

Mr Deepta Gupta, Bikanervala Foods Pvt Ltd

This is a transcript of the exclusive interview of Mr Deepta Gupta, Bikanervala Foods Pvt Ltd taken on the occasion of World Cashew Convention & Exhibition 2018

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Kindly elaborate the ethnic industry and the role of cashews in Indian markets?

The cashews ethnic industry in India is very old. In 2017, 52 percent of the total domestic consumption is used by ethnic industry and mainly used in Namkeens, savorys, snacks and sweets. More usage of cashews in the gifting segment started in the last five to ten years and about 10-15 percent of total cashews are used for gifting on festival occasions; thus the cashew is an important element in the ethnic industry in India.

What are the potential challenges likely to be faced by the Indian cashew industry during this year?

In the last two to three years, rising in cashew prices are posing major challenges to the industry. Profit margins are shrinking day by day with the hike in the cashew price and we are looking for alternates. In our gift packs, we have increased the content or composition of other nuts when compared to cashews, so as to balance the price because the customer is very sensitive to price. In my opinion as well as industry concern, if this trend continues, then it will have an adverse impact on the cashew consumption. So the cashew industry collectively has to take steps to rein the price spike, otherwise it will be great threat to the industry.

You are in the dry fruit industry, but the automation is making inroads into the industry. Sir, your comments on the same!

Automation for any kind of industry should be viewed as important and beneficial. But if you are doing automation from the traditional processes, then we cannot compromise on the quality. Automation doesn't mean in reducing the cost and shouldn't forget about the quality and it is happening with the cashew industry.

Today, there is a lot of difference between the traditional and automation processing of cashews. In automation, lot of issues are there such as more husks, bitterness, off flavors in cashews; the industry should do a lot more to improve the automation efficiency and should concentrate more on quality aspects, otherwise end users may have to consider buying from traditional processors.

In what way the Indian cashew industry needs to be upgraded?

Cashew industry has to work from the scratch, may have to partner with the agricultural institutes and work on the seeds, the efficiency of the crop, GMP of the plants, good innovative packaging system, all combined together we can give a better quality of cashews. Consider the case of almonds in the US, the American companies have done wonderful job in terms of almonds quality and consistency of the product. Ten years back almonds were very expensive but now due to the initiative of American Almonds Boards, the dry fruits markets were flourished with many varieties of almonds. Similar way the cashew industry should work with the seeds to get good quality of cashews, improvement in yields and to achieve consistency in the quality.