

Industry Roundtable on “Strengths & Opportunities in Food Processing Sector in Andhra Pradesh”



UAE-India Business Council (UIBC) in partnership with Government of Andhra Pradesh organized an industry roundtable on “Strengths & Opportunities in Food Processing Sector in Andhra Pradesh” on 8th April 2021. The virtual roundtable was organised for enhancing the bilateral cooperation between the UAE and India as well as to understand and explore the opportunities available in the food processing sector in Andhra Pradesh.

The event was attended and addressed by H.E. Dr. Ahmed Albanna, UAE Ambassador to India; H.E. Mr Pavan Kapoor, Indian Ambassador to the UAE; Mr Zulfi Ravdjee, Advisor to Chief Minister, Government of Andhra Pradesh & Special representative to the Middle East & Far East Countries; Mr R. Karikal Valaven, Special Chief Secretary to Government, Infrastructure, Investment, Industries & Commerce, Government of Andhra Pradesh; Mr JVN Subramanyam, Commissioner - Industries, Commerce & Export Promotion, Government of Andhra Pradesh & CEO, Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB); and Maj Gen (Retd.) Sharafuddin Sharaf, Chairman, UAE-India Business Council (UIBC) and Vice Chairman, Sharaf Group who shared their perspectives on the subject. The webinar also witnessed the participation of more than 150 eminent leaders from agro, food processing and allied industries from the UAE and India.





In his opening remarks, Maj Gen (Retd.) Sharafuddin Sharaf shared his perspective on the UAE-India economic relations and reiterated that the bilateral strategic partnership between both countries has been manifested through regular exchange between the leadership and officials on both sides. Maj Sharaf highlighted the new areas of collaboration between the UAE and India & mentioned that the two countries are on the path to significantly reinforce two-way investments in major infrastructure projects through multiple channels.

He reiterated that there is a vast untapped potential and huge appetite to invest in India, which remains unexplored and urged the participants to take advantage of the lucrative opportunity to unlock the immense potential of the food processing domain in Andhra Pradesh. He also highlighted the role of UAE-India Business Council (UIBC) in strengthening the bilateral partnership between the two countries by creating an inclusive bilateral trade environment between the UAE and India.

During the interactive session, H.E. Pavan Kapoor deliberated on India's multifaceted relations with the UAE having deep engagements in trade and investment, tourism, food security, culture, science & technology, defence, space etc. His Excellency shared that during the pandemic, both food security and healthcare have emerged as important sector of growth and India has been a trusted partner for the UAE in terms of meeting its food requirements & that the focus is to continue enhancing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership even while exploring new areas of cooperation.

While addressing the participants, Indian Ambassador highlighted India's food ecosystem which offers huge opportunities for the UAE investments with stimulating growth in food retail sector, favourable economic policies, and attractive fiscal incentives. He apprised the participants regarding India being the most preferred investment destination in food processing sector with 100% FDI permit and the efforts of Indian Government through Ministry of Food Processing for boosting investments in this sector. His Excellency also mentioned about the comprehensive set of advantages offered by Andhra Pradesh for food processing companies looking to establish their footprint in India.

In his keynote address, Mr Zulfi Ravdjee applauded the efforts of H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed Saeed Hareb Almheiri, UAE Cabinet Member and Minister of State for Food and Water security for her visionary leadership in the areas of sustainable and innovative farming and driving UAE to be a thoughtful leader in global food security index. He reiterated about the Andhra Pradesh team's visit to Dubai in November during the Gulf Food and numerous requests of participants for setting up additional food processing industries in the state.



