

# Preservation and promotion and value addition of coastal food heritage of India: A strategy for farmer and entrepreneurs



**ICAR – Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute**  
(Indian Council of Agricultural Research)  
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(An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institute)

- gardens
- Konkan Mango Corridor: orchard experiences + mango tasting
- Udupi–Mangaluru Temple Cuisine Route: traditional meals + cultural visits

## Strengthen Packaging & Storytelling to Increase Price

For high-value sales—especially exports and premium Indian markets—packaging is crucial.

- What farmers, SHGs, FPOs and NGOs can do:
- Use eco-friendly pouches/boxes (coconut-leaf boxes, kraft paper, glass jars)
  - Add short stories: “Made by coastal women of \_\_\_ district”, “Traditional recipe from \_\_\_ village”, etc.
  - Include QR codes showing the farms, processors, coastline and traditional methods
  - Use simple certification marks (FSSAI, GI, MSME, FPO logo)
  - Ensure neat labelling: ingredients, district name, contact, expiry

## Value Addition: A Practical Roadmap for Coastal Farmers & Rural Entrepreneurs

Value addition converts raw produce into market-ready food products that fetch higher prices. It also creates more village-level jobs.

## High-Potential RTE/RTC Products for Coastal Districts

- Cashew Farmers:
- Spiced cashew
  - Pepper-lime cashew
  - Cashew butter
  - Cashew-based protein bars

- Coconut Growers:
- Coconut chips
  - Coconut sugar
  - Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO)
  - Coconut milk powder

- Fisherfolk & Marine SHGs:
- Dry fish chips
  - Shrimp pickle
  - Ready-to-cook fish curry paste
  - Fermented fish chutneys

- Mango Growers:
- Dried mango slices
  - Freeze-dried mango
  - Mango pulp sachets

- Tapioca Farmers:
- Tapioca chips
  - Instant tapioca meal mixes

- Millet Farmers (coastal tribal belts):
- Ragi noodles
  - Millet dosa mixes
  - Millet cookies

- Palm/Date Producers:
- Palm sugar crystals
  - Palm caramel syrup
  - Natural sweetener blocks

Table 2. Value-Added Products Suitable for Export / Premium Urban Markets

Product Cluster	Value-Added Variant	Best Market Angle
Cashew	Peri-peri cashew, cashew butter	Premium snack, vegan protein
Coconut	Chips, coconut powder	Wellness + plant-based diet
Marine	Fish curry base, dry fish chips	Authentic coastal cuisine
Mango	GI Alphonso/ Kesar pulp	Gourmet tropical flavour
Palm Jaggery	Organic palm sugar	Natural sweetener trend
Millet	Millet cookies, noodles	Smart food & health diets

## Technology & Support Opportunities for Farmers & FPOs

- PM-FME Scheme: 35% credit-linked subsidy for small food processing units
- Loans can support:
  - roasting units,
  - pulping machines,
  - dryers,
  - cold storage,
  - freeze-drying machines,
  - coconut deshelling tools,
  - fish processing units,
  - packaging equipment.

## A Simple Three-Part Strategy for Farmers & Rural Enterprises

- 1. Preserve**
  - Record traditional coastal food skills through videos and community workshops
  - Start small village museums/heritage rooms showcasing tools, recipes, and traditional methods
  - Connect farmers with chefs to revive old recipes
  - Promote climate-resilient crops like coconut, cashew, jackfruit, millets, date palm
- 2. Promote**
  - Conduct village-to-district coastal food festivals
  - Display products in airport souvenir shops, beach markets, and hotels
  - Use GI tags and district identity kits in all packaging
- 3. Add Value**
  - Develop RTE/RTC products from traditional foods
  - Invest in packaging that increases shelf life
  - Use QR codes to prove authenticity
  - Create export partnerships through APEDA, MSME, and private distributors

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India's vast coastline stretching from Gujarat in the west-to-West Bengal in east comprises of 9 states and two union territories forms one of the most vibrant food heritage zones in the world. Coastal communities have, for centuries, nurtured unique food traditions shaped by their proximity to the sea, estuaries, lagoons, mangrove belts, coconut groves, spice gardens, millets, and fruit orchards.

Today, these precious food traditions face challenges from industrial homogenization, climate pressure, and loss of traditional skills. Yet, they also present enormous opportunities. Through the One District One Product (ODOP) framework and modern value-addition avenues, India can preserve this culinary heritage while empowering farmers, fisherfolk, SHGs, women-led microenterprises, and young entrepreneurs.

Coastal Food Heritage: A Treasure at Risk and an Opportunity to Harness

- Coastal India is home to distinctive food systems:**
- **Cashew belts** of Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, and Karnataka
  - **Coconut landscapes** of Konaseema, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu
  - **Marine-rich fisheries** of Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry
  - **Mango corridors** of Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Navsari, and Gir Somnath
  - **Millet-based diets** of Vizianagaram, Thane, and Palghar
  - **Palm jaggery traditions** of Thoothukudi
  - **Date palm culture** of Kachchh
  - **Rice, tapioca, spice, and jackfruit cultures** of Kerala and the Konkan region

These foods once traveled the world through ancient Roman, Arab, African, and Southeast Asian trade routes. They still hold immense potential for cultural diplomacy, wellness markets, and premium exports.

