

APEDA Successfully Concludes First Cohort of BHARATI Programme to Accelerate Innovation-Led Growth in Agri-Food Exports

100 Startups from 22 States and 2 Union Territories Complete Export-Focused Acceleration Programme

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The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, has successfully concluded the first cohort of BHARATI (Bharat's Hub for Agritech, Resilience, Advancement and Incubation for Export Innovation), its flagship export enablement and acceleration programme aimed at fostering innovation-led growth in India's agri-food export sector. Beyond supporting stakeholders, BHARATI seeks to cultivate a dynamic ecosystem aligned with India's target of achieving exports worth USD 50 billion in APEDA-scheduled products by 2030.

The programme was launched to identify, nurture and support high-potential startups developing innovative products, technologies and solutions that can enhance India's agricultural and processed food exports. The initiative aims to strengthen the country's agri-food export ecosystem by promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, value addition, technology adoption and global market readiness.

The inaugural cohort comprised 100 startups from 22 States and 2 Union Territories, selected through a rigorous multi-stage evaluation process from over 700 applications received from across the country. The cohort included 68 agri-food product startups, 26 export-enabling technology and service providers, and six innovators working in the areas of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, traceability, quality assurance and compliance solutions.

Reflecting the diversity and vibrancy of India's innovation ecosystem, the cohort featured entrepreneurs ranging in age from 17 to 75 years. Their participation highlights the growing adoption of innovation and technology-driven solutions across the agri-food export value chain.

The participating startups underwent a structured 120-hour export-focused acceleration programme covering export preparedness, market access, business scaling, regulatory compliance, packaging, branding and investor readiness. The programme also provided one-to-one mentorship, masterclasses by industry experts and opportunities to engage with stakeholders from government institutions, industry bodies, financial institutions, exporters and investors. These interactions enabled startups to explore commercial partnerships, strengthen market linkages and enhance their export readiness.

As part of its international market exposure initiative, APEDA facilitated the participation of the top eight BHARATI startups at Gulfood 2026 in Dubai, one of the world's largest food and beverage trade exhibitions. The event provided direct access to global buyers and enabled high-value B2B engagements

with international trade stakeholders. More than 100 B2B meetings were held between startups and international traders and importers, and product samples were showcased to prospective buyers.

Chairman, APEDA, Shri Abhishek Dev, IAS, said that the BHARATI Programme reflects APEDA's commitment to building a future-ready export ecosystem driven by innovation, entrepreneurship and global competitiveness. He noted that the enthusiastic response from startups across the country demonstrates the growing strength of India's agri-food innovation ecosystem. He further stated that the initiative aims to create a strong pipeline of export-ready enterprises capable of contributing to the growth of India's agricultural and processed food exports.

The successful completion of the first cohort marks an important milestone in APEDA's efforts to integrate innovation and entrepreneurship into the country's export growth strategy. The initiative is expected to support the emergence of globally competitive startups while creating new opportunities for value addition, market diversification and sustainable export growth.

Within three months of the commencement of the programme, startups supported under the BHARATI initiative have demonstrated significant progress in advancing innovation-led agri-export solutions. Two agri-tech startups collaborated to export approximately 37 MT of GI-tagged Jardalu mangoes to Dubai, while another startup achieved the first-ever sea shipment of nutraceutical-based and botanically infused ready-to-cook millet functional food products to Auckland, New Zealand, using millet sourced from Karnataka-based Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs).

A Madhya Pradesh-based startup dealing in organic products, including pulses, millets and heritage grains, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a leading supermarket chain in the UAE for an export consignment. An agri-tech startup offering fruit bagging solutions, mango orchard management services and post-harvest tools collaborated with an APEDA-registered exporter to ship approximately 5 MT of mangoes to Singapore during the current season.

A Maharashtra-based Farmer Producer Company (FPC) exported approximately 850 kg of GI-tagged fig juice and jamun-based juice to the United States and the United Kingdom and subsequently received a repeat order of approximately 1.25 MT from the same markets. In another significant achievement, a Karnataka-based startup supported by a network of more than 1,600 farmers across 12 States exported 40 MT of organic products, including pulses, heritage grains and GI-tagged native rice varieties such as Indrayani, along with 5 MT of value-added products to the UAE and European Union markets, with projected exports exceeding 40 MT to the United States, European Union and UAE markets over the next one to two months.

In addition, a Kerala-based startup has received an order for millet-based products from Oman. Negotiations are underway for several other startups involving products such as makhana for the Dubai market and ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook products for the Japanese and Cameroonian markets, among others. Furthermore, a Madhya Pradesh-based startup has expanded its domestic market presence through quick-commerce and e-commerce platforms, along with a retail footprint spanning 100 stores across multiple States in India.

The successful outcomes achieved by startups under the BHARATI initiative underscore the programme's role in accelerating export-oriented innovation and strengthening India's agri-food export ecosystem. Building on the success of the inaugural cohort, APEDA will soon launch the next edition of the BHARATI Programme to further expand support for startups developing innovative solutions for the agri-food export sector. APEDA remains confident that the initiative will continue to create new opportunities for innovation, value addition and sustainable growth while contributing to the long-term expansion and diversification of India's agricultural and processed food exports.

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