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Publisher's Note

The May Edition of Food Marketing & Technology Magazine is the Plant Based Foods Special Edition.

India's plant-based foods industry is emerging as one of the most dynamic frontiers in the country's food landscape, sitting at the intersection of nutritional awareness, environmental consciousness, and entrepreneurial innovation. Driven by a convergence of health-conscious urban consumers, a traditionally strong vegetarian culture, and a growing ecosystem of startups and established food companies, the sector is rapidly evolving from niche to mainstream. Its potential extends beyond food production into public health, sustainability, and the future of India's agricultural value chains.

However, the industry faces its share of headwinds. Affordability remains a significant barrier, with plant-based products often priced at a premium that limits mass adoption beyond metro consumers. Consumer skepticism around taste, texture, and nutritional equivalence continues to challenge marketers, and the lack of standardised regulatory frameworks for labelling and health claims adds uncertainty for both producers and buyers.

Technological innovation is at the heart of this sector's promise. Advances in food science, from precision fermentation and extrusion technology to mycoprotein cultivation, are enabling manufacturers to replicate the sensory experience of conventional products with greater fidelity. Ingredient sourcing is also being reimaged, with indigenous legumes, millets, and pulses increasingly being positioned as the backbone of homegrown plant-based formulations that are both nutritious and culturally resonant.

Shifting consumer preferences are redefining product development strategies, with demand surging for plant-based dairy alternatives, meat analogues, egg replacers, and functional protein products. Traditional food companies are entering the space alongside agile D2C startups, creating a competitive yet collaborative environment that is accelerating portfolio diversification and category experimentation. Transparency in sourcing, clean-label credentials, and sustainability storytelling are becoming decisive purchase drivers.

This Edition explores the evolving contours of the Plant Based Foods sector, along with insights from the nutraceuticals and food technology segments. Read this edition to garner perspectives on what is shaping the next chapter of food in India and beyond!

Linda Brady Hawke

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Mespack Expands Its Digital Ecosystem with the Launch of MESCADA, a Factory-Level Packaging Line Management Platform

Mespack, a leading international manufacturer of innovative and sustainable flexible and turnkey packaging solutions, expands its digital portfolio with the launch of MESCADA. This new software, within the Athena digital platform, is designed to provide factory-level visibility and control of packaging lines. It integrates both Mespack turnkey solutions and third-party equipment.

Thus far, Mespack's Athena platform has facilitated advanced machine control, data acquisition, and machine level performance optimization. With the introduction of MESCADA, Mespack takes a decisive step forward by extending this intelligence beyond individual machines, hence allowing customers to monitor, analyze, and optimize all packaging lines across the factory from a single platform.

A Strategic Step in Mespack's Digital Vision

According to Adrián Mora, Athena & MESCADA Product Owner at Mespack: "With MESCADA, we are extending Mespack's digital vision from the machine to the entire factory. Athena continues to be the intelligence at machine level, while MESCADA connects all packaging lines and turns production data into actionable insights. Together, they create a unified digital ecosystem that helps our customers operate more efficiently, make better decisions, and fully leverage the value of their packaging lines."

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Not All Fresh Food Is Equal: The Case for Smarter Preservation

■ By Anushree Dewen*

In most Indian homes, buying fresh vegetables, chicken or fish is almost a ritual. We trust what looks fresh at the market, bring it home, store it in the fridge, and cook it the next day believing we are making the healthiest choice for our families. But what truly defines quality goes beyond just how fresh something appears. Hygiene, safety, and knowing the source of our food play an equally important role especially for meat and poultry, where hygienic rearing and processing are essential. There's also a hidden factor we often overlook-time. The longer the journey from farm to fork, the greater the exposure to temperature fluctuations, repeated handling, and potential quality loss. So, while something may look fresh on the surface, it may not necessarily have retained its optimal nutrition or safety by the time it reaches our kitchen.

According to a recent report highlighted by United Nations Environment Programme, India wastes food worth nearly ₹1.55 lakh crore every year, amounting to almost 78–80 million tonnes annually. (The Hindu, 2026)

A large part of this loss happens long before food reaches our plates, during storage, transport, and handling, especially in highly perishable categories like meat, poultry, and seafood.

So, the question is - when something as valuable as food is already losing its quality across the journey, are we really choosing freshness, or simply choosing what looks fresh in that moment?



The Freshness Paradox

As consumers, we are more aware than ever, we read labels, look for protein, and try to make better choices for our families. Yet, when it comes to something as basic as freshness, perception often wins over science.

Across global markets, this thinking is already shifting. As highlighted by the British Frozen Food Federation, more households are turning to frozen formats to reduce waste, especially in categories like meat and seafood. Over 47% of European households have started choosing frozen foods specifically to cut down on household waste.

What is driving this shift is not just convenience, but advancements like Individual Quick Freezing (IQF).

Locked at Its Peak

At its core, freshness is about timing. Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) reflects a shift towards more precise, technology-led preservation.

In simple terms, IQF works by freezing food rapidly at extremely low temperatures, typically between -30°C and -40°C . This speed is critical. It helps halt the activity of microorganisms that cause decay, while also preserving the natural moisture, texture, and flavour of the product. Unlike older methods of freezing, which were slower and often affected quality, IQF treats each piece individually, ensuring more consistent results.

This has a direct impact on how well food retains its quality over time. When preservation happens early

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and efficiently, the gradual loss that typically occurs during storage and transport in fresh formats can be significantly reduced. Insights from the India Snacking Report Volume 2 (STTEM 2.0) indicate that nearly 45% of experts believe advancements in food technology play a key role in retaining freshness and quality, reinforcing the importance of solutions like IQF in modern food systems.

This shift is also being reflected globally. The Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) market is projected to reach USD 9.24 billion by 2033, growing at a CAGR of 6.2%, indicating rising adoption of technologies that help preserve food quality and nutritional value, particularly in high-protein categories such as meat and seafood. A chicken bought 'fresh' may have already spent hours (or days) in transit and storage. IQF, on the other hand, freezes it at peak freshness—locking in quality at the right moment.