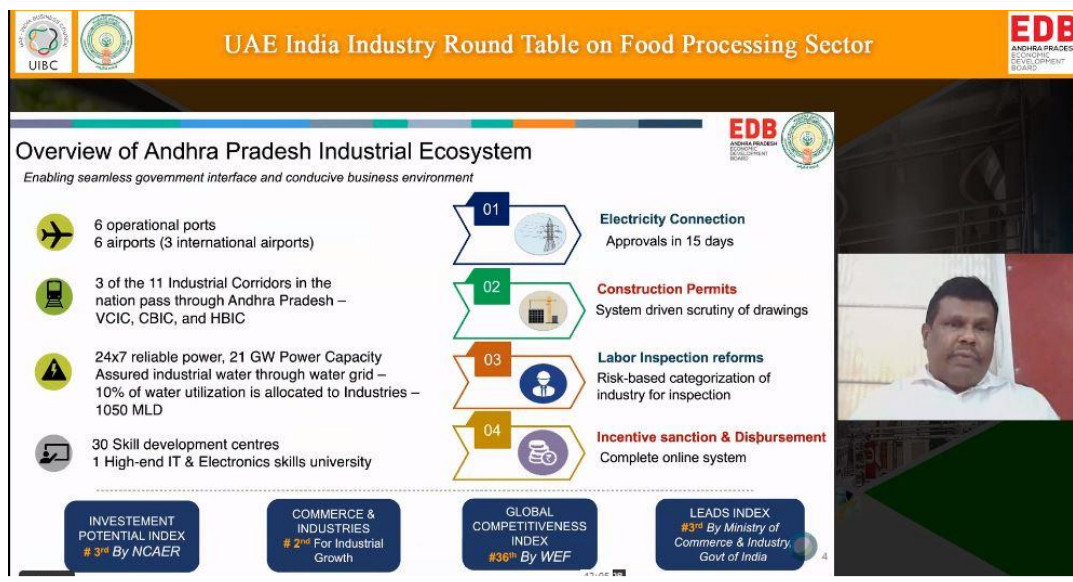
Mr Zulfi appreciated the recent announcement regarding upcoming investments of about USD 7 billion as part of UAE's food security plan in India and highlighted the unique opportunities offered by Andhra Pradesh along with supportive policy environment. Mr Zulfi assured highest level of support from the Government of AP and Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB) and urged the UAE companies to explore the investment opportunities in AP as the state holds huge potential for agri and food processing which can be explored immensely.

In his address at the roundtable, H.E. Dr. Ahmed Albanna reiterated the strategic ties between the UAE and India with trade and investment being the cornerstones of their bilateral strategic partnership. He highlighted the unique partnership between the two countries in food security, adding that both the countries look at each other as reliable partner. He said, "Just as India values the UAE as its trusted energy security partner, the UAE looks at India as a reliable food security partner." His Excellency further mentioned that despite of many challenges caused by the pandemic, the Indian aviation and cargo has emerged as a resilient sector and sustainable practice across the entire supply chain and advanced agricultural technologies have become indispensable for achieving global food security.

Dr. Albanna appreciated the joint initiative undertaken by both countries to develop UAE-India food corridor in tune with the UAE National Strategy for food security which is projected to draw investments of up to USD 7 billion. He shared that the ambitious corridor is another instance of the dynamism that UAE pursues in the bilateral collaboration with India. Another recent collaboration in this sector is under the umbrella of AGRIOTA, an E-marketplace to connect bulk buyers directly with farmers' ecosystem, while providing neutrality, traceability and trust, His Excellency commented.

The UAE Ambassador also mentioned that food wastage in India is another important area that needs to be look at and urgently calls for a paradigm shift with the introduction of a strong logistics infrastructure, sophisticated technology, artificial intelligence tools and large-scale investment in integrating supply chain. The UAE can step-in and form meaningful collaborations with India on that front, he added.

