

Dr Ajit Kumar

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India is largest producer, consumer of food products



As Vice-Chancellor of the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) Dr Ajit Kumar has provided an effective leadership to the NIFTEM and made it a premier institute in short of span of time. Dr Ajit Kumar talks to NuFFooDS Spectrum about NIFTE's vision, career opportunities to food technologist and managers and the growth of the food processing sector.

How NIFTEM was set up?

Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) conceptualised the idea of setting up NIFTEM. It put up the proposal before the cabinet and it was approved in 2006. The ministry coined the idea and drafted the proposal on the backdrop of lack of advanced technology in farming and processed food sector then. There was no skilled human resources, industry did not have a training centre to train people and develop skilled personnel and research was also lacking. All these factors together resulted in MoFPI thinking of setting up an institute to overcome these problems. NIFTEM is conceived as an international centre of excellence and apex world class centre of global standards in food science technology and management.

What career opportunities students passing out from NIFTEM have?

Food is one such area where opportunities will always grow. This you can see from the fact that all our M Tech students of first two batches have got placements in prominent food industries. In addition to that all 115 students of the first batch of B Tech have been sent on internship training in reputed food processing industries for six months' period. We have achieved this success due to our innovative content of academic programme as well as due to our association with the industries. We have more than 80 industries as members of NIFTEM industry forum. They visit us regularly and our faculty also visit them with regular interval. In addition our corporate resource division, which looks after placement, makes advance planning.

What is the innovative component of the academic programme?

There are many innovative components. The academic programme and research is driven by requirements of industry. But, along with innovative components in the academic courses, at NIFTEM we run a unique village adoption programme for students to understand rural economy and to link rural food sector to mainstream economy.

It is a unique approach to take food processing technologies and NIFTEM's message to developed villages. Under this programme students' groups are formed with one teacher for each group. Each group adopts a village and works for its development. Students have to stay in that village two times a year spending 10 to 12 days each time. In this manner we have adopted 39 villages across 19 states in the country since 2012.

What is the prospect of food processing industry?

India is the largest producer and consumer of food products. Food processing industry is one of the largest industries in India and is ranked fifth in terms of production, consumption and export. It is a gold mine for the country. It will remain gold mine in future also. This is one sector whose demand will never go down. Demand will increase day by day with increasing population, with more value added food products, because of the larger income earned by youth, people, working women. As the buying capacity of young generation continues to improve, the demand for good quality food is also on the rise.

If you look at the data, even when there was worldwide recession four to five years ago, the core sectors were growing at 1 or 1.5%. At that time also this sector was growing at 13%. Even today when the core sectors are growing at 3 to 4%, this sector is growing at around 10%. This sector has no limits. More the population, more the demand for food, more the growth for the industry. [NS](#)

Milind Kokje