For consumers, this translates into something simple but valuable - better quality food, longer usability, and greater confidence in what they are consuming.



Beyond Myths: What IQF Actually Delivers

Technologies like Individual Quick Freezing (IQF), which we discussed earlier, work by rapidly freezing food at extremely low temperatures, helping preserve its natural texture, moisture, and overall quality. Unlike slower, conventional freezing methods that can impact structure, IQF ensures that food is preserved in a more controlled and consistent way, using temperature rather than additives, which means it does not require added preservatives to maintain quality.

IQF offers several clear benefits:

- **Retention of up to 90% of original nutrients** in vegetables, meats, and fruits.
- **Extended shelf life** without the need for preservatives or additives.
- **Portion control**, allowing consumers to use only what they need.

- **25% reduction in food waste** compared to conventional freezing.

Rethinking What We Call Fresh

As we move through our daily routines, it's worth asking what truly defines quality in the food we consume. Technologies like Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) are not just about convenience, they reflect a more precise and informed way of preserving food at the right moment.

This shift isn't about replacing one format with another it's about enabling more informed choices, where consumers understand not just how food looks, but how it has been handled. Because when food is handled intelligently, it allows us to make better choices not just for our homes, but for the larger system we are part of.

About the author:

- * Anushree Dewen
Head of Marketing & Innovation,
Godrej Foods Ltd

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NFE-500	500 Kg/hr	85 kW	5775 Kg	4500 x 2600 x 3450



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Plant-Based Ingredients in 2026: From Imitation to Innovation

The plant-based food industry is undergoing a quiet but profound transformation in 2026. No longer content with simply swapping meat for a soy patty, consumers and manufacturers alike are rethinking what plant-based truly means, shifting the conversation from clever imitation to genuine nutrition, authenticity, and function.

A Market Coming of Age

The global plant-based market is on track to hit \$21.23 billion by the end of 2026, driven by consumers demanding clean labels, whole-food proteins, and ingredients that support gut health, fiber intake, and heart-conscious eating. This growth is not fuelled by novelty alone. The ingredients market for plant-based

food and beverages, valued at \$2.3 billion in 2023, is projected to surge to \$9.30 billion by 2033, growing at a CAGR of 15%.

Meati Foods

The "Authentic Plant-Based" Movement

The defining theme of 2026, according to Innova Market Insights, is "Authentic Plant-Based." This trend emphasizes continued interest in the plant-based market, but rather than mimicry, consumers are seeking products that support holistic well-being. Plant-based is moving away from imitation towards increasing nutritional value and naturalness.

Innova's research indicates that 55% of consumers agree that plant-

based foods should be considered as their own category, and 64% of global consumers agree that plant-based products should be made with less processing. This has prompted brands to shorten ingredient lists, use recognizable components, and in some cases, feature the number of ingredients directly on packaging as a trust signal.

Proteins Get a Whole-Food Makeover

Protein remains at the heart of innovation, but the sources and formats are evolving fast. Edamame, quinoa, and fungi-based proteins are leading growth by delivering nutrition with recognizable ingredients, and interest in textured, sensory-rich foods is up 44% year-over-year.



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Mycelium, the root-like network of fungi, is emerging as one of the most promising ingredients of the year. Mycelium delivers complete protein with all nine essential amino acids, uses significantly less land and water than conventional beef, and contains no cholesterol or saturated fats.

Meanwhile, plant-based milk brands are debuting high-protein innovations, with some delivering the highest protein content of any plant-based beverage on shelves, alongside growing interest in whole-ingredient soy and oat-based formulations.

Beyond Protein: Fiber, Sweeteners, and Functional Ingredients

Beyond protein, there is growing demand for plant-derived fibers and sweeteners, transforming product formulations for health-conscious and sustainability-driven consumers. Companies are pioneering innovations with ingredients such as stevia, apple extract, and chicory root fibers to address taste, texture, and health needs.



Fiber is expected to receive even more attention in 2026, with rising demand being driven by increasing consumer awareness of digestive health, weight management, and preventive healthcare.

GLP-1 Medications Are Reshaping the Category

An unexpected force shaping plant-based ingredient formulation in 2026 is the mainstream adoption of GLP-1 weight-loss medications like Ozempic. These medications have created a demographic with a specific need for nutritional density, making macronutrients like protein even more critical and driving plant-based products toward higher protein, lower sugar, and increased fiber content.

Global Flavors Take Centre Stage

Middle Eastern flavors are anticipated to dominate food trends in 2026, with ingredients like harissa, pomegranate, pistachio, and za'atar described as versatile, recognizable, and easy to integrate across snacks, sauces, meals, and beverages. Korean ingredients are also surging, with K-food crossovers finding growing

presence in the plant-based freezer aisle globally.

Hybrid Products Bridge the Gap

Brands like Perdue and Better Meat Co. now blend meat with mushrooms or soy to create better texture, fewer calories, and a lighter environmental impact, hybrid products that appeal to the majority of consumers who do not want to give up meat entirely but are open to reducing it.

The Road Ahead

Companies are innovating with natural ingredients, organic sources, and non-GMO formulations as consumer scrutiny of labels intensifies. The plant-based category in 2026 is no longer a niche ideology, it is a mainstream, science-backed, and flavour-forward movement redefining how the world eats.

Sources:

* Innova Market Insights, Tastewise, GlobeNewswire / ResearchAndMarkets, Meati, FoodNavigator, USA, Food Ingredients First, VegNews, Future Market Insights

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The Science of Specialised Plant-Based Processing

When a consumer bites into a piece of vegan chicken and finds it pulls apart in fibrous strands, or flakes a plant-based salmon fillet onto their pasta, they are experiencing the result of some of the most technically demanding food science on the planet. Creating convincing meat and seafood analogues from plants is not simply a matter of flavouring, it is a deep engineering challenge rooted in physics, chemistry, and materials science. Here is how it is done, and why it is so fundamentally different from conventional food processing.