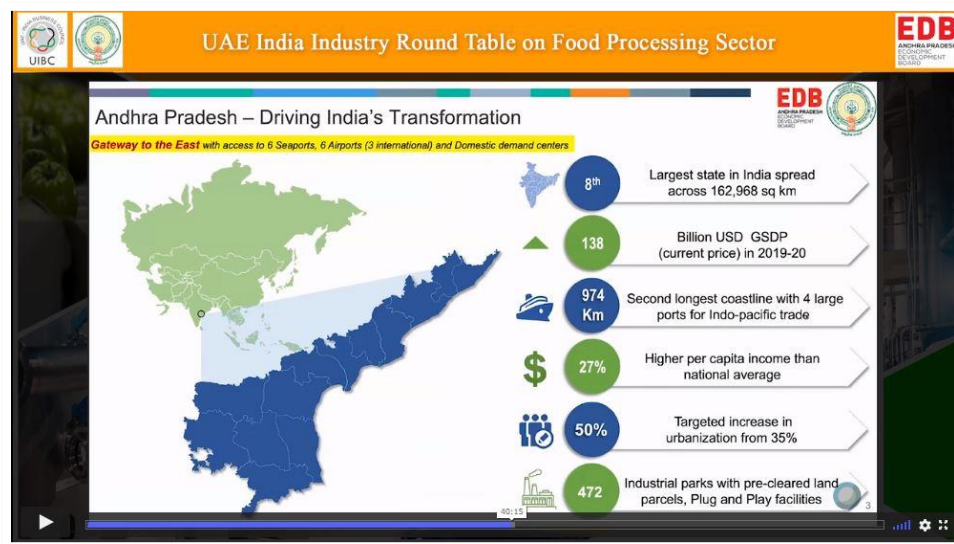
Dr. Albanna recommended that the UAE and Andhra Pradesh could form potential partnership in innovation, technology driven areas such as agri technologies, vertical farming, supply chain management and many others. His Excellency congratulated the Govt. of AP and UAE-India Business Council (UIBC) for successfully organizing this unique virtual interaction at the most opportune time to address and deliberate on one of the most important sector for any economy.



While addressing the participants, Mr R. Karikal Valaven reiterated the close and strategic relationship that exists between both the nations and highlighted the substantial role of Andhra Pradesh in this strategic relationship. He talked about Andhra Pradesh’s infrastructure ecosystem which has been developed over the years for the industries to flourish. While presenting the presentation, Mr Valaven mentioned about the Industrial policy of AP which is focused towards having a strong administration by providing strong administrative and infrastructure support to the industries. Andhra Pradesh has become a global hub for entrepreneurship and investment, thanks to the significant efforts made by the Government to create a world class, business-friendly environment, enabling the state to vie with the best, he added.

In his presentation, he gave an overview about the industrial landscape in Andhra Pradesh and apprised that the state has been consistently ranked no. 1 in ease of doing business from past 3 years. Mr Valaven also shared details regarding the upcoming start-up policy focused towards industrial growth that will provide innovation, incubation and financing support by the Government. He further invited UAE investors to explore possibilities of investing in the state.

While drawing the attention of the participants towards opportunities in the food processing ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh, Mr JVN Subramanyam deliberated that the state is called food bowl of India and is number 1 in many agri and agri related sectors. He expressed keenness of AP for becoming food security partner of the UAE and how it can play a important role in this partnership.





Mr Subramanyam apprised the participating companies about the opportunities in food processing industries including mango processing, tomato, fish and shrimp processing, chilly etc. Additionally, he shared information regarding the agrarian reforms undertaken by the state for improved productivity, value addition and innovation. He also briefed regarding the Andhra Pradesh Food Processing Policy 2020-2025, where a host of financial incentives will be provided including investment subsidy, GST reimbursement, interest subsidy and many others.

Mr Subramanyam emphasized that there exist huge opportunities for the UAE to invest in the state with presence of huge food processing infrastructure, cold storages, pack houses etc. He said, “We have great cooperation with UAE, and we look forward to supporting any UAE agro & food company to invest with us”. Mr Subramanyam also provided information on the export potential and opportunities, food parks, food processing sector ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh and also regarding UAE-AP collaboration on Exports.

The interactive session ended positively with an active participation from the UAE companies. The rountable provided a platform for Emirati companies to share their existing/future plans in regard to making investments in India and why they should choose Andhra Pradesh as a destination for investment, particularly in the food processing sector. During the session, the importance of holding regular similar interactions was also highlighted as it would be beneficial from both ends to elevate, upscale & nurture a strategic plan for a long-term engagement. The UAE companies evinced keen interest for making huge investments in the arena of food processing sector in Andhra Pradesh and thereby bolstering UAE’s partnership with the state.

