



IndiaFood

FOODS, BEVERAGES & INGREDIENTS DIGEST
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April and May 2009 were elections months in the world's largest democracy. India's diversity and the complexity of Indian political process make it impossible for anyone to predict elections results with accuracy. Till 16 May, when results rolled out, everyone seemed to be sure that the country was heading towards a hung parliament. All political parties were negotiating and discussing possibilities of post-poll alliance scenario.

No one had anticipated that the pre-poll alliance (UPA) led by Congress will emerge as a clear winner. So, when the results came, everyone, including Congress leadership, was shocked. The trouble-free swearing-in of Manmohan Singh for a second term was most unexpected. Initial shock soon gave way to euphoria.

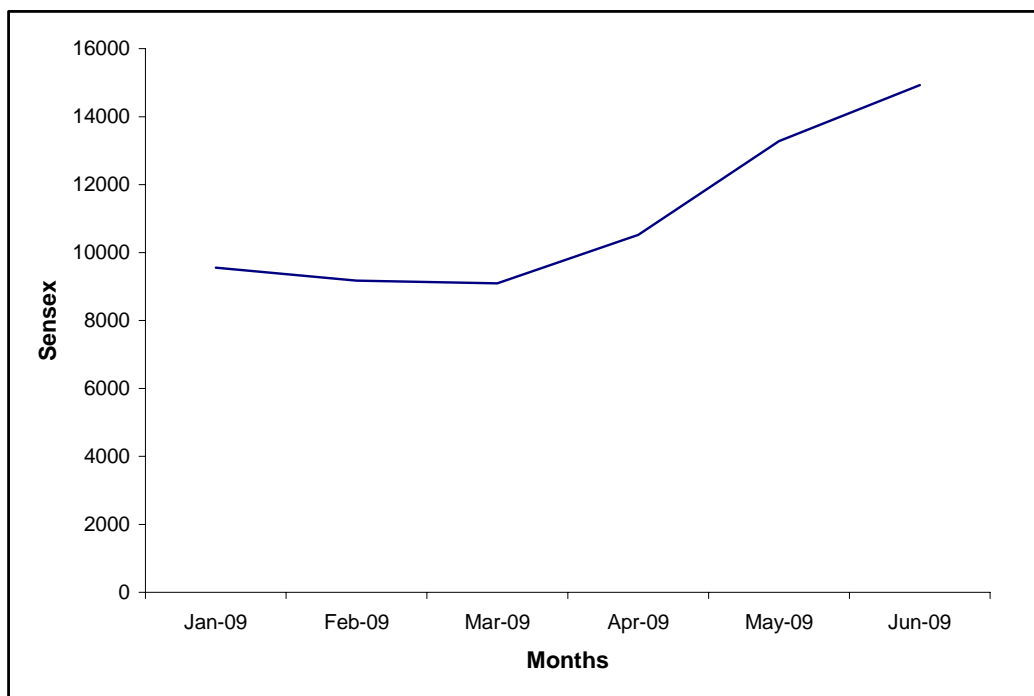


Business houses were most thrilled. On one hand, the poll results have heralded a period of political stability. On the other hand, corporate leaders are happy that small parties representing narrow regional and caste interests have been given a drubbing. The happiness of Indian business and financial circles was evident when the stock market opened on Monday, 18 May, after the election results. The market zoomed up at such speed that application of upper circuit breaker had to be resorted to twice within the same day causing the market to be closed for the day. Since then the market has stabilized to a steady pace. The well-known Mumbai Stock Market Index, Sensex, is now touching 15,000 level, which is almost 50 per cent higher than the level at the beginning of 2009. The following table illustrates this upwards movement of Sensex very well.

(Continued on next page)

Month	Open	High	Low	Close
January 2009	9,720.55	10,469.72	8,631.60	9,424.24
February 2009	9,340.37	9,724.87	8,619.22	8,891.61
March 2009	8,762.88	10,127.09	8,047.17	9,708.50
April 2009	9,745.77	11,492.10	9,546.29	11,403.25
May 2009	11,635.24	14,930.54	11,621.30	14,625.25
June 2009	14,746.51	15,257.30	14,599.43	15,103.55

Plotting of average Sensex over the first half of 2009 shows not just the rise of share market. It is indicative of the mood of the economy and the country as a whole.



Indian economy has been on a revival track in the past few months with all indicators turning positive. A stable and confident government will provide all the right inputs for the economy.

This issue of IndiaFood has projections of growth by various agencies. All the projections are dated prior to poll results. There has been a sea-change in outlook since then.

We at IndiaFood believe that the real India story has just started. While the world grapples with problems of recession and downturn, the elephant continues to move forward with firm and steady steps. It is a joy watching the elephant move. We are enjoying it. Hope you too enjoy it!