Why Plant-Based Processing Is Different

Animal muscle is inherently fibrous. Strands of myosin and actin proteins are arranged in long, parallel bundles that give meat its distinctive chew, tear, and bite. Plants contain proteins too, in peas, soy, wheat, and legumes, but these proteins exist in a globular, compact form. Plant proteins must undergo the processes of unfolding, cross-linking, and aligning to

produce the fibrous structure that extends from the microscopic to the macroscopic scale. This transformation does not happen naturally. It must be engineered.

The complex and resource-intensive task of replicating the texture, flavour, and nutritional profile of traditional meat using plant-based ingredients demands specialised equipment, high-quality raw materials, and advanced processing techniques, all of which drive up production costs significantly. It is this gap between a raw pulse and a convincing chicken breast that defines the entire field.

High-Moisture Extrusion: The Engine of Vegan Meat

The most widely used industrial technique is High-Moisture Extrusion Cooking (HMEC). During extrusion, proteins undergo thermal and mechanical stresses through heating of the barrel and shearing of the screws, altering protein structure and leading to the formation of aggregates that create meat-like textures.

What makes the high-moisture variant so critical is precision. HMEC operates at moisture content between 40% and 80%, with an optimal range of around 60%, where moisture acts as both a plasticiser and a solvent, influencing protein mobility, gelation, and product texture. If moisture content is too low, it leads to increased viscosity and hardness; excessive moisture results in significant softening.

Temperature is equally critical. Temperatures above 160°C cause excessive aggregation that negatively impacts sensory attributes, resulting in rubbery textures. Cooling die design, including length-to-diameter ratio and temperature between 20°C and 80°C, also affects the final fibrous structure, with longer dies favouring laminar, pork-like textures and shorter dies simulating chicken-like textures.

This single fact explains why making vegan chicken and vegan pork are not the same process, the physical geometry of the machine itself must be adjusted for each target product.



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Shear Cell Technology: Precision Structuring

Where extrusion is industrial and continuous, shear cell technology offers a more controlled alternative. Shear cell technology was developed to impart a well-defined shear, pressure, and heat treatment to protein ingredients. Researchers have created Couette cell devices to produce anisotropic, fibrous meat analogues using formulations of plant proteins in demineralised water.

Shear-induced structuring involves a shear cell designed like a rheometer to apply shear force, offering convenient control due to its simple geometry and just two processing variables ,temperature and shear rate. This makes it a valuable research tool for understanding exactly how fibre formation occurs, even if extrusion remains the dominant method at commercial scale.

The Particular Challenge of Vegan Fish

If vegan chicken is difficult, plant-based fish is harder still. It is hard to achieve the nutritional content, unique textures, and mild flavours of cooked fish meat using vegetables or fungi. Plant-based seafood mimics exist, but their ingredients often don't include meaningful protein.

Fish presents unique textural targets: the delicate flakiness of white fish, the layered fattiness of salmon, the springy chew of calamari. These are difficult to replicate with standard extrusion. This is where 3D food printing is stepping in as a genuinely transformative technique. Researchers at the National University of Singapore replicated the flakiness and mouthfeel of real fish by 3D printing a protein-based ink with a food-grade 3D printer,



depositing it layer by layer to create different textures , some fatty and smooth, others fibrous and chewy , within a single product.

Commercially, Vienna-based Revo Foods has teamed up with Belgian company Paleo, backed by a €2.2M EU grant, to develop a specially fermented Myoglobin protein, typically found in animal muscle, to enhance the taste, texture, colour, and nutritional value of its 3D-printed salmon alternative, with the company claiming its process cuts water use by 90% and CO₂ emissions by 75%.

Fermentation as a Flavour and Texture Tool

Fermentation is emerging as a critical secondary processing step across all categories of plant-based meat. The incorporation of fermentation in plant-based meat production provides products with better sensorial qualities, addressing one of the most persistent consumer complaints , that vegan meats simply do not taste right. Fermentation can develop depth of flavour, reduce beany or off-notes in legume proteins, and improve mouthfeel in ways that mechanical processing alone cannot achieve.

3D Printing: The Frontier of Whole-Cut Analogues

Standard extrusion excels at grounds, strips, and nuggets, but whole-cut formats – a chicken breast, a

salmon steak, a fish fillet , require spatial complexity that extrusion cannot easily deliver. Stakeholder Foods has developed a drop-on-demand 3D printing technology that enables ultra-precise deposition of micro-droplets of plant-based materials, allowing for structuring and marbling that replicates the texture and appearance of fish, with products including Beef Steak, White Fish, and Chicken Fillet blends designed to replicate the taste and texture of conventional meat.

The Road Ahead

Innovations in processing techniques are shaping the future of plant-based meat alternatives, and establishing regulatory consensus will be significant in propelling the industry's development. As techniques like high-moisture extrusion, shear cell structuring, precision fermentation, and 3D bioprinting mature and converge, the gap between plant protein and animal protein , texturally, nutritionally, and sensorially , will continue to close. The science is not just catching up with consumer expectations. In some ways, it is beginning to surpass them.

Sources:

* IFT Food Technology Magazine, Wiley / Journal of Food Process Engineering, Taylor & Francis, PMC / Wiley, ScienceDirect / Journal of Future Foods , Food Manufacturing , 3D Printing Industry Veganist

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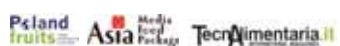
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The Psychology of Packaging: How Design Influences Buying Decisions

■ By Anmol Choubey*

Nobody reads the label first. Nobody checks the price first. The hand reaches out before the brain has caught up. Something about the product just felt right – trustworthy, exciting, worth it. That feeling didn't happen by accident. Someone built it. And they built it through the packaging.

Packaging isn't a container. It's a conversation – one that lasts under three seconds and has to say everything. In sports nutrition especially, where every shelf is a wall of bold claims and louder-than-life branding, that conversation needs to cut through instantly. No room for subtlety. No second chances.



The First Word is Color

There is a proven principle in consumer psychology. When looking at something, a consumer will make a subconscious decision about what they see within the first minute and a half of seeing the product. The most important factor in this decision is color. Color serves a purpose. It conveys a feeling. It expresses authority, and communicates personality and ensures an emotion before the first word is read.

