

Remarks by Ambassador at the Webinar on Export of Indian Agro Products to Kuwait, November 18, 2021

Good afternoon to you all.

Shri Prashant Girbane, DG MCCIA, Shri Umeshchandra Sarangi, our esteemed guest speakers from Kuwait, importers and exporters as well as everyone who has joined us virtually,

It gives me great pleasure, to address you all today and welcome you to today's webinar for the promotion of Indian Agro Products exports to Kuwait.

Today we are exploring prospects for enhancing exchange in the agricultural sector between India and Kuwait. Today's event is being organised in association with the Maratha Chamber of Commerce Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA) and its Agriculture Export Promotion Cell.

Agriculture continues to be the bedrock of the robust Indian economy. Agriculture and its allied sectors, is the largest livelihood provider in India. In the past, Indian agriculture and allied activities have witnessed a green revolution, a white revolution, a yellow revolution as well as a blue revolution, and are now marching forward robustly towards sustainable agriculture, especially through environmentally sustainable technologies such as soil conservation, sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity protection.

India and Kuwait share a warm and close relationship that has been spanning for centuries. Kuwait is part of our extended neighbourhood. Our trade links go back to centuries when wooden ships from Kuwait would sail with Dates and Pearls and bring back all kinds of items- rice, clothes, handicrafts, fruits and vegetables. India has been and continues to be a major source of food grains and other produce, helping ensure food security in Kuwait. Kuwait, is an important partner in securing India's energy needs. The two countries are among each other's major trading partners. Geographic proximity, historical trade links, cultural affinities, people to people connect and growing cooperation in key areas of mutual interest, including energy security, trade and investment, infrastructure development projects, petrochemicals and education continue to strengthen and broaden our longstanding partnership, with immense potential in developing our mutually beneficial partnership.

Looking at the presence of Indian agricultural products in Kuwait, nearly 50% of cereals come from India! Apart from this more than 15% of vegetables, 18% of fish and around 10% of fruit comes from India! Our diverse climate helps in ensuring availability of all varieties of fresh fruits & vegetables across seasons.

We rank second in fruits and vegetables production in the world. Last year, India produced 99.07 million metric tonnes of fruits and 191.77 million metric tonnes of vegetables. India is the top producer of milk, pulses, ginger and the second largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, and groundnut in the world. Additionally, India also leads in the production of spices, fish, poultry, livestock and plantation crops globally. We also have the largest number of organic farmers in the world!

As such, there is vast scope for India to ably contribute further to all food security needs of Kuwait and other countries in the region. Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, with his vision of promoting exports of Indian products abroad, has for the first time this year set up a target of 400 billion US Dollars for all exports from India in the current financial year. Under this innovative mission, each country is given a target and we here in Kuwait, are also working to achieve the target of export of 1.6 billion USD. A major part of this would cover agricultural products.

Today morning in his keynote address at the Sydney Dialogue Hon'ble Prime Minister spoke about the massive digital transformation that India is witnessing including in the Agriculture sector. This will offer new opportunities for Indian exporters for smooth and enhanced export to countries like Kuwait.

Dear Friends,

This year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of establishment of our diplomatic relations. As part of these celebrations, despite the many challenges posed by Covid 19 pandemic, we in the Embassy along with our Indian Business Network and other partners from India and Kuwait conducted several business events involving stakeholders from India as well as Kuwait in food sectors, including a VBSM on Marine Products in January this year, a VBSM for import of Indian Mangoes into Kuwait in April as well as the hugely successful Made in India exhibition in September. I also recall the successful Indian Handicrafts week and the Indian Herbal products week that attracted huge response in Kuwait this year.

It is my pleasure to inform you that these interactions between concerned stakeholders for particular products or sectors have been immensely successful and contributed in promotion of our exports. Post the VBSM for Marine Products, we have seen considerable growth in Indian exports to Kuwait. Export of Indian Marine products have increased from about USD 30 million in FY 2019-20 to USD 40 million in FY 2020-21!

At the beginning of the Mango season this year, in the VBSM for mangoes, I stated that I my ardent wish is to ensure that every Kuwaiti family here and every Indian and foreigner in Kuwait enjoy Indian mango during this anniversary year. The interactions between the importers and exporters in the VBSM were highly successful and we saw a huge consignment of Indian Banganapalle mangoes being brought to Kuwait and enjoyed by all!

It is on similar lines that we aim to work in the several sectors in the Food industry such as Tea, Coffee, Wheat, Dairy products and processed foods in the coming months. Our endeavour is to make it known to all producers in India that Kuwait with its proximity, with its special relationship either India and the fact that over a million Indians live here, offers an ideal destination for their agricultural produce. We want you to forge direct business connections with Kuwaiti partners and not route your produce through a third country, so that costs and time taken is less. It would be a win- win situation for all, exporters, importers and consumers.

Dear friends,

I wish every success to today's conference, and hope that the participants form useful contacts with each other, and help promote the trade between India and Kuwait in coming days. We, at the Embassy, particularly our Commercial Section, is always available for any help you need. I commend the Commerce Section for this initiative of connecting directly with farmers and exporters, and orienting with regional, more deeply connected Chambers of Commerce which will help us maximize the gains of our outreach and will also benefit our farmers, exporters and customers.

Thank you and best wishes to all.