Anil Chawla

Food Industry Overview

- With emerging economies facing the possibility of "abrupt slowdowns", India's Gross Domestic Product growth rate could slip to as low as 4.3 per cent in 2009, said the OECD.
- Asian Development Bank has projected that India's economic growth will slow down to 5 per cent in 2009-10.
- After averaging at 8.8 per cent growth over the past four years, India's growth rate in 2009-10 is expected to slow down to 5.5 per cent mainly due to lower investment and declining external demand, the US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has said.
- India's economic growth rate is expected to fall drastically to 3.4 per cent this year, economic forecasting consultancy Oxford Economics has said.
- The median forecast of real GDP growth, according to the Reserve Bank of India's latest professional forecasters' survey, for 2009-2010 has been revised downwards to 5.7 per cent from 6 per cent.
- The country's economy is expected to grow by around 6 per cent in the current fiscal, even in the worst-case scenario of global recession prevailing till March 2010, according to Arvind Virmani, chief economic adviser in the Ministry of Finance. The growth projection matches with the Reserve Bank of India's estimate of 6 per cent expansion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2009-10. But it is higher than the median forecast of 5.7 per cent by professional forecasters, according to a survey done by the central bank.
- India's exports could fall or remain flat in 2009/10, as demand contracts in key markets, an industry survey showed. The survey by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) comes days after data showed India's exports fell for the fifth straight month in February.
- India's exports fell for a sixth straight month according to the latest provisional estimate for March, and are likely to extend the fall till September before recovering, commerce secretary G K Pillai said.
- India's exports have declined for the seventh consecutive month in April. Quick estimates available with the commerce ministry reveal that the country's exports dipped by 33 per cent to USD10.7 bio.
- After rising by more than 40 per cent during 2007-08, the country's exports of agricultural and processed food could witness a moderate growth in the last financial year. Decline in growth in exports is mainly due to demand destruction in the west because of the global financial crisis, appreciation of rupee against the dollar, ban on non-basmati rice export and recurring incidents of bird flu that hurts the poultry sector. The major decline in exports has been in floriculture, fruits and vegetables and pulses. "We are expected to achieve export growth rate of around 15 per cent during 2008-09", an Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority official told reporters.
- A health ministry notification, making it mandatory for all processed foods and beverage makers to carry nutritional facts in their product labels, has sent the small-scale and unorganised sectors into a huddle, while market leaders said that the "one-time cost" would not impact operating margins significantly. The ministry directive came to effect on March 19 and companies have been given three months more to fall in line or face imprisonment of up to six months. The new labels will have to declare ingredients, weight, total calories (energy value), amounts of protein, carbohydrate, fat, sodium (salt), sugars, dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals, and amount of trans fats in all foods and beverages. The notification also ruled that a fruit juice that does not contain a specified amount of fruit juice or pulp cannot be described as a fruit-based product.

(Food Industry Overview continued on next page)

Food Industry Overview (Continued)

- Global investors are expected to remain positive on India and bring USD 30 bio foreign direct investment into the world's second-fastest growing economy in 2009-10 even when the world economy is facing a severe credit squeeze. India is estimated to have received FDI of USD 27.5 bio in 2008-09, up from USD 24.57 bio in the previous year.
- West Bengal government, which is keen to spread organic cultivation, has resolved to set up one bio-village in each of the 341 blocks in the state in the next two years. The objective behind setting up bio-villages is to create role models for adaptation to organic farming. Already 75 bio-villages have been set up across the state up to 2007-08 since its launch in 2004-05.
- Talks on the ambitious India-Asean Free Trade Agreement (FTA) have received another setback due to the violent protests at the Asean summit venue in Thailand.
- India's leading commodity bourse, Multi-Commodity Exchange (MCX), which is struggling to increase volumes in agri futures, launched futures contracts in 10 farm commodities -- cashew kernel, coriander, crude palm oil, jeera, maize, mentha oil, potato, red chilli, rubber and sesame seed.
- The food-processing special economic zone in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, promoted by CCCL Infrastructure Ltd, has been notified by Government of India and the first unit is expected to be operational in three months. Spread over 522 acres, the SEZ would be a centre for processing marine foods, mangos, dry fruits, dry flowers and other export-oriented food products.
- Central government would soon come out with new guidelines on food safety to prevent adulteration and maintain standards and public health. Science based standards will form the basis of these guidelines, which will be regulated through the newly established Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Aquaculture

- Giving a major relief to Indian shrimp exporters, US Customs & Border Protection (CBP) has recently withdrawn the customs bond requirement imposed in 2004. According to a CBP notice, the enhanced bond requirement on shrimp items from India and Thailand stands fully withdrawn, effective April 1.
- The economic slowdown has had a major impact on seafood exports to one of the traditional markets, namely, Japan. The seafood export to Japan is likely to see a 20-25 per cent fall in quantity in the current financial year as compared to the previous year. In 2007-08, the exports to Japan stood at 67,373 tons valued at Rs. 12.2759 bio. In dollar terms, the exports stood at USD 305.49 mio.
- Saudi Arabia has lifted the ban imposed on the import of fish and other sea products including farm products from India. The ban was imposed on seafood items in a number of countries affected with cholera, a few years back. *Vibrio cholerae*, a type of pathogen, was detected in samples exported from India and other south Asian countries that led to the ban imposition.
- Seafood exports during the last fiscal (2008-09) are likely to surpass the performance of previous fiscal by at least 8-10 per cent in both volume and value, thanks to good response from non-traditional markets like China, Middle East and South East Asia, trade sources said. Dollar realization is also likely to match or marginally move up.
- Britain-based Food Standard Agency has issued a note advising importers that restrictions on crustacean imports from India, mainly farmed shrimp, are likely to be introduced shortly. The implications are that crustaceans will have to be accompanied by an all-clear test result for nitrofurans residue for the consignment to be automatically permitted into EU countries. Indian farmed shrimp consignments that are not accompanied by the test result would be detained at the border, pending laboratory checks.