For the performance nutrition industry, the color blue has, until now, been the most common. It has connotations of science, reliability, trust and credibility. The color black

signals a premium product and especially serious as well as elite performance. Together, blue and black signify that a product is no-nonsense, clinically approved sports nutrition. It has proven safe and effective.

However, safe needs to have emotion more often than not.

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We changed our color scheme from blue and black to black and yellow. This change was not cosmetic. It was strategic in every sense.

CSK's yellow is arguably the most recognizable color in cricket, and for good reason. It transcends cricket, and verges on cultural. It signifies the roar of the Chepauk crowd. It brings to mind a picture of Dhoni standing still at the crease while the whole crowd is going wild. It evokes the sense of a title being won with composure and consistency, not flash. In the context of CSK, yellow carries the kind of meaning and association that most brands struggle to build with their brand colors for decades.

What Yellow Actually Does to the Brain

Yellow is the most active color in the visible spectrum. It triggers what is called the After Image effect, where the eyes quickly shift between objects. It is used in caution signs around the world. Yellow in brands is an eye capturing color, however, it is used differently and paired with different meanings.



In the presence of black, yellow is energizing. It doesn't talk, it shouts. It is an epitome of positivity, optimism, and boldness. For sports nutrition, it is the ideology you seek. Yellow is warm in the emotional spectrum, and unlike any other color, it is yellow that endearingly connects. In most sports, fans are extremely loyal to the personalities and teams they love, and that warmth connects. It is a commercial tool. People do not just trust brands. They purchase the emotional product.

CSK is More than just a Cricket Team. It is a Way of Life.

When you consider what CSK stands for in Indian sports, it transcends beyond IPL trophies. It is about Staying calm When There is a Lot of Heat Under the Bouncer. It is about doing the right things at the right time. It is about the culture of discipline and the ability to think in a sustained manner over short term bursts of activity.

A brand's value alignment with consumers is exemplified as extraordinarily powerful in the case of the aforementioned sports nutrition brand. The sleek and professional branding of CSK's black-and-yellow packaging does not just sell them supplements, or protein, or whatever else; it sells them on the idea of an elite performance that is 'built' in a quiet, daily, and regimented manner, through the 'right' inputs and 'correct' levels of discipline. The packaging is a performance statement.

Moreover, the co-branding does something that purely 'advertising' cannot: it brings a sense of identity. CSK supporters are some of the most loyal and passionate in the world of cricket. They have followed and supported the franchise through peaks, valleys, and even a suspension that would have broken most teams. Their Connects to the brand are even identity level deep. When our packaging is designed with the colors and crest of their team, it is

much more than an appeal to them. It embodies their identity and becomes a part of how they express who they are.

The rationale for the redesign

The change from blue and black to black and yellow was more than just a color change. It was a complete redesign of visual hierarchy and the weight of typography, graphic language, and shelf impact. With black now as the primary color, it anchors a performance-first and premium positioning while still providing retail contrast. Yellow, as the accent, provides a psychological lift of energy and optimism while also carrying the CSK identity.

The outcome is packaging that provides the serious, premium

sports nutrition message while simultaneously providing a link to the consumer's established love. Achieving that in a single visual presentation is a result of an authentic brand partnership and focused design intent.

The true return on investment from the psychology of packaging

Brands that understand packaging, understand the most basic fundamentals of the discipline. It is never about designing a box or a pouch. It is about designing a feeling. It is about a split second promise, an unconscious contract, and a brand standing in an aisle.

Purchasing decisions are influenced by color. When brand partnerships are authentic, equity is transferred.

When the correct psychological charge is used, packaging ceases to be packaging. It becomes a reason to believe.

For us, adopting yellow was not a loss of our original identity. It was an enhancement of it. Black and yellow combinations do not just look different from blue and black combinations. They communicate, and evoke, something else entirely, and in an oversaturated market, that advantage is all that matters.

About the author:

* Anmol Choubey, Director & COO Pure Nutrition

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One of the most effective ways Radicon supports sustainability is through its gear systems' **high mechanical efficiency**, which directly contributes to lower electricity consumption in continuous operations. For example, the **Series C Heli-Worm and Series F Parallel Shaft Geared Motors**



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are designed to deliver optimal performance even under varying load conditions, reducing the stress on motors and associated systems. This not only conserves energy but also lowers the carbon footprint of plants over time.

Moreover, Power Build's **planetary (Series PL)** and **worm gear (PBWR)** series contribute significantly to space-saving, heat reduction, and maintenance-free operations all of which are key to sustainable plant design. Many of these gearboxes are pre-filled with high-grade lubricants and designed for long maintenance cycles, ensuring reduced downtime and lower waste generation over the life of the equipment.

To complement its mechanical excellence, Radicon also offers the **PBL VFD Series (Variable Frequency Drives)** a modern, electronic solution that brings intelligent speed and torque control to the table. These drives allow motors to operate at optimal speeds, cutting down on excess energy use

during startup, operation, and load variations. The result is a finely tuned drive system that aligns with green manufacturing goals.

Lastly, through extended equipment life cycles, Radicon products inherently reduce the need for frequent replacements and resource consumption. Gear units like the **Series J Shaft Mounted Reducers** and **Roloid Gear Pumps** are crafted with durability and long-term efficiency in mind, further reinforcing the company's commitment to sustainable industry practices.

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Decoding Food Labels: New Report Sparks Industry Debate

■ By Dr. Rashida Vapiwala*

A new industry-led report is prompting critical introspection within India's packaged food sector. The LabelBlind® Study of *Labelling Claims* in India's Packaged Food Industry (Feb 2026) shifts the spotlight from consumers to the industry itself, examining how food labels are created, validated, and presented. Unlike consumer perception studies, this report is designed to strengthen compliance systems, identify structural gaps, and push the industry toward more accountable labelling practices.

