



IndiaFood

FOODS, BEVERAGES & INGREDIENTS DIGEST
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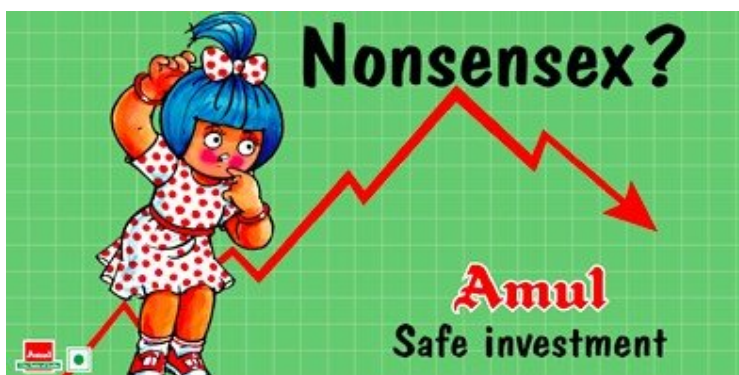
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Happy New Year

The New Year has brought bad news. Indian stock markets, that had been riding a bull wave for almost 2 years, crashed. Bombay Stock Exchange's benchmark Sensex, which had risen from 10,000 to touch 21,000 in less than 2 years, came down to as low as 16,730 on 23 January.



A hoarding put up by Amul butter after the share market crashed

The stock market crash was precipitated by triggers coming from USA and Europe, but the reports from Government of India and other agencies about Indian economy also dampened enthusiasm. India's growth rate seems to be slowing down to a level of about 8.5 per cent per annum instead of the heady projections of 9-10 per cent growth. Of course, a growth rate of even 8.5 per cent is not bad by any standards. Most countries would be glad to achieve even half of that. Indian markets had raised their expectations to such high levels that a small step-down has rattled them.

Fears of a recession in USA are making Indian economists, policymakers and analysts jittery. It is accepted by everyone that Indian economy is built on internal strengths and the effect of external disturbances is likely to be minimal. Yet, it is difficult to predict the effect that a major global event will have on the economy. The immediate effect of US recession may be more psychological than real. Markets are swayed by emotions and that could be a bigger danger than the actual drop in exports or capital inflows.

The dangerous effect of emotional reactions was seen by poultry industry in the month of January. Avian Flu was confirmed in a few thousand birds in some districts of the eastern state of West Bengal. Government immediately ordered culling in all affected districts as well as in nearby regions. All farmers whose birds were taken for culling received some compensation from the government. Poultry farmers in regions not affected by avian flu were not so lucky. Media hype about fears of the flu created a panic in the minds of poultry consumers. Poultry (or any other meat) is not a staple food in India. Meat is a celebration food. Any negative publicity or fear has the potential to scare away consumers. Fears of avian flu led to a collapse in the demand for poultry products. Prices of chicken and eggs fell all over the country. Delhi, which is very far away from West Bengal, saw chicken prices drop by almost 50 per cent. Farms in every part of India have lost huge sums of money even though they are nowhere close to the avian flu affected region.

(Continued on next page)

Every dark cloud has a silver lining. Poultry industry is optimistic that this is just a passing phase and soon bird flu will be forgotten. In a month's time, poultry farmers hope, consumers will be back at chicken shops. Many poultry farmers, especially small ones, have closed their farms. This has led to a sharp reduction in supplies. As and when the surge in demand comes, the prices will shoot up enabling farmers to make good profits. The same had happened in 2006.

Moving from poultry to larger economic picture, one notices that even though small fall in growth rate and fears of recession in USA have led to fall in share prices, strength of fundamentals of Indian economy is attracting attention from every part of the world. Government of India is finding itself deluged by proposals of FTA (Free Trade Agreement) / PTA (Preferential Trade Agreement) from countries as diverse as Switzerland, China, Asean, and Singapore. There is apprehension in Indian industry about the FTA with China. This may act as a block. Malaysia and Indonesia, powerful members of Asean, are trying hard to get duty concessions for palm oil in the proposed FTA. Singapore has already signed a comprehensive economic partnership agreement. Overall, it seems that Government of India is adopting a cautious approach with regard to FTA's / PTA's in spite of the interest expressed in such agreements by many countries.