Dairy, Meat & Poultry

- Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF), the apex cooperative organisation marketing the Amul brand of milk products, has registered a quantum growth of 28 per cent to reach a record turnover of Rs. 67.05 bio in the financial year 2008-09. This is an increase of nearly Rs. 14.50 bio in absolute terms over the previous year. GCMMF's turnover has almost doubled in the last three years. The unduplicated group turnover of GCMMF and its 13 dairy cooperatives has touched the Rs. 100-bio mark.
- Domestic dairy industry is expecting a revival in milk powder exports as the international prices have posted two consecutive monthly gains after a gap of five months. Forward contract prices of whole milk powder (WMP) in New Zealand have seen a correction of over 19 per cent since March. This is the first significant rise since November last year. Domestic price is still not competitive from a viewpoint of exports. Domestic milk powder price is higher by Rs. 5 a kg compared to the international price. But the revival in global prices is a positive signal and exports are expected to pick up. Domestic price is ruling in the range of Rs. 115-120 a kg and could move up further during the peak of summer season.
- Quick service restaurant chain Nirula's is looking at expanding its just launched standalone ice cream kiosk model and plans to open up to ten such outlets across India by September.
- The patent dispute over bird flu drug Tamiflu does not seem to settle down. Gilead Sciences, the manufacturer of the drug, is set to appeal the verdict of the Delhi patent office which rejected the patent application for Tamiflu (oseltamivir phosphate) while considering the pre-grant opposition of Mumbai-based Cipla last week. The patent office had recently rejected Gilead's patent application owing to lack of inventiveness in the drug.
- Britannia Industries, India's largest processed food company, has announced that it has entered into an agreement with Fonterra Brands (Mauritius Holding) Ltd, Mauritius, for acquiring the latter's 49 per cent Equity and Preference shareholding in Britannia New Zealand Foods Pvt Ltd (BNZF), their Joint Venture Company engaged in Dairy business. This acquisition is subject to Reserve Bank of India approval. With this acquisition, Britannia along with its wholly owned subsidiary will hold the entire Equity and Preference capital of BNZF.
- After parting ways with Britannia, French foods major Groupe Danone is chalking out a solo strategy for India push. The Paris-headquartered firm is considering launching its dairy products, baby foods and water brands in India.
- Eyeing a Rs. 40 bio turnover in the current fiscal, National Dairy Development Board subsidiary, Mother Dairy will invest Rs. 1 bio in augmenting its capacity in this year. Mother Dairy has clocked Rs. 32 bio turnover in the last fiscal.
- Oseltamivir or Tamiflu, the wonder drug that cures avian influenza as well as the new H1N1 flu, would be distributed in India only through the government machinery as experts have warned that its indiscriminate use can result in the virus developing resistance to the medicine.
- Kerala Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd., popularly known as Milma, the largest supplier of milk in Kerala, is planning to expand its product range. The federation, once again in the black after a gap of several years, will launch a series of new products like milk chocolates, sugar-free ice creams and yogurt. It will also revamp its existing products.

Alcoholic Beverages

- India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh (UP), is under the influence of liquor baron Gurdeep Singh aka Ponty Chadha. The Mayawati government has asked Mr. Chadha to manage the liquor business on its behalf, a first for the country. The 55-year-old businessman has been handed the reins of the wholesale liquor business in UP as well as control of retail vends in several districts. This means that the Ponty Chadha group, estimated to be worth USD1.5 bio, will decide what stock to buy, how much and at what price, from both domestic as well as multinational spirits companies. The Chadha group directly and indirectly influences the liquor trade in Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and has operations in Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh.
- Macallan Fine and Rare is bringing the largest and most expensive range of vintage single malt whiskies priced at Rs. 2.8 mio for a 700-ml bottle.
- SABMiller plans to take its new mild beer, Indus Pride overseas, while there is a possibility of making its global marquee brand, Miller beer in India itself.
- Dutch spirits major UTO has moved the Mumbai High Court seeking ownership of Mansion House and Savoy Club trademarks in India that are currently with its one-time ally Tilaknagar Industries (TIL). TIL has been operating Mansion House Brandy and Savoy Club gin and rum since the early 1980s, following a technical and licensing collaboration with UTO. In June 2008, UTO scrapped the agreement and issued letters to excise authorities stating that the brands belonged to them and not Tilaknagar.
- Beating the most optimistic projections of Kerala State Beverages Corporation, which had expected liquor sales in Kerala to gross Rs. 40 bio in 2008-09, actual sales touched Rs. 46.18 bio, signifying a 26 per cent growth over the Rs. 36.69 bio sales in 2007-08.
- Wilbur Ross, the master of distress buyouts, has emerged as a strong contender to acquire the troubled Cobra Beer that has been put on the block by its founder Karan Billimoria, according to two people close to the development.
- Pernod Ricard has breezed past Radico Khaitan to officially emerge as India's second-largest spirits marketer by volume. It is now the main rival to Vijay Mallya's spirits empire locally. The company was now reporting sales of around 14 mio cases annually, while Radico Khaitan reported sales of 13.2 mio cases during the just ended financial year.
- Belgium-based malt manufacturer Boortmalt Group has informed the Indian government that it has severed ties with its joint venture partner in the country Agya Holdings, and the existing JV, Agya Boortmalt cannot meet SABMiller's malt requirement in India. The Belgium company has dragged its Indian partner to the Company Law Board alleging misappropriation of funds. Hence, Boortmalt has sought the government approval to start a wholly-owned malt manufacturing company in India or acquire 100 per cent equity in an Indian company to ramp up its malt production capacity.
- United Spirits, India's largest spirits firm, owned by Vijay Mallya, reported a volume growth of 20 per cent in fiscal 2008-09, with sales of 90 mio cases.
- Private equity giant Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR) has initiated talks with Vijay Mallya-led United Spirits to pick up a significant minority stake in the world's third-largest liquor marketer — a development that would pit it against MNC liquor firms Diageo and Bacardi, which have also been eyeing a stake in the Indian liquor major.

(Alcoholic Beverages continued on next page)

Alcoholic Beverages (Continued)