At its core, the study is not about calling out brands; rather, it is about course correction. As India's packaged food market expands rapidly, with thousands of SKUs entering retail shelves each year, labelling has become a critical compliance checkpoint. The report highlights why decoding labels is a strategic necessity for both domestic credibility and global competitiveness.

Why this study matters

The intent behind the study is clear: to draw the attention of food businesses to the increasing complexity and importance of regulatory compliance. Food labels today serve multiple purposes: they inform, market, differentiate, and increasingly, withstand regulatory scrutiny. However, without robust internal validation systems, labels can quickly become points of vulnerability.



By focusing on industry practices, the study highlights operational challenges, ranging from claim substantiation to cross-functional coordination between R&D, marketing, and regulatory teams. It reinforces the idea that compliance cannot be an afterthought added at the packaging stage; it must be embedded into product development itself.

Key findings that are driving debate

The report is grounded in extensive data, analysing 586 products across 227 brands, and evaluating 5,058 on-pack claims. Its findings reveal systemic inconsistencies that are

now difficult for the industry to ignore.

1. One in three claims raise compliance concerns

A striking **33.6% of all claims** were found to be either **non-compliant (21.3%)** or **unverifiable (12.3%)**. This suggests that a significant proportion of claims lack proper substantiation or fail to meet regulatory requirements. For an industry that relies heavily on front-of-pack communication, this raises concerns around both internal validation processes and regulatory interpretation.

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2. High-consumption categories show higher gaps

The study identifies notable non-compliance levels in everyday food categories such as -

- **Snacks:** 27.3%
- **Flour:** 24.8%
- **Edible oils:** 21.7%

These are staple categories with high consumer reach, making the implications of inaccurate labelling more widespread. For example, a commonly consumed flour product with exaggerated health claims or an edible oil marketed with loosely defined benefits can influence daily dietary choices at scale.

3. Health claims are the most vulnerable

Among all claims analysed, **39.1% were health or nutrition-related**, making them the most influential and risky category. More concerning is that **health claims showed a 52.5% combined rate of non-compliance or unverifiability**.



Examples cited in the report include:

- Flour products claiming to “reduce the risk of certain cancers”
- Tea and herbal infusions marketed as “supporting heart health”
- Honey labelled as “good for heart health”
- Ready-to-eat meals positioned as “diabetic friendly”
- Edible oils claiming “hormonal balance”

Such claims, when not scientifically substantiated, can mislead consumers into overestimating a product's health benefits.

4. Claim density is contributing to confusion

On average, products carried **8.6 claims per pack**, with some categories like snacks and honey going up to **13–14 claims per product**. This high claim density creates information overload, often leading to conflicting signals between marketing claims and actual nutritional data.

For instance, a snack product may highlight “high protein” on the front while also being high in sodium or saturated fat; details that are less prominently displayed. This imbalance in communication can distort consumer understanding and decision-making.

Compliance gaps point to systemic challenges

The findings suggest that the issue is not merely regulatory gaps but inconsistencies in **implementation**. **Challenges** include:

- Lack of standardised interpretation of claim definitions
- Weak internal validation and audit mechanisms
- Limited integration of regulatory checks during product development

These systemic issues indicate that compliance is still treated as a checkpoint when it should be a continuous process embedded across the product lifecycle.



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Beyond compliance: A business and public health imperative

The implications of these findings go beyond regulatory risk. Misleading or poorly substantiated claims can shape consumer perception, influence dietary patterns, and ultimately impact public health outcomes, especially in a country like India, which faces a dual burden of undernutrition and lifestyle diseases.

At the same time, the report underscores a critical business reality: **global market access increasingly depends on labelling compliance.** International regulations vary widely in their requirements for ingredients, allergens, and claims. A product that is non-compliant domestically is unlikely to pass scrutiny in export markets.

The way forward

The debate sparked by this report is already pushing the industry toward



more structured solutions. Key areas of focus include:

- **Stronger claim validation systems:** Integrating scientific substantiation and regulatory checks early in product development.
- **Clearer regulatory guidance:** Reducing ambiguity in claim definitions and permissible language.
- **Digital compliance tools:** Leveraging technology and AI to ensure real-time validation and consistency across labels.

- **Front-of-Pack Labelling (FOPL):** Simplifying key nutritional information to balance marketing claims with factual data.

Ultimately, the responsibility of decoding food labels cannot rest entirely on consumers. As the industry responds to this report, compliance is becoming a defining factor in trust, transparency, and long-term growth.

About the authors:

* Dr. Rashida Vapiwala, Founder and CEO, LabelBlind

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Safe Automations : Building the Future of Food Automation



INTERVIEW



In conversation with Ashraf Arinchikool, Managing Director of Safe Automations, he delves into how integrated turnkey solutions are redefining F&B automation across GCC and India, and why Safe Automations is uniquely positioned to lead it.

Q YOUR SOLUTIONS SPAN FROM PRIMARY PACKAGING TO END-OF-LINE AUTOMATION AND INSPECTION. HOW IS THE DEMAND FOR INTEGRATED, TURNKEY SOLUTIONS EVOLVING IN THE FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY AMONG MID-SIZED MANUFACTURERS?

The shift toward integrated, turnkey solutions is reshaping how we operate across GCC and Indian markets, and it's accelerating. Mid-sized manufacturers in India's packaged foods, dairy, and bakery sectors are moving away from piecemeal purchases toward end-to-end accountability. The reasons are straightforward: operational complexity makes multi-vendor coordination a liability, and

integrated solutions demonstrably improve capex efficiency, one Indian customer reported 30% faster ROI after moving away from a traditional multi-vendor setup.

Our hybrid model is built precisely for this moment. We engineer bespoke conveyance systems at our Bangalore facility and integrate best-in-class global inspection and packaging equipment around them, optimizing the entire line, not just its parts. Demand is strongest in dairy, confectionery, and ready-to-eat foods, where scaling requires synchronized automation. The shift in customer language says it all: RFQs have moved from "send us a checkweigher spec" to "design me a complete line for 250 ppm throughput with full traceability."

