

## Enhanced Market Access Poised to Drive India's Agricultural Exports



India's agricultural export sector is set for significant expansion as the nation focuses on securing higher market access through strategic trade agreements and policy reforms. This proactive approach aims to unlock new opportunities for Indian farmers and food producers, ultimately contributing to increased incomes and a stronger presence in global food markets. The recent Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United Kingdom, which offers duty-free access for a vast array of Indian agricultural products, exemplifies this strategic direction.

The thrust towards greater market access is a critical component of India's broader strategy to boost farm exports, which stood at approximately \$51.91 billion in Fiscal Year 2025. While India is a leading exporter of several farm products like rice, spices, and marine items, it also seeks to diversify its export basket and reduce reliance on a few staple commodities. This move is particularly timely amidst global trade uncertainties and growing protectionist pressures.

Key to this strategy is the identification of high-potential commodities and target markets. The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), an agency under the Ministry of Commerce, has commissioned studies to analyze value chains for 32 high-potential product categories. These include items like basmati and non-basmati rice, fruits such as banana, mango, pomegranate, and pineapple, and vegetables like potato and cucumber. Processed and value-added food items, along with animal products like bovine meat and dairy, are also being prioritized for export promotion.

Free trade agreements are proving instrumental in this endeavor. The India-UK FTA, for instance, eliminates duties on nearly 99% of Indian agricultural and processed food items, including turmeric, cardamom, pepper, mango pulp, and pickles. This gives Indian products a competitive edge over those from countries that may still face tariffs, such as certain European nations. Experts project that this agreement alone could lead to a significant increase in agricultural exports to the UK.

However, challenges remain. Issues such as inconsistent quality standards, inadequate cold storage and transportation networks, and frequent changes in export policies have historically hampered India's agricultural export growth. The focus now is on addressing these systemic issues by enhancing infrastructure, ensuring compliance with international quality and sanitary standards, and maintaining stable export policies to build India's reputation as a reliable global supplier.

By strategically pursuing higher market access through comprehensive trade agreements and bolstering domestic infrastructure, India aims to achieve its ambitious target of \$100 billion in agricultural exports by 2030. This expansion will not only strengthen India's position in global food trade but also provide sustainable economic benefits to millions of farmers across the country.