- India's beer consumption vaulted 9-10 per cent during FY09 as economic slowdown did not reflect on sales as yet in a sector often linked directly to the economic well-being. And brewers expect the growth to hold up despite the economy projected to grow at a slower pace in the ongoing fiscal. But the domestic beer volume growth in the recently-concluded fiscal was lower compared with 14.8 per cent in FY08, with changes in the excise policy coupled with a deadlock between the state government and brewers over revision of prices in the largest beer guzzling state, Andhra Pradesh, keeping the growth under check.
- In what can be seen as a possible truce between the two largest wine producing states, the Maharashtra government has proposed to bring down excise duty being charged for wine obtained from outside the state, if Karnataka agrees to reciprocate.
- Liquor major Vijaya Mallya reaffirmed that talks with the world's largest liquor manufacturer Diageo for selling stake in his group company United Spirits Ltd are on track.
- Prices of low-end brands in India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) segment may go up by 15-20 per cent in the next couple of months. According to All India Distilleries Association (AIDA), molasses prices have increased to Rs. 6,500-7,000 per quintal which is about 75 per cent higher than the prevailing price last April. Molasses based alcohol accounts for over 90 per cent of the total liquor consumed in the country.
- Spirits major Radico Khaitan is shifting to a more premium-focused growth strategy and is hitting the liquor market with a super-premium brandy this month.
- Wine sales, which had grown 44 per cent in April 2008, went into negative territory in January 2009. Grape growers in Nashik district, which is home to 30 of the 58 wineries in the state of Maharashtra, have been hit the most due to this. Wine grapes are a long-life crop hence farmers cannot discontinue cultivation when rates fall in one season.
- Beer giant Heineken and Vijay Mallya's United Breweries (UB) have settled their differences over the former's role in the Indian company, more than a year after Heineken bought Scottish and Newcastle's stake and gained an entry into UB.
- Mohan Breweries & Distilleries, an associate of Tamil Nadu-based Mohan Meakins, is likely to snap its bottling pact with SABMiller, dealing a blow to the foreign brewer's chances of making headway in Tamil Nadu, the country's second-largest beer market. A SABMiller application for a greenfield brewery in Tamil Nadu has been pending with the state government for several years now.
- Cobra Indian Beer Pvt Ltd, the wholly owned subsidiary of the UK firm Cobra, has put in place a major restructuring of its operations on all fronts. The company has scaled down its presence from 24 States to 13, rationalised its product portfolio, and is in the process of re-negotiating all its contract brewing and distribution arrangements. It has also brought down its staff strength from 178 to 99.
- The US has said that it would like to join the consultations requested by the EU at the WTO challenging a local levy imposed by the Andhra Pradesh government on imported liquor. The EU had contended that the "assessment fee", which was 100 per cent for certain wines and 200 per cent for certain spirits, violated WTO rules as it was not applied on domestic liquor. As per WTO norms, any product brought in from another country has to be given national treatment which means that it has to be subjected to same regulations as the domestic ones.

Non-alcoholic Beverages

- US-based Tampico Beverages has entered the Indian market with an exclusive licensing agreement with the Maharashtra-based Mala's Fruits Products. It intends to produce and market Tampico's range in the country.
- This summer HUL is extending its OOH (Out of Home) business by setting up 'experiential kiosks' under the Lipton brand. Graduating from its existing vending machines, almost 50 such kiosks are planned this year which it would set up at corporate parks, railway stations and airports.
- Hisham Aalmir Trading has announced the launch of Cade and Spicy Cola drinks in the country beginning with Hyderabad.
- Parle Agro has added Grappo Fizz, a sparkling grape drink, to its existing portfolio. It can also be used as a mixer for cocktails or mocktails.
- Galla Foods has launched GTM Cocktail, a combination of mango, orange, apple, banana and papaya, and two mango blend variants under GTM Magic – Mango-Apple and Mango-Orange.
- India continues to bring cheer to the Coca-Cola company, which reported a 31 per cent unit case volume growth for the Indian market for the first quarter of 2009.
- Global beverages major Coca Cola said its USD 250-mio investments in India are on track and will not hold it back, notwithstanding the global economic downturn.
- Pepsico India plans to consolidate its bottling operations under one 'anchor bottler' — Ravi Jaipuria's RJ Corp — in a reversal of its previous strategy of buying out franchisee bottlers, as it looks to focus its energies on marketing and distribution operations.
- Ramesh Chauhan-owned Bisleri and Coca-Cola's Kinley are neck-and-neck in the Rs. 12-15-bio retail packaged water segment, according to market researcher AC Nielsen. Bisleri, however, claims it leads in the bulk segment, which contributes to over 50 per cent of its sales. Nielsen data shows Bisleri's retail share at 9.4 per cent, closely followed by Kinley with a 9.1 per cent share. PepsiCo's Aquafina, with an 8.6 per cent share, is at No 3. Nielsen tracks packaged water sales only for retail channels and not for the bulk segment.
- Dabur has launched a fruit beverage Real Burrst. Targeted at consumers in the cities, it has been priced at Rs. 65 for a litre and Rs. 15 for 200ml pack and will be available in four flavours — mixed fruit, apple, orange and mango.
- Pepsico India Holdings Pvt Ltd has approached the Supreme Court seeking permission to use the pictorial display of 'snow-capped mountain' on its packaged drinking water 'Aquafina'. Pepsico has challenged the Delhi High Court judgement that asked it to remove 'a squiggly cartoon like depiction of a mountain range' and also add the phrase 'as per BIS standard' below the phrase 'purity guaranteed' on the label within six months from the date of the impugned order. The time to incorporate the changes expires on May 19.

Tea

- Tata Tea and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) plan to acquire 51 per cent controlling stake in Russian packaging and distribution company Grand. Tata will have 33.2 per cent stake in Grand, while EBRD's share will be 17.8 per cent. The balance 49 per cent will remain with promoters of the Russian company.

(Tea continued on next page)

Tea (Continued)