Q WITH INCREASING REGULATORY SCRUTINY ON FOOD SAFETY, HOW ARE YOUR INSPECTION TECHNOLOGIES (X-RAY, METAL DETECTION, CHECKWEIGHING) HELPING F&B BRANDS MEET GLOBAL COMPLIANCE STANDARDS LIKE HACCP AND EXPORT REQUIREMENTS?

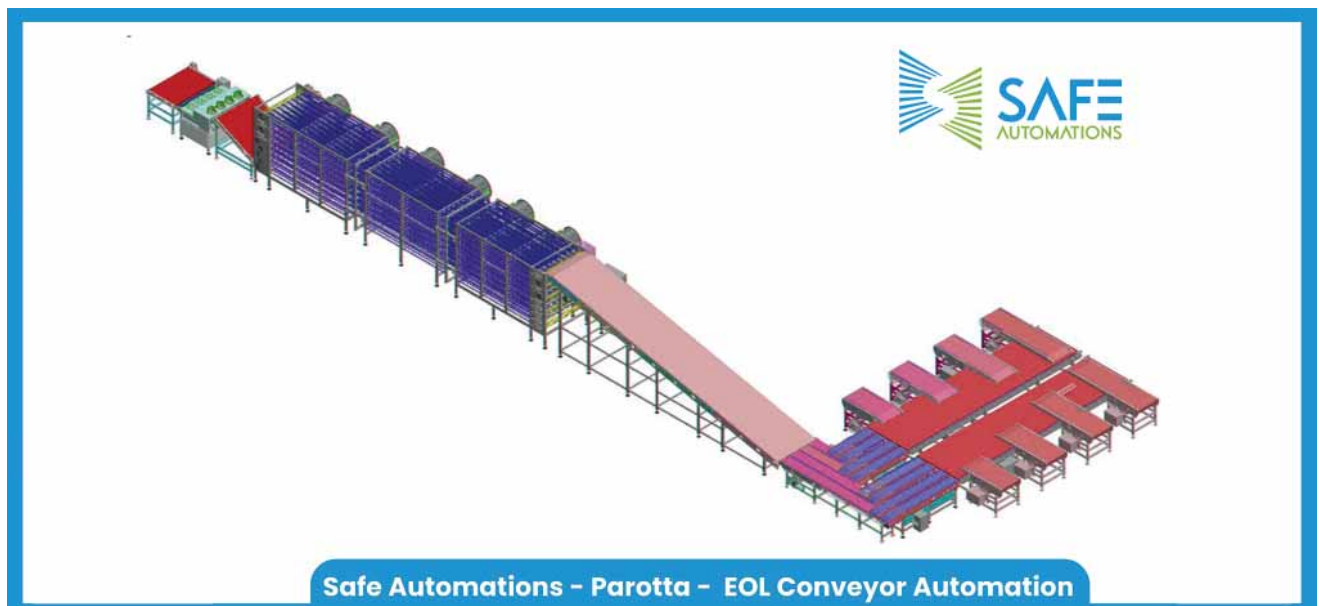
Compliance is the lingua franca of modern F&B, and every customer, from Arla Foods in Bahrain to Nestlé in India asks the same question: "Will this system protect me from recalls, border rejections, and liability?" Our inspection portfolio answers that directly. We deploy Wipotec X-ray systems for foreign body detection—stones, glass, metal, high-density polymers, giving clients the audit trail regulators demand; a recent deployment for a Saudi Arabian ice cream manufacturer detected a stainless steel screw in a single 8-hour run, averting a catastrophic recall.

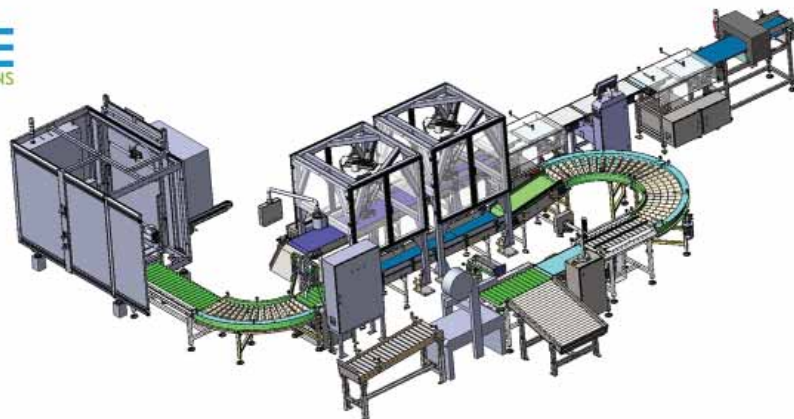
CEIA metal detection handles ferrous, non-ferrous, and stainless steel contaminants across Indian food segments, integrated with automated rejection and documented compliance records for FSSAI, BRC, and SQF certifications. Our Wipotec HC-A checkweigher, paired with our conveyor systems, ensures legal metrology accuracy from 5mg with full data export for audits. The underlying insight is this: inspection is risk transfer. When our clients tell regulators and export partners that every unit was inspected by certified equipment with documented protocols, it unlocks access to EU, US, and Gulf markets, which is why we've positioned Safe Automations as a compliance partner, not just an equipment supplier.

Q SAFE AUTOMATIONS IS KNOWN FOR DELIVERING CUSTOMIZED, COST-EFFECTIVE AUTOMATION SYSTEMS. HOW DO YOU BALANCE CUSTOMIZATION WITH SCALABILITY AND STANDARDIZATION, PARTICULARLY FOR FAST-GROWING FOOD BRANDS?

The core tension in this business is balancing scalability with customization and getting it wrong costs both money and relationships. Our answer is modular architecture: standardized conveyor frames, drive systems, and PLC logic form the foundation of 80% of every deployment, enabling replicable designs, efficient spare parts inventory, and scalable technician training. The remaining 20% is where customer-specific requirements live—throughput profiles, reject mechanisms, product handling, engineered at the integration and control layers without rebuilding from scratch.