Indian growth story is fuelled by the drive and dynamism of her entrepreneurs and not by any government initiatives. Nothing illustrates the entrepreneurial spirit of India better than the reported move by Mr. Vijay Mallya's UB Group to dare to do what the purists may dub heresy — selling Indian wines to the French. The group is also planning to export to the UK. It will try its luck in New Zealand also. Our best wishes for Mr. Vijay Mallya's spirits.

Another dynamic business personality, which is drawing attention in India as well as France, is Mr. Nusli Wadia. He is on the verge of buying out Danone's 25.1 per cent stake in Britannia bringing to an end a dispute that seemed at times to have turned acrimonious. Danone should soon be free to pursue its growth plans in India without having to seek a nod from Mr. Wadia. We hope that both, Danone and Mr. Wadia, will grow to new heights in their future endeavors in foods and beverages market of India.

Growth in food market of India is attracting global retailers, restaurant operators and coffee bar owners. Starbucks has finally managed to get its foot in. International coffee chain Gloria Jean's is making India a manufacturing and sourcing hub. Spanish restaurant chain EatOut, of the Agrolimen group, has tied up with Dabur-promoted Litebite to open 50 restaurants. American grocery retailer, Kroger, is entering India in the real estate business. Kroger's strategy seems to be to put in place the infrastructure that will enable it to get into retailing as and when foreign investment is permitted in retail trade.

An interesting collaboration is the tie-up between Tata Chemicals and Ireland's Total Produce with an eye on the wholesale business of fruits and vegetables in India. Reliance has burnt its fingers in retailing of fruits and vegetables. It seems that Tatas have learnt from the woes of Reliance and are aiming at wholesale business and not retail. This way they will be able to avoid the political storm that Reliance had to face.

Politics, economics, society, business – all seem to mix together in India in a strange way. Understanding the complexity of India, helping you navigate through the deep and not-so-deep waters is our business. We, Hindustan Studies & services Ltd. and DNP Information & Analytics Pvt. Ltd, know and understand India. IndiaFood gives you an overview of the developments in this large market. In case you have any specific queries, kindly do not hesitate to contact us.

Food Industry Overview

- During the two months under review, stock markets initially rose with BSE index, Sensex touching 21,000 in the first half of January. In the second half, the stocks started falling. Sensex went as low as 16,730 on 23 January. Subsequently there was a recovery. On 25 January, the index closed at 17,322.
- In India, the market capitalization to GDP ratio reached 173 per cent by the end of December 2007 – a 73 per cent increase in just a year's time. The recent downward trend in Indian equity market brought down the ratio down to 147 per cent.
- Switzerland is looking to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India.
- India is considering a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China but a decision will be based on sensitivities of domestic industry. Indian industry is against either an FTA or a preferential trading agreement as it fears that preferential tariffs would result in a greater flow of cheap goods from across the border making the domestic players uncompetitive.
- Asean countries and India have got together to put life back into the bilateral free trade negotiations.
- Singapore will now have wider access to the Indian market under the bilateral comprehensive economic partnership agreement. India has decided to agree to eliminate or reduce tariffs on 539 products.
- Imports of agricultural, fish and forestry products from the US have risen by 37.74 per cent to USD 467.62 mio in 2006-07.
- Standard & Poor's (S&P) has warned that tightening of the monetary policy may moderate the India's economic growth rate which was hovering between 8.5 per cent and 9 per cent during the current year. The agency has said that any further tightening measures taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may moderate the growth between 8.1 per cent and 8.6 per cent.
- Prime Minister has cautioned that the US slowdown may hit Indian economy, which could impact exports as well as capital inflows.
- Organic agriculture movement is gaining momentum in the country. The area under organic cultivation is likely to cross the 2 mio hectare mark by 2012.
- Organic food has yet to make its mark in the Indian market, as price and availability are the main hindrances to the growth of this category, according to a new study by The Nielsen Company.
- Trade between India and Pakistan almost doubled to 1.67 bio dollars in 2006-07 over the previous year.

Aquaculture

- India's shrimp exports are facing a serious threat from low-cost *Litopenaeus Vannamei* shrimp produced in countries such as Thailand, China, Indonesia and Vietnam. Most of the shrimp importing nations, especially the US, prefer *Vannamei* shrimp to Indian Black Tiger variety because of the former's lower price tag.
- For the first time in India, three farm-level antibiotic testing laboratories for aquaculture output will be set up soon in Andhra Pradesh.
- Marine product exports dropped by 19.64 per cent in the April-October period of the current financial year. The country shipped 268,254 tons of seafood compared with 333,834 tons in the same period in last year.