- The country's tea import bill has almost doubled in January over 2008, according to the latest data of Tea Board. India could get teas for an average price of Rs. 69.64 a kg, around Rs. 2 lower than January 2008 encouraging more imports. The imported volume rose to 1.73 mio kg from 0.89 mio kg, an increase of over 94 per cent.
- India's tea import bill has shot up sharply in calendar 2009 over 2008. In the first two months of 2009, India imported 3.40 mio kg, compared with 1.89 mio kg in the earlier corresponding period. The average price of imported tea rose to Rs. 77.17 per kg from Rs. 66.83 per kg in the previous year.
- According to the latest information available with the Tea Board, India exported 14.87 mio kg of tea to Egypt in 2008 against 5.14 mio kg in 2007. Egypt paid an average price of Rs. 73.91 a kg against Rs. 64.55 in 2007.
- Tea prices in the new season are at a decade's high on fear of global shortage. Both the leading tea producers — India and Sri Lanka — are facing a fall in tea output. A 10 per cent crop loss in March has led prices of Indian teas to climb.
- DNV (Det Norske Veritas) has issued the first SINCERT accredited IFS certificate in India to the tea division of Pune-based Weikfield Foods Pvt Ltd.
- With tea companies progressively leaning towards tea bags as a means of value addition, the potential market for the tea bags industry is estimated to touch Rs. 4.41 bio by 2012-13. This has been projected by ICRA Management Consulting Services.
- Goodricke Group Ltd. is stepping up its presence in the value-added segment. The company, which now markets 6 mio kg tea through packets, plans to increase it to 10 mio kg within three years. The company has also firmed up plans to introduce ready-to-drink (RTD) teas in India shortly. RTD teas will be produced at the company's instant tea factory at Aibheel in North Bengal.
- The tea industry is showing signs of recovery despite the economic slowdown as the average auction price of tea has appreciated almost by Rs. 17. The average tea price in India for the first quarter of 2009 (January-March) stands at Rs. 81.89 per kg against Rs. 64.92 per kg for the corresponding period last year.
- In the first four months of this year, 25-28 per cent reduction in tea production has been reported from different agro-climatic zones of the Nilgiris, the largest tea producing district in the South.
- Tea exports during the last fiscal (2008-09) dropped marginally from 2007-08 while recording a significant increase in unit realization. The country exported 183.99 mio kg of tea in 2008-09 against 185.32 mio kg in the previous year. Meanwhile, unit realisation on a kilogram of tea exported increased by 21 per cent due to good global demand for the commodity. On an average, a kilogram of tea fetched Rs. 123.64 during 2008-09 as against Rs. 101.91 in 2007-08.
- Tea exports in the first three months of 2009 fell 24 per cent as a domestic output shortfall, firm internal demand and the global economic slowdown weighed on exports.
- Electronic auction of tea at Kolkata auctions is expected to kick off from May 19. To begin with, only dust variety of tea will be routed through the e-auction system, which will gradually pave the way for putting an end to the age-old outcry system in tea auctions.
- Faced with a supply shortage, tea companies have decided to raise basic selling prices by Rs. 20-40 a kg across all varieties with immediate effect, marking the first increase this year. If the supply constraint continues, they may raise prices further by Rs. 20 a kg next month (June).
- Himachal Pradesh's Kangra tea has been adversely impacted by the economic slowdown. The demand for Kangra tea has dropped 30 to 40 percent in the last few months.

Coffee

- Coffee growers are reportedly shifting to cultivation of robustas from arabicas. There seems to be no relief from white stem borer, which has affected arabica plants during the last few years. Growers are fed up of this and are, therefore, replanting the affected arabicas with robustas.
- Arabica coffee production this season to October will be the lowest in 14 years, but the eight-year high output of robusta is likely to help things. The board has projected arabica production at 79,500 tons, the lowest since an output of 79,000 tons in 1994-95, while robusta's at 182,300 tons, the highest since 196,800 tons were produced in 2000-1.
- Indian coffee exports have shown a significant drop so far this year on low demand said to have been caused by the current global economic slowdown. Provisional figures of coffee exports, including those of value-added products, stood at 55,812 tons between January and March 2009 against 70,162 tons in the year-ago period.
- Fresh & Honest (F&H) is about to introduce a range of high-end machines designed to brew coffee from capsules. Unlike traditional machines that are equipped to grind roasted beans fed into them, the new range is used with single-serve capsules, available in a variety of blends. F&H is a 100 per cent subsidiary of Italian coffee major Lavazza Group.
- Fresh & Honest Café is launching the Italian Lavazza Club brand of coffee at select outlets.

Food Service & Retailing

- India's retail sector will continue to slow down for another 12-18 months and a recovery will depend on the government's efforts to stimulate the economy, consulting firm KPMG said in a report.
- Pantaloon Retail is planning to spin off some of its business verticals such as Big Bazaar and Food Bazaar into separate companies.
- French retail chain Carrefour SA plans to open its first wholesale cash-and-carry outlet in India by the end of this year or by early 2010.
- Cooperative major National Agricultural and Cooperative Marketing Federation (Nafed) has drawn up plans to set up retail grocery outlets under a franchisee model. The company currently operates ten retail outlets under the name of Nafed Bazaar — eight in Delhi and two in Shimla. All of these are owned by the company. Nafed is also into institutional sales of grocery products to hospitals, hotels and government departments.
- Hit by the retail slump in major markets, many international brands are looking for a foothold in India. The brands planning an India entry include The Pizza Company and Spicchio Pizza (both pizza chains from Thailand), Coffee Club from Australia, Lolita Fashion, a Japanese brand, Revive Juice Bars from the UK, Mrs Fields Cookies and Jamba Juice from the US, and Jules- a French fashion brand. Other brands eyeing India include Alto Café, also from France, BBQ Chicken from Singapore, UAE-based Mikyajy, a cosmetics firm, and Nayomi, a lingerie brand from Saudi Arabia.
- Top-branded retail companies are betting big on private labels this year to overcome rising pressure on margins.
- Bharti Wal-Mart, the joint venture between Bharti Enterprises and the US-based Wal-Mart Stores Inc, will soon open its first cash-and-carry store in India. The joint venture's first store will come up in Amritsar. The launch was postponed after riots in Punjab following an attack on a Sikh temple in the Austrian capital Vienna.
- Moods Hospitality, which owns Chinese food chain Yo! China is looking for partially selling its stake.