A mid-sized Indian food processor runs our standard conveyor base across multiple product types, switching from stick packs to pouches in 45 minutes via quick-change interfaces. For fast-growing brands scaling from 5 million to 50 million units annually, this matters enormously, they expand lines by adding stations, not replacing infrastructure. Financially, standard components drive economies of scale while customization remains a high-margin service layer, and spare parts for standard modules generate recurring revenue across installations. This modularity also makes our partner integrations seamless by design, eliminating proprietary rework at every customer site.





Safe Automations – Bakery EOL and Pick and Place

Q YOU COLLABORATE WITH GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY LEADERS LIKE WIPOTEC AND CEIA. HOW DO THESE PARTNERSHIPS ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY TO BRING CUTTING-EDGE AUTOMATION AND INSPECTION TECHNOLOGIES TO INDIAN AND GCC FOOD PROCESSORS?

Our OEM partnerships are force multipliers in a market dominated by large automation conglomerates. Wipotec delivers world-class checkweighing and X-ray systems; we localize them, maintaining spare parts inventory across KSA, Gulf, and India, providing same-day technical support so a customer in Jeddah calls us, not Germany. CEIA brings Italian-grade metal detection reliability; we act as their regional engineering arm across GCC and India, handling commissioning, training, and compliance documentation. The cumulative advantage is credibility: tier-1 customers like Nestlé, Mondelez, and Mars demand OEM-backed, warranted equipment, and our partnerships position us as systems integrators backed by global principals, not resellers. Customers choose us over direct OEM relationships because we absorb their coordination burden entirely.

Q AS CATEGORIES LIKE DAIRY, BAKERY, AND READY-TO-EAT FOODS SCALE RAPIDLY, WHAT SPECIFIC AUTOMATION OR PACKAGING INNOVATIONS DO YOU SEE BECOMING CRITICAL FOR THESE HIGH-GROWTH SEGMENTS?

Across GCC and Indian markets, mid-sized manufacturers in packaged foods, dairy, and bakery are moving decisively away from piecemeal equipment purchases—they want one partner accountable for the entire line. The drivers are simple:

multi-vendor complexity creates costly downtime, and integrated solutions compress commissioning timelines and improve capex efficiency; one Indian customer reported 30% faster ROI making the switch. Our hybrid model is built for this, bespoke conveyance systems engineered in-house at our Bangalore facility, wrapped around best-in-class global inspection and packaging partners. The result is full-line optimization, and the market is responding: RFQs have shifted from component specs to "design me a complete line for 250 ppm throughput with full traceability.

Q CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR COLLABORATION WITH YOUR NEW PARTNER FOOD RADAR AND WHAT THAT MEANS FOR YOUR UPCOMING PLANS?

Safe Automations has signed an exclusive distribution agreement with Food Radar Systems (Gothenburg, Sweden) across seven territories, KSA, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and India—bringing a genuinely differentiated technology to the region. Food Radar's proprietary microwave-based detection operates without radiation and identifies contaminants that X-ray systems routinely miss: soft and hard plastics, rubber, wood, fruit stones, aluminum foil, and starch lumps, alongside conventional metals and glass. With no dominant regional player in this segment and growing recognition from FSSAI and GCC food authorities, the timing is strategic. Our Q2 2026 rollout includes pilot installations with major food processors, bundled end-of-line solutions combining Food Radar with CEIA metal detection and Wipotec X-ray, and a co-produced content campaign, cementing our position as the region's leading contamination detection integrator.



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The Organic Shift: Why Our Grocery Baskets Are Going Green

■ By Venkatesh Ganapathy*

Organic grocery products refer to food and beverage items that are produced, processed, and handled according to certified organic farming standards. These standards prohibit or strictly limit the use of synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), artificial preservatives, growth hormones, and routine antibiotics. Instead, organic farming emphasizes natural inputs, crop rotation, composting, biological pest control, and ecological balance. In India, organic products are certified under systems such as the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), while globally recognized certifications include USDA Organic in the United States and EU Organic standards in Europe. The core principle behind organic grocery products is sustainability—ensuring that food production protects soil health, biodiversity, animal welfare, and human health.

Organic grocery products cover a wide range of categories available in modern retail stores, specialty outlets, farmers' markets, and online platforms. The most common category is fresh organic produce, including fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, spinach, apples, bananas, and carrots grown without synthetic agrochemicals. Another major category consists of organic grains and staples, including rice, wheat, millets, pulses, lentils, and flour, which are especially important in countries like India where cereals form the dietary foundation. Organic dairy products such as milk, yogurt, butter, and cheese come from animals fed organic feed and raised without artificial growth



hormones or routine antibiotics. Organic eggs and poultry also fall into this category. In addition, there is a rapidly expanding segment of organic packaged and processed foods, including breakfast cereals, edible oils, spices, snacks, ready-to-eat meals, baby foods, and beverages such as organic tea, coffee, and fruit juices. Specialty organic products, such as gluten-free organic foods and functional health products, are also gaining popularity among health-conscious consumers.

One of the primary benefits of organic grocery products is reduced exposure to synthetic chemicals. Conventional farming often relies on pesticides and herbicides that may leave residues on food. Organic farming avoids these inputs, which appeals to consumers concerned about long-term health effects. While regulatory bodies maintain that conventional foods are generally safe within prescribed limits, many consumers prefer organic alternatives as a precautionary measure. Another benefit is environmental sustainability. Organic farming improves soil fertility through composting and natural nutrient cycles, enhances biodiversity by avoiding harmful chemicals, and reduces water contamination. By promoting ecological balance,

organic agriculture contributes to long-term environmental health.

Animal welfare is another advantage associated with organic grocery products. Organic livestock production requires animals to have access to outdoor spaces, organic feed, and living conditions that support natural behavior. The avoidance of routine antibiotics also addresses growing concerns about antibiotic resistance. Additionally, some research suggests that organic foods may contain higher levels of certain nutrients, such as antioxidants in fruits and vegetables and omega-3 fatty acids in organic dairy products, although the differences are not always substantial. Many consumers also perceive organic foods to have better taste and freshness, particularly when sourced locally through farmers' markets or direct farm-to-consumer models.