Dairy, Meat & Poultry

- Suguna Poultry Farm Ltd, a unit of the Coimbatore-based Suguna Group, has launched a range of branded eggs with added nutrient value.
- India once again has become the victim of the incidence of avian flu on poultry. The recent outbreak in a few districts of West Bengal was confirmed by the central Government.
- An outbreak of avian flu in West Bengal state is "serious" and the virus has spread rapidly to many districts, the World Health Organization's representative said.
- Oman has banned import of all poultry and poultry products from India and Iran.
- Sri Lanka has banned import of chicken from India.
- Following outbreak of the avian flu in West Bengal, Indian egg exporters have started feeling the pinch. In the past five days, egg exports have shown a steep decline of 40 per cent from Namakkal region alone.
- Godrej Agrovet Ltd has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Punjab Government to set up a greenfield chicken processing plant to be operational by March 2008.
- Delhi Agri Marketing Board is adopting the public-private partnership route to set up the first chicken processing unit of Delhi. The Rs. 630-mio facility would have a capacity to process 5,000 birds per hour.
- Real estate boom in north coastal Andhra Pradesh is having an adverse impact on the poultry industry.
- Yakult-Danone Pvt. Ltd has launched probiotic fermented milk drink, becoming the fourth player to foray into the country's probiotic dairy products market.
- Yakult-Danone India Ltd has said it will invest Rs. 1 bio in the next three years to increase capacity of its probiotic milk plant in Haryana and expand business.
- Dabur India plans to foray into the milk segment to tap the Rs. 1 bio milk-based beverages market.
- In a bid to serve customers better, India's largest food brand Amul is set to launch 24/7 ATM (Any Time Milk) outlets.
- Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) will launch liquid milk with double the calcium content under its brand Amul.
- The dairy cooperatives of Gujarat under GCMMF collected more than 10 mio litres of milk in a single day.

Alcoholic Beverages

- Manufacturers of country liquor will soon have to adhere to standards almost similar to that of branded spirits. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is in the process of setting fresh manufacturing norms for country liquor.
- Maximum retail price of liquor may soon be uniform across the country. There is consensus among states to bring about a uniform duty structure.

(Alcoholic Beverages continued on next page)

Alcoholic Beverages (Continued)

- Piramal Enterprises, a glass packaging major in India, is planning to supply designer bottles to liquor makers.
- Consumption of low-cost wine in rural Indian market is expected to touch the Rs. 5-bio mark by end of this fiscal.
- India's beer consumption that clocked 28 per cent jump in the last financial year is growing at 14 per cent in the first nine month period of FY'08.
- Domestic traders are exporting barley at a huge premium because of a global shortfall in its production. This is likely to force most domestic manufacturers to import barley, a key raw material for brewing beer, at a premium.
- Brazil's traditional white spirits' drink, Cachaca (pronounced Cashasa), produced by Diva Distilleries will now be launched in India.
- Vinbros, a Puducherry-based Rs. 400-mio liquor manufacturer and trader, has tied up with two Australian companies for marketing Billygoat wines and Boomerang vodka in India.
- Anheuser-Busch is set to increase the price of its flagship Budweiser beer, in India, to cut down losses. The company's local joint venture - Crown Beers, which started operations around mid-2007, is targeting cash break in the third year and maiden profit in the fourth.
- SABMiller has successfully wrapped up a legal battle in the US that prevented rolling out of flagship Miller beer in India.
- Cobra Beer has acquired Bihar-based Iceberg beer, a brand that sells over 500,000 cases a year.
- Winemaker Sula Vineyards will launch a wine targeted at women wine drinkers. Named 'Dia', the wine will be available at Rs. 180 per bottle.
- Chateau d'Ori is launching the brands, namely, Viva (Chenin Blanc), Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Merlot and Cabernet Syrah.
- Vijay Mallya-led UB group is now daring to do what the purists may dub heresy — selling Indian wines to the French. The group is also planning to export to the UK. It will try its luck in New Zealand also.
- Armed with the right of first refusal, Chairman Vijay Mallya is set to ensure United Breweries stays within his empire amid reports that beer makers Anheuser-Busch Co and Heineken are vying for Scottish & Newcastle's 37.5 per cent stake in his flagship company.
- UB group has acquired the US distribution rights for the Dalmore Single Malt.
- Vijay Mallya is set to unfurl an aggressive price play for the recently-acquired Whyte & Mackay brands on his home turf.