Snacks

- Groupe Danone and the Wadias have ended their long standing dispute with the French foods' major set to fully exit their biscuit joint venture company, Britannia Industries. Groupe Danone will sell its entire 25.48 per cent stake in Britannia Industries to a Wadia Group company, Leila Lands, which indirectly holds a similar stake in the biscuit company.
- UK'S United Biscuits, the world's third-largest biscuit company, is exploring manufacturing and marketing opportunities to tap the Rs. 60-bio-plus organised biscuits market in India.
- Wrigley has launched Boomer Gumlairs, a new category within bubblegums. The Gumlairs reportedly combine the taste of a chocolate éclair with the fun of a bubblegum. It has a creamy centre, full of choco-paste, and costs Re 1 per piece.
- ITC has managed to corner nearly 11 per cent of the national biscuit market. Since the Rs. 90-bio biscuit market witnessed a growth of 20 per cent last year and is slated to sustain its growth this fiscal, ITC is looking at enhancing its biscuit manufacturing capacities by at least 15-20 per cent, primarily to manage supply chain costs and improve profitability.
- Britannia Industries has taken full control of the Bangalore-based bakery foods retailer Daily Bread. Britannia, which had acquired 50 per cent stake in June 2006, has now mopped up the remaining shares, taking over the operational reins fully from the original promoter Arjun Sekri.
- Britannia Industries is working on operational realignment aimed at streamlining the number of manufacturing locations as well as reworking its distribution strategy. This comes in the wake of Britannia's non-biscuit businesses such as breads, rusks, cakes and dairy gaining in size.

Culinary Items

- Swedish cosmetics major Oriflame is set to launch a range of wellness products like protein shakes in India this year to cater to high-income groups.
- Heinz India has decided to enter the breakfast cereal market by introducing Complian Nutri Bowl Muesli. Extending the equity of its largest malted food brand, Complian, Heinz intends building the Complian franchise with a host of products to cater to the health and nutrition needs of consumers in the near future. The company estimates the breakfast cereal market at Rs. 2 bio and growing at the rate of 30 per cent.
- FritoLay has announced the 'South Special' flavour of Kurkure snacks. Made with rice, corn and blended with spices, Kurkure now adds a flavour which includes a dash of curry leaves.
- Godrej Tyson Foods, the 49:51 joint venture company formed a year ago, is getting ready to unveil the US-based Tyson brand through the food services channel comprising institutional sales. Currently with two brands under its fold — Yummiez and Real Good Chicken (RGC) — Tyson is being introduced through a co-branding initiative with the existing two brands rather than a standalone one at the retail level. Having entered the ready-to-cook segment under its Yummiez brand, the integrated poultry company is now poised to make a foray into the nascent ready-to-eat category in the near future.
- Ever thought you can use a spoon and eat it too? Making this possible is Hyderabad-based startup BK Environmental Innovations Private Limited, which turned the concept into reality by baking a mix of sorghum, rice and wheat flour as an alternative to the environmentally-detrimental plastic and wood cutlery.
- Scandic Food India has announced its decision to re-launch its brand SIL. The company, a subsidiary of Danish food major Good Food Group, acquired the SIL brand from Marico in March 2008.

Sugar

- Sugar production in Uttar Pradesh declined to a new low at 4 mio ton this season. In 2006-07 and 2007-08, the production stood at 8.5 mio tons and 7.4 mio tons respectively.
- Maharashtra, the biggest sugar producer in the country, has produced 4.55 mio tons as on March 31, compared to 7.24 mio tons a year ago.
- With crushing of cane by sugar mills almost coming to an end, sugar production is now estimated about 45 per cent lower at 14.2 mio tons during the current season ending September compared with last year's 26.4 mio tons.
- Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), the apex body of the private sector mills in India, has revised sugar output estimate for the current season (October-September) by 5 per cent to 14.7 mio tons. India's output is not enough to meet the domestic demand of 23 mio tons.
- Bajaj Hindusthan chairman Shishir Bajaj is scaling up his equity holding in the country's largest sugar company by nearly 5 per cent through subscription of preferential warrants. Post-conversion of the warrants, shareholding in control of Shishir Bajaj will be over 51 per cent.
- Madras Cements Ltd will float a subsidiary company to set up an integrated sugar plant in Tamil Nadu. Madras Sugars Ltd, will set up a mill with a capacity to crush 5,000 tons of sugarcane a day along with a cogeneration facility and a distillery.
- Sugar prices may rise by 20 per cent in the next five months, even though there is a marginal fall in March, as supply would be tight, a report by investment banker Bank of America-Merrill Lynch said.
- "Sugar prices will start rising again from June 2009 as rapid depletion of inventories will build tremendous upward pressure on them", Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) said.
- The government has allowed duty-free imports of raw sugar until August 1 to be processed and sold domestically to meet any shortage. Sugar producers are seeking an extension as a shortfall in cane supplies may persist in the new season starting October 1.
- India exported over 0.1 mio tons of sugar in the current season even as the government has allowed imports of 1 mio tons at zero-duty to increase domestic availability.

Oils

- A conducive weather and better irrigation coverage helped the country to harvest 9.58 mio tons of oilseeds in the 2008-09 Rabi season (harvesting in Feb-Apr) — 18 per cent higher than 8.1 mio tons in the previous season.
- India, a net exporter of sesame seed, imported about 4000 tons of the plant seed from Ethiopia between November last year and January to take the benefit of prevailing low prices in the African country.
- India's vegetable oils import may surge by 35 per cent to 8.5 mio tons in the 2008-09 season, as slump in global prices coupled with zero import duty are prompting local traders to purchase on a large scale from overseas markets.
- Overall import of vegetable oils, including edible and non-edible oil, has increased by 59 per cent at 3.592 mio tons during five months of the current season (November 2008 to March 2009) from 2.264 mio tons for the same period last year.

