans and okra are cultivated in commercial scale. Ginger and turmeric occupy prime position among the spices," he said.

According to him, "Assam has a rich diversity in fruit crops. In citrus, there are [as](#) many [as](#) 17 species, 53 varieties and [7](#) hybrids. Wild and semi wild species of mango and temperate fruits particularly of the Rosaceae family occur in the [state](#). In addition, quite a good number of traditional fruit crops like leteku (*Baccaurea sapida*), poniol (*Flacourtia gangomos*), nagatenga (*Rhus semialata*), thereju (*Prunus jenkinsii*), kordoi (*Averrhoa carambola*), mirika tenga (*Parameria polyneura*), amora (*Spondias mangifera*), outenga (*Dillenia indica*), silikha (*Terminalia chebula*), bhomora (*Terminalia belerica*) etc. are [found](#) in the [state](#)."

[Hazarika](#) also said that, "the Annual Production scenario of Horticulture Crops in Assam is quite satisfactory. According to the official data, Assam produces 20.73 LMT Fruits, out of which 11.63LMT Marketable Surplus. Similarly, we have produces 14.45 LMT of Kharif Vegetable, out of which [8.00](#) LMT Marketable Surplus. Likewise, Production of Rabi Vegetable is 35.34 LMT - Marketable Surplus: 14.00 LMT. Spices: 3.27 LMT- Marketable Surplus 1.75 LMT.

However, despite these distinct advantages, Assam's horticulture sector has not grown at par with the rest of the country, and the State's horticulture potential has not been fully tapped, mainly due to lack of market led production practices, poor commercial understanding of farmers, insufficient infrastructure at the farm [level](#), poor transportation system, inadequate road network, lack of post harvest infrastructure like dedicated markets, pack houses, cold storages, sorting grading lines, processing industries etc. Due to the lack of adequate postharvest infrastructure in the State, not only are post harvest losses high, but dependency of farmers on intermediaries for [marketing](#) is very high."

He said commented that, "with significant initiatives taken by the Government of [India](#) to promote horticulture development in the North-East region , appropriate strategies like adoption of market driven production system, enhancement of productivity, appropriate post-harvest handling through proper packaging, loading/unloading of commodities and promotion of pack house concept including collection centre in the production clusters, cold storage, processing and value addition, creation of adequate transportation infrastructure and organised [marketing](#) system are necessary additions to current interventions to provide remunerative prices to farmers."

Several dignitaries and entrepreneurs from NERAMAC, [IIE](#), NEDFi; PHD Chamber participated in the conference which highlighted the investment opportunities to help in identifying the major political of food processing sectors in the State.

Mowsam Hazarika

BY MOWSAM HAZARIKA

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