The Indian market for organic grocery products has witnessed significant growth over the past decade. According to the report by Market Research Future titled "India Organic Food Market," the market was valued at approximately USD 17.74 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach around USD 20.02 billion in 2025. Over the long term, it is expected to grow to nearly

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USD 59.68 billion by 2035, registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 11.66 percent between 2025 and 2035. This robust growth reflects rising consumer awareness, improved distribution networks, and expanding product availability across categories such as fruits, vegetables, cereals, dairy products, beverages, and processed foods.

The expansion of modern retail formats and e-commerce platforms has further strengthened the organic grocery market in India. Online grocery apps and digital marketplaces have made organic products accessible beyond metropolitan cities, reaching consumers in tier-2 and tier-3 towns. Supermarkets and specialty organic stores are also dedicating more shelf space to certified organic brands. In addition, India's strong agricultural base and increasing number of certified organic farms support domestic supply and export potential, particularly in products like organic spices, basmati rice, and pulses.

Several key drivers are fueling the growth of organic grocery consumption both in India and globally. Foremost among them is rising health consciousness. Consumers are increasingly aware of the link between diet and lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular conditions. This awareness encourages a shift toward perceived "cleaner" and safer food options. Increasing disposable income, especially among urban middle-class populations, has also played a crucial role. As purchasing power rises, consumers are more willing to pay a premium for quality and health-focused products.

Environmental awareness is another significant driver. Climate change, soil degradation, and water pollution have prompted consumers to rethink



the environmental footprint of their food choices. Organic agriculture, with its emphasis on sustainability and reduced chemical usage, aligns well with these concerns. Globally, younger generations in particular prioritize sustainability and ethical consumption, which benefits the organic grocery segment. Trust in certification labels also drives demand. Clear labeling and regulatory oversight reassure consumers that products meet established organic standards, reducing skepticism and building brand loyalty.

Government support further contributes to market expansion. In India, initiatives promoting organic farming, training programs for farmers, and certification support schemes have encouraged the adoption of organic agricultural practices. Globally, various governments offer subsidies and incentives to promote sustainable farming. The rise of social media and digital information platforms has also increased awareness about food sourcing, ingredient transparency, and farming practices, accelerating consumer interest in organic groceries.

Looking ahead, the future of organic grocery products appears promising. The segment is gradually transitioning from a niche category catering to a limited, affluent

consumer base to a more mainstream option available across income groups. As supply chains become more efficient and economies of scale improve, prices may become more competitive with conventional products. Technological advancements, such as improved traceability systems and blockchain-based supply chain transparency, could further strengthen consumer trust in organic labels.

Product innovation will likely shape the next phase of growth. The development of organic ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat meals, fortified organic beverages, plant-based organic alternatives, and convenient snack options will attract busy urban consumers. Integration with broader sustainability movements, such as regenerative agriculture and low-carbon food systems, may also redefine the organic sector's role in combating climate change. In India, growing export demand for certified organic produce provides additional opportunities for farmers and agribusinesses.

In conclusion, organic grocery products represent more than just a food category; they symbolize a shift toward sustainable consumption and responsible agriculture. By avoiding synthetic chemicals and emphasizing ecological balance, these products address growing concerns about health, environment, and ethical production. The Indian market, supported by rising awareness and favorable growth projections, is poised for substantial expansion in the coming decade. Globally, organic groceries are expected to gain further traction as consumers prioritize transparency, sustainability, and wellness. The future of organic grocery products therefore appears both dynamic and transformative, shaping the way societies think about food and its impact on people and the planet.

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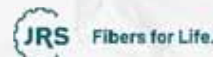


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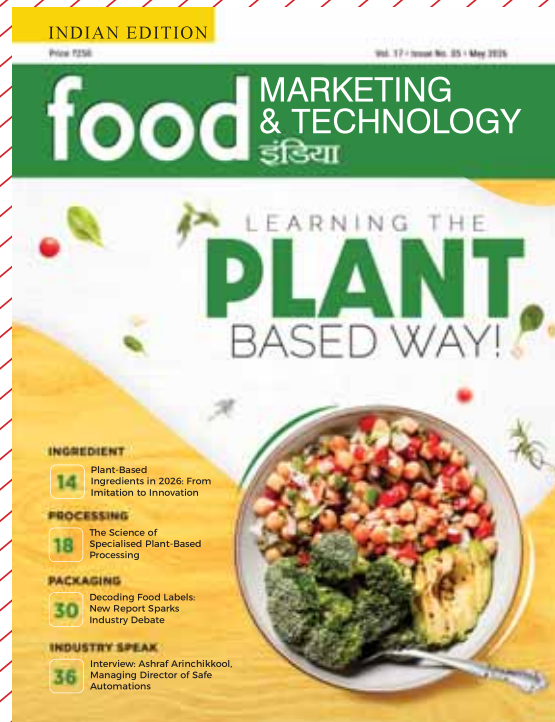
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S.R NO.	EVENT NAME	DATES	VENUE
1.		24-27 June 2026	Taiwan, TaiNEX1
2.		01-03 July 2026	Codissia, Coimbatore, India
3.		23-25 July 2026	JECC, Jaipur
4.		21-23 August 2026	KTPO Exhibition Centre, Whitefield, Bangalore
5.		26-28 August 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
6.		26-28 August 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
7.		10-12 September 2026	Hall No. 1, 2 & 3, Chennai Trade Center, Nandmbakkam, Chennai
8.		25-26 September 2026	Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi
9.		29 Sept-01 Oct 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
10.		29 Sept-01 Oct 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
11.		17-21 Oct 2026	Paris Nord Villepinte
12.		28 Oct-30 Oct 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
13.		28 Oct-30 Oct 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
14.		28 Oct-30 Oct 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
15.		09-11 December 2026	Bombay Exhibition Centre
16.		20-22 December 2026	Yahobhoomi, IICE, New Delhi

NOTE: Key numbers at the end of articles can be used as references for reader requests

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