(Oils continued on next page)

Oils (Continued)

- Adani Wilmar, a Rs. 60 bio company with brand Fortune, plans to invest Rs. 1 bio to double capacity of its port-based refinery unit in Haldia to 1,600 tons per day by December 2009. The investment includes the land acquisition cost.
- Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia and Thailand remained top export destinations for Indian soymeal last fiscal. India's soymeal exports grew 6.5 per cent to nearly 4.2 mio tons in the last financial year.
- Hit by the global economic recession, oilmeals exports dipped 45 per cent to 1.352 mio tons in the fourth quarter of the 2008-09 financial year, against 2.456 mio tons during the same period a year ago.
- Despite facing a downturn in demand and consequently in prices since October 2008, India's earning from oilmeal exports increased 17 per cent to Rs. 83.41 bio in 2008-09 even on a lower export volume. A firm trend in global markets during the first half of the FY09 has helped India beat the impact of recession on oilmeal exports.
- The Rs. 50-bio vanaspati (hydrogenated vegetable oil) industry is facing an enemy within. Refined palm stearin, a non-edible by-product of crude palm oil, is being used as an adulterant in cheap vanaspati, denting the business of genuine manufacturers.
- Sunflower oil, considered among the healthiest of edible oils, has begun to lose its premium over soya and palmolein with global prices shooting up of late for the latter two. Prices of palmolein and soya oil have almost levelled with sunflower oil, owing significantly to a phenomenal demand from India.
- For the first time in the recent years, the total export of castor oil has crossed 0.3 mio tons mark in financial year 2008-09. Total export increased to 0.308 mio tons in 2008-09 from 0.176 mio tons in 2007-08, up by 74 per cent thanks to good buying from China.
- The relentless rise in mercury level across Gujarat and Rajasthan has left castorseed crop high and dry. Badly affected by heat waves in those two major castor seed producing states during February and March, total castorseed production in the country is set to dip finally to 0.98 mio tons from the five-month old estimate of 1.1 mio tons.
- Indian Oilseeds and Produce Export Promotional Council, earlier known as Indian Oilseeds & Produce Exporters Association, has sounded a red alert to groundnut exporters that EU may ban groundnut imports from India on account of presence of aflatoxin (a kind of fungi).
- India's soybean output may drop to 8.2 mio tons in the year ending September 2009, down more than a fifth from early estimates, as lower rainfall trimmed yields in producing areas.
- Bhaskar Exxoils Ltd is planning to take land on lease in Indonesia or Philippines for palm plantation to source up to one mio ton of oil in 5-7 years.
- Sanwaria Agro Oils plans to invest Rs. 1.25 bio for producing value-added products such as soya flour (200 tons a day), soya nuggets (100 tons a day) and vanaspati (50 tons a day). It will also set up a 150 tons a day palm oil refining unit, besides expanding its solvent extraction and refining capacity by 500 tons a day to 3,750 tpd.
- The country's oilseeds and vegetable oil industry is undergoing a consolidation and expansion phase as big players try to build capacity to lower operational costs and better margins. Firms like Adani Enterprises, Ruchi Soya Industries, unlisted Bhaskar Exxoils, KS Oils and Gokul Refoils & Solvent are ramping up crushing and refining capacity through green-field projects or buyouts.

Food Additives

- Bhavnagar (Gujarat) based CSMCRI (Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute) has now developed a 'super-salt' that has 99.5 per cent purity, exceptional whiteness and helps salt manufacturers cut production costs by 25 per cent. Not only have Indian manufacturers like Grasim and DCW licensed this technology, a firm from Kenya has also evinced interest in this common salt. The technology could revolutionise salt production in India, which is the third largest producer of the salt in the world, after the US and China. India's annual salt production is around 17-19 mio tons, of which 5 mio tons is consumed as edible salt, while 8.5 mio tons is used by various industries as raw material and the balance exported.
- Rajasthan guar acreage is likely to fall 9.74 per cent in 2009-10 crop year. Guar acreage is seen at 2.5 mio hectares this year down from 2.77 mio hectares last year. Guar is primarily a rain fed crop and its crop year is from June to May.

Spices & Flavors

- Continuing drought situation in cardamom producing centers of Idukki in Kerala and Bodinayakanore area of Tamil Nadu has shattered farmers' hopes about the fresh crop. It is almost certain that next crop season will be delayed by 1-2 months and harvesting will take place only by August. According to estimates by experts and growers, a 30 per cent drop in production is most likely in the 2009-10 season.
- Chhindwara Spices Park, the country's first such park, is expected to add flavor to Madhya Pradesh's spice export business. The park was inaugurated on February 17. The park is expected to start garlic dehydration and processing unit from May. But the unit is unlikely to become fully operational before next year. The park is first among seven such parks planned by Spices Board to be set up in Kerala, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- The country's turmeric production for the current season is expected to fall by around 10 per cent.
- Exports of turmeric in 2008-09, despite the global economic recession coupled with higher prices of the commodity consequent to short supply, are expected to cross the set target of 50,000 tons in quantity and Rs. 1.60 bio in value.
- Karnataka is set to oust Kerala from the top spot in pepper production this year. Harvesting of the new crop is at its peak in the Coorg region of Karnataka. The latest estimates suggest that 28,000-30,000 tons of pepper is expected from the state — around 12,000 tons higher than last year. On the other hand, a 40 per cent output loss in Kerala on the back of unfavorable weather conditions has led to an overall production of only 15,000 tons in the state. Tamil Nadu is the third main pepper producer.
- European Commission has rejected a consignment of curry powder from India which was found to have harmful coloring agent, methyl yellow.
- India is likely to become a net importer of black pepper this financial year as pricing pattern in domestic and global markets favors large-scale imports. Since January, Indian and global prices, especially those in Vietnam, have a huge gap that tempt value-adding industries to opt for import route.