Non-alcoholic Beverages

- Coca Cola India has got a clean chit from The Energy and Resources Institute in an audit that did not find pesticides in the water used for making soft drinks.
- Coca-Cola is increasing the share capital of its Indian arm Hindustan Coca-Cola Holdings with additional investments of USD 60 mio.

(Non-alcoholic beverages continued on next page)

Non-alcoholic Beverages (Continued)

- Spirits distributor Finewinesandmore and earth making equipment Taurus are planning to make forays into the premium mineral water segment.
- Soft drink concentrate maker Rasna is close to acquiring a distribution company in Bangladesh.

Tea

- Tata Tea Ltd has launched Tetley Green Tea Leaf in packet format.
- Indian tea is losing its markets abroad and its production stagnating over the years, primarily due to decline in productivity and quality.
- The new European Union (EU) legislation on pesticides and cheap Chinese teas are giving tough challenges to India's tea exports to European markets.
- With tea production in Kenya expected to increase this year, there is a cause of worry for the Indian tea industry. Another report dated 17 Jan says, "The political problem in Kenya has affected the tea production there. We have learnt that the tea garden workers have fled from gardens. The weather pattern in Kenya has also become dry, which is not favourable for tea. Due to all these, the tea production in Kenya is expected to be affected and will create a global shortage".
- Darjeeling tea is all set to be the first Indian commodity to be included in the EU registry for geographical indications.
- Leading branded tea players including HUL, Tata Tea, Girnar, Wagh Bakri and Jivraj Tea have increased their prices and others are expected to follow suit.
- Faced with a bumper crop in Kenya, strong rupee and lower shipment to Iraq, tea export from India will see a fall of almost 17.8 per cent this year.
- Chamong Tee Exports is entering the packet tea business with its 'Te' brand of tea bags by next month.
- Twinings has drawn up aggressive plans to reinforce its presence in India. The game-plan includes acquisition of a premium Indian tea brand and a simultaneous launch of new blends.
- Typhoo Tea is eyeing an Indian launch and may even set up a manufacturing facility in the country.
- Wagh-Bakri Tea Group is planning to expand capacities and buy four tea plantations for nearly Rs. 500 mio in the near future.
- Tata Tea has forayed into the out-of-home beverage segment by unveiling its first outlet "Chai Unchai" in Bangalore.

Coffee

- Coffee output in India may reach 262,000 tons in the year ending September 2008, lower than the 291,000 tons forecast in July by the government.
- Indian coffee exports for calendar 2007 is down 11.2 per cent at 222,000 tons compared with last year's (2006) exports of 250,000 tons.

(Coffee continued on next page)

Coffee (Continued)

- Illycaffè, the world's leading roaster of Espresso coffee from Italy, plans to hike its sourcing of plantation A coffees from India and also raise it to the level of south American countries.
- Starbucks has finally seen the light of the day in India through a distribution tie-up with the country's leading multiplex operator PVR Ltd for its select products.
- International coffee chain Gloria Jean's is looking to make India a manufacturing and sourcing hub. It is setting up its second global coffee roasting and blending unit in Mumbai.
- Coffee Board has released a new Arabica coffee variety with several promising features such as good production potential, high field tolerance to leaf rust disease and superior bean quality traits.
- Daily Bread, the Bangalore-based Rs. 250 mio premium bakery products retailer in which Britannia has a 50 per cent strategic stake, is aggressively expanding its coffee retailing business.
- Araku Emerald coffee, an organically grown Arabica variety, is becoming popular in India as well as overseas.

