

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT THE VALEDICTORY CEREMONY OF  
THE WORLD FOOD INDIA 2017**

**New Delhi, November 5, 2017**

1. I am happy to be here at the concluding function of World Food India 2017 and would like to congratulate every one of the organisers for its resounding and truly historic success. This Summit saw the participation of delegates from over 60 countries, including CEOs of 60 global companies. It has helped showcase the vast and near limitless opportunities in the food industry and in food processing in India. It has been, if I may put it so, the Kumbh Mela of Indian food.
2. A rich, complex and sophisticated food culture is part of the ethos of India. This has been true for thousands of years, ever since our ancestors planted grains in the Indus Valley. Our intellectual legacies, such as Ayurveda and yoga, place emphasis on appropriate food elements in keeping with different body systems.
3. Across the length and breadth of this vast subcontinent, our communities have historically used diverse and nutritious grains. They have also practised traditional farming methods that are essentially organic. Ironically, these have come back to our markets today after repackaging in other countries.
4. Food in India is as diverse as the rest of our society. Varieties of **dal** – the pulses or lentils that are a principal source of protein for so many of our people – change from state to state, even district to district. There are 29 states in India – and maybe 290 different recipes for **biryani** or of course **khichri**. Different soil systems are responsible for an astonishing range of agricultural produce. From **taenga** in Assam to **sarson da saag** in Punjab, from the **dhokla** in Gujarat to the **dosa** in Tamil Nadu and other states of the South, there is so much to choose from.

5. I would say that one human lifetime is not enough to experience the range and richness of Indian food!
6. Food is part of India's global outreach and has been so for centuries. As a naturally open and trading society, we have exported as well as embraced different food items and customs. Today, from West Asia to the West Indies, Indian food is popular, and is often adapted to local tastes. Butter chicken can be found from Brazzaville in Congo to Berlin in Germany.
7. Recently I travelled to Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa, on my first visit abroad as President of India. In that country the principal snack is a variation of the **samosa**. I was told that the **samosa** had arrived in Djibouti from India. And in India it is believed that a version of the **samosa** travelled here on the trade routes from Central Asia. Truly food connects the world. Even Japan's **tempura** style is said to have been inspired by the Indian fried **pakora**.

### **Friends,**

8. Food is culture – but food is also commerce. India's food consumption is currently valued at US \$370 billion. It is expected to reach \$1 trillion by 2025, in less than a decade. There are opportunities across the entire food value chain in India – including post-harvest facilities, logistics, cold chains, and manufacturing. It is a sector with a large business appetite.
9. The food industry can be a huge employer. And this is of utmost importance for a country such as India, which has such a large youth population. It is also noteworthy that women are deeply involved in the food sector. Especially in our rural areas, there is great potential for women to emerge as micro-entrepreneurs and raise overall female participation in the workforce.
10. Women can set up small enterprises to make jams and pickles by processing fruits and vegetables gathered from farms in the village. They can even use the Internet and modern

communication technology to study prices and consumer trends in faraway markets. In this manner they can empower themselves, enhance the family income and contribute to nation building.

11. A simple outcome such as this can have multiple benefits. It can go a long way in curtailing the unacceptably high crop wastage in our country. In this regard, some of the numbers are truly startling. For instance, close to 16 per cent of India's guava crop is wasted, as are 10 per cent of our mango and apple crops. I am sure the deliberations at this conference will take us closer to preventing such regrettable wastage. A focused emphasis on modern food processing can change things. It gives the food sector the potential to become the intersection of so many of our flagship programmes – Make in India, Start-up India, Skill India, Digital India, and the resolve to double farm incomes.
12. The Government of India is conscious of the social and economic benefits of a thriving food industry. This is a major area for attracting domestic and foreign investment. I am happy to learn that around 50 MoUs have been signed at this event. Forty-one mega food parks and cold chains are being established in all parts of the country to enhance food production. There is an increasing stress on food safety, accurate labelling, intellectual property issues and innovation in the food processing sector – as well as on using technology as an enabler.
13. In this context, I would like to congratulate the winners of today's Start-up Awards and Hackathon Awards. I am sure you will go on to shape India's food processing sector and improve quality and safety standards. I understand that one of the start-ups selected has adapted Raman Spectroscopy, the discovery of India's very own Nobel Prize winning scientist Dr C.V. Raman, into a low-cost hand-held device that can instantly detect food adulteration. This technology can save billions in food fraud.
14. I am also confident that Indian farmers and the Indian food processing industry can produce food products for India and – given India's competitive cost structure – for the world as well. This

would insulate both farmers and consumers from price shocks, and go a long way in ensuring remunerative incomes for the agricultural community. I look forward to the results and agreements flowing from this conference. I am sure they will take us nearer many of our goals.

15. I would once more like to appreciate the efforts of the organisers. They have put together a truly impressive event that has made many of us here – both from India and internationally – think of food issues and of the food industry in a manner that we had previously not done. In particular, it should lead to a time-bound plan to reduce if not eliminate crop wastage in our country.

**Friends,**

16. It is not without reason that this Summit has been called World Food India. The food story in India has world-wide implications. On a global scale, the market for Indian food products is massive. It extends from 1.8 billion people in South Asia to a 30 million strong diaspora population, and to millions more in all parts of the world. As such, the opportunities in the Indian food industry should give you much to chew about. Please digest. And invest.

Thank you  
Jai Hind!