Foodgrains

- The prices of Pusa 1121 variety paddy, the latest entrant into the elite basmati club, have shot up by about 40 per cent in the domestic market on increased export demand from the Middle East. The price surged to Rs. 2,500 a quintal in the domestic market in first week of April from Rs. 1,800 a quintal 10 days ago.
- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) is likely to receive geographical indications (GI) for basmati in next two months, which will help the agency to register it in Europe.
- There is good news for rice farmers in flood-prone Indian states and also in Bangladesh. Their paddy fields, submerged even for 15 days in flood waters will have a second life, if they plant the new rice variety, 'Swarna-Sub1'. The 'Sub1' is the gene that empowers paddy to lie dormant during floods and rise up more vigorously when the water recedes. Scientists of International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines created the new rice by using the gene that gives flood-tolerance quality to a low-yielding variety in Orissa.
- India's barley exports in the year ending March 2010 is seen down 50 per cent at 100,000 tons on higher supplies from rival Ukraine.
- The government will import 37,000 tons of pulses from Myanmar on a government-to-government basis and the consignment will arrive at Indian ports in May.
- Following rejection of six consignments of basmati rice by US on the ground that they contain 'filth', India has issued an advisory to exporters asking them to fulfill the quality norms and meet other procedural demands.
- Basmati rice cultivation is finding more takers in Kerala. Despite several difficulties like low yield and lack of sufficient specialized mills to process the rice what has attracted the farmers to Basmati variety is the higher price.
- The country's foodgrain production in the crop year ending June 30 is now expected to be around 229.85 mio tons, up 0.9 per cent from an earlier estimate announced in February largely due to record increase in rice harvest.
- Higher minimum export price has dented overseas sale of Indian basmati rice marginally by 3 per cent to 1.149 mio tons during 2008-09 fiscal, compared to 1.183 mio tons in the year-ago period. Basmati rice exports from India suffered due to an increase in minimum export price to USD1,200 a ton, which not only made the aromatic rice expensive but also uncompetitive in the global market.

Fruits & Vegetables

- Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Kerala State Cashew Development Corporation (KSCDC) have announced a tie-up to retail cashew products. Under the agreement, cashew nuts and cashew-based products from KSCDC will be sold at HPCL's fuel stations across the country.
- India will soon adopt an Israeli technology to rejuvenate mango trees that will increase the productivity of the crop. National Horticultural Board has placed orders for two Israeli machines, Canopy Management Pruning Machine, which can mechanically rejuvenate trees in large areas.

(Fruits & Vegetables continued on next page)

Fruits & Vegetables (Continued)

- India has emerged as the leading importer of Californian almonds due to rising consumption of the dry fruit in the country. Almond exports to India stood at 30,000 tons till February in FY'09. The US accounts for 80 per cent of India's almond imports and California is the world's leading almond producer, accounting for about 80 per cent of the global production of the dry fruit.
- Onion exports from India have recorded over 50 per cent jump in 2008-09 on rising demand from neighboring countries. India exported 1.67 mio tons of onion in 2008-09, up 51.7 per cent from 1.10 mio tons in 2007-08. The value of export in 2008-09 was Rs. 18.16 bio, up 41.3 per cent from Rs. 12.85 bio in the previous year. Exports were a little over 20 per cent of the country's total onion output.
- Cashew kernel exports from the country have declined 5.4 per cent to 108,131 tons for the year ended March 2009 compared to the previous year. In value terms, however, the exports have gone up by 29 per cent to Rs. 29.50 bio compared to the last year, the highest ever performance by the commodity. The rise in value was mainly due to a 36 per cent rise in the unit value realization at Rs. 272.8 per kg, as a result of the appreciation of dollar against the rupee in international market.
- Mango exporters have started on a good note, shipping nearly 60 per cent higher fruit to the US alone in the first month of the current season, even as the production of the delicious fruit is estimated to have declined. Mango exports to the US stood at 31.7 tons in April this year, compared to around 20 tons in the corresponding period last year.
- Mother Dairy's fruit and vegetable retailing arm, marketed under the Safal brand, is implementing a Rs. 200 mio makeover of all its stores. Around 100 Safal stores are already donning a new look and the rest will be made over by the end of this year.
- Litchi production is likely to dip by 20 per cent from the normal 0.42 mio ton to around 0.336 mio tons this year due to adverse weather conditions in the growing regions.
- Grapes export to Europe, the major destination for the fruit, declined by 6 per cent to 38,688 tons in 2009 season due to lower demand in the region. The country had shipped 41,139 tons of grapes in 2008 season.
- Mahindra Shubhlabh Services Ltd, a Mahindra Group company, has registered 9.25 per cent rise in export of grapes during the 2008-09 (November-April grape season) as compared to that of last year, earning foreign currency amounting to Rs. 250 mio.

Major Companies

- Nestle India wants to set up a food and beverage manufacturing unit in Himachal Pradesh with an investment of about Rs. 4 bio.
- ITC Foods is gradually moving out of low-margin food products and will focus on building a more profitable portfolio, under pressure from an ultimatum set by its parent to turn profitable. Cigarettes-to-hotels conglomerate ITC has warned its foods division that it will withdraw financial support unless it turns profitable within a specified period. ITC's foods division, which owns top-selling brands such as Aashirvaad Atta, Sunfeast biscuits, Bingo snacks and confectionery items such as Mint-O and Candyman, has revenues of Rs. 8-10 bio, but is yet to report operating profits.

Biotech

- India's apex court has sought clarifications from three Union ministries – agriculture, department of biotechnology (under ministry of science and technology) and environment and forests – about government's regulatory process for genetically modified (GM) crops and its implementation. The apex court also sought clarifications from US seed multinational, Monsanto's Indian partner, Mahyco.
- Dr M. Vidyasagar, Executive Vice-President, Tata Consultancy Services, is the new President of ABLE (Association for Biotechnology-led Enterprises), the biotechnology industry association. He along with the new office-bearers will hold office for the next three years until 2012.
- Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company Ltd (Mahyco) is to license to other seed-growing companies the technology for the pest-resistant genetically modified Bt brinjal.
- Bt brinjal, the country's first genetically modified (GM) edible product, is in the final stage of getting a clearance from the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), the biotechnology regulatory body of the Government of India.
- Seed company Mahyco has said it is not averse to go in for labelling (of Bt brinjal) should the law of the land require it. Anti-GM food activists have been demanding that there should be a legislation mandating labelling of the agricultural produce telling the consumers whether it is a GM product or not.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with President and the first batch of 19 cabinet ministers after swearing-in on 22 May 2009.

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