Figure 1. Kholla Chilli - GI Registered from Goa



**The ODOP Framework: A Tool for Cultural Preservation and Economic Growth:**

- The ODOP initiative recognizes district-level food identity and provides a pipeline for:
- **Preservation:** Documentation of traditional processing, recipes, crafts, and community skills
  - **Promotion:** Branding, festivals, culinary tourism, GI tagging, product storytelling
  - **Value Addition:** Introducing RTE/RTC variants, modern processing units, premium packaging
  - **Market Linkages:** Linking microenterprises to domestic and global markets
  - **Entrepreneurship:** Training farmers, SHGs, and youth to build rural food businesses

**Coastal India's ODOP Food Basket**

Table 1. Coastal Food Heritage Categories and Selected ODOP Districts

Heritage Category	Example Districts	Traditional Strength
Cashew	Srikakulam, Kollam, Kasaragod	Hand-peeling, roasting, premium kernels
Coconut	Konaseema, Kozhikode, Goa, Thanjavur	Oil extraction, coconut milk, coir foods
Marine/Fish	Udupi, Balasore, Karaikal, Mumbai	Dry fish craft, curry pastes, seafood pickles
Mango	Ratnagiri, Gir Somnath, Navsari	GI-rich Alphonso & Kesar flavours
Tapioca/Rice	Kerala, TN coastal belts	Chips, flakes, steamed rice cuisines
Palm & Date	Thoothukudi, Kachchh	Palm jaggery, date syrup
Millets	Vizianagaram, Thane, Palghar	Coastal tribal food heritage

**Reasons to preserve coastal food heritage**

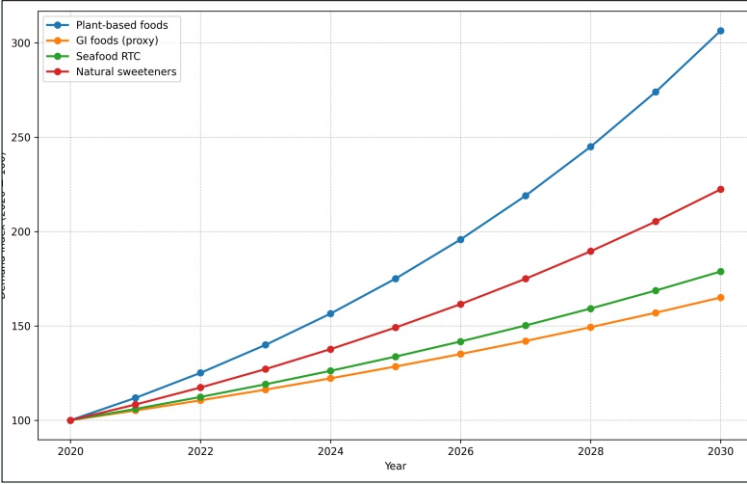
**Cultural Significance**  
Traditional practices—such as sun-drying fish, roasting cashew in traditional ovens, tapping coconut flower nectar, slow-cooking mango pulp, fermenting rice products—are disappearing. Preserving them safeguards intangible cultural heritage.

**Nutritional & Ecological Resilience**  
Coastal foods like coconut, ragi, tapioca, jackfruit, and marine products are nutrient-rich, climate-resilient, and suited to changing coastal environments.

**Livelihood Security**  
Millions of coastal families depend on these value chains. Preserving them ensures stable income and employment.

- Global Market Alignment**  
The world is embracing:
- plant-based diets,
  - natural sweeteners,
  - clean-label snacks,
  - GI-protected fruits,
  - traditional ethnic foods,
  - marine proteins, and
  - millet-based health foods.

Figure 2. Global Market Demand Trend (Plant-based, GI foods, Seafood RTC, Natural Sweeteners)



**Promotion Strategies:**

**Build a Strong District-Level Food Identity**

Every coastal district has a unique food story. Farmers and FPOs can use this identity to attract buyers and build consumer trust.

- What you can do:**
- Create simple “District Identity Kits” for your product (coconut, cashew, fish, mango, millet, palm jaggery etc.). This can be done by FPOs, NGOs or local youth groups. These kits should include:
    - + A small logo representing the district's food identity
    - + A short origin story (2–3 sentences about tradition, geography and community)
    - + A GI symbol (if the product already has a GI tag)
    - + A QR code linking to videos or photos showing farmers, traditional methods, coastal area, and the story behind the product

**Use GI Tags to Increase Profit and Protect Heritage**  
A Geographical Indication (GI) ensures that only genuine products from a region can use the name. Some famous GI examples:

- Ratnagiri Alphonso Mango
- Gir Kesar Mango
- Goa Bebinca
- Konkan Cashew

**Organise “Coastal Food Festivals” Led by FPOs and SHGs**  
These festivals are powerful tools to increase visibility and local pride. Farmers can directly interact with buyers, chefs, tourists, hotels, and exporters.

- Activities you can showcase:
- Live cashew roasting
  - Dry fish cleaning and sun-curing demonstrations
  - Coconut sweets, burfi, oil extraction, chips
  - Mango desserts, pulp-tasting
  - Tapioca snacks, steamed dishes
  - Millet-based coastal meals

- Where to organise:
- Beach tourism spots
  - District Collectorate grounds
  - Local fairs or temple festivals
  - Airports, railway stations
  - State-level food exhibitions

Who should lead:  
FPOs, SHGs, NGOs, college groups, RSETIs, and District Industries Centres.

**Create Coastal Culinary Tourism Routes**  
Farmers and FPOs can partner with tourism departments to develop “food experience circuits”.

- Ideas for tourism-based income:
- Goa Coconut–Cashew Trail: farm tours + tasting
  - Konaseema Coconut Cultural Route: coastal cuisine + grove visits
  - Malabar Seafood & Spice Trail: cooking demos + spice