Food Service & Retailing

- Food retail business in India is expected to double at USD 482 bio by 2020 as against USD 236 bio in 2006.
- Metro Cash & Carry, the global German wholesale major, will invest about 40-45 mio for setting up two new marts in Kolkata and Mumbai.
- Organized retail market in India will more than double in the next three years to touch 30 bio dollars from 14 bio dollars at present, according to a FICCI-Ernst and Young report.
- Most of the Indian consumers look for good value for money with price and promotions influencing the choice of a grocery shop, says a new survey.
- Bistro Hospitality will invest nearly Rs. 300 mio in its specialty restaurant chain TGI Friday's to set up 10 new outlets by March 2009.
- United Pizza Restaurants Pvt. Ltd, operators of US Pizza chain, is all set to dilute 49 per cent stake to Nirmal Kotecha of Kotecha Capital to fund its expansion plan.
- Spanish restaurant chain EatOut, of the Agrolimen group, has tied up with Dabur-promoted Litebite to open 50 "all you can eat" restaurants in the next decade.
- Domino's Pizza India, a franchisee of US-based Domino's Pizza Inc, plans to invest 2.5 bio rupees (USD 63 mio) over the next 3 years to open new outlets.
- Subhiksha, the country's largest supermarket, pharmacy and telecom chain, aims to treble the number of its stores to 3,000 by first-half of 2010.
- Hypercity Retail (India) Ltd is planning to bring in the international food hall retailing concept for the first time in India, under the brand name 'Gourmet City' in 2008.
- Nitesh Estates has joined hands with Citigroup to set up multi-city shopping mall projects.
- Indiabulls Wholesale Services, the retail arm of Indiabulls Real Estate, has acquired Piramyd Retail.

(Food Service & Retailing continued on next page)

Food Service & Retailing (Continued)

- Bharti Retail will kick off its operations in March next year by setting up its first small format retail store.
- ITC is looking at increasing its e-Choupal footprint to nine more states adding 20,000 more kiosks.
- American grocery retailer, Kroger, is entering India in the real estate business.
- Unitech Ltd. has announced that it would be investing Rs. 200 bio in the next six years to develop another 48 malls.

Snacks

- Groupe Danone's peace treaty with Nusli Wadia is ready, almost. Two Wadia group companies are set to buy Danone's 25.1 per cent stake in cookie major Britannia parked in a UK joint venture entity.
- France-based agricultural company, Advanced Food Technologies (AFT), is planning to set up a couple of potato flakes plants in the Hoogly district near Kolkata.
- Middle East-based Switz Group, owned by Mumbai's Khorakiwala family, is set to buy Modern Foods from Hindustan Unilever.
- Frito-Lay India is all set to start production of its patented potato stakes in its plant at Sankrail in Howrah.
- Frito Lay has Indianised its potato chips brand Lay's in the wake of competition by new entrants like ITC's Bingo.
- PepsiCo would now focus on reducing "saturated fat" in its chips. The development comes after the company earlier shunned trans fats in its products as part of its health drive.
- Sale of chocolates in India is on a swell, thanks to the economic boom and a rise in consumer spending.
- Godrej Hershey Foods and Beverages Ltd, the joint venture company between the US-based chocolate major, Hershey, and Godrej Beverages and Foods Ltd, is likely to set up a greenfield facility in India soon.

Culinary Items

- In a bid to address the needs of health-conscious Indian consumers, FMCG majors have lined up a slew of products for launch in 2008.
- Dabur India, today announced the national roll-out of ChyawanPrakash, a sugar-free variant of Chyawanprash.
- ITC Foods is rolling out health foods business under Benevita brand. The company is hitting the market with products like Pasta and flax seed biscuits initially.
- Alkem Laboratories Ltd, a USD 130-mio Indian pharmaceutical company, has forayed into the foods sector with a wholly owned subsidiary Alkem Health Foods Ltd.
- Bagrrys India has unveiled its all-new range of Fruit 'n Fibre Mueslis.
- Aashirvaad has launched an instant mix for *rasmalais*.

Sugar

- Sugar output in India is expected at 30 to 31 mio tons in the year to September 2008.
- Maharashtra mills are hopeful of shipping out 0.7-0.9 mio tons of raw sugar in addition to 1.5 mio tons of plantation whites during the current 2007-08 crushing season.
- The sugar production in Maharashtra has declined by 15 per cent with mills crushing 20-22 per cent less cane this season.
- Leading global sugar producers have joined hands and approached the World Trade Organization, asking the multilateral body to seek details from India on subsidy to exporters.
- The Centre has formally notified the partial lifting of the ban on sugar exports.
- Lower sugar output projections are driving up prices of sugar and molasses at a time when the crushing of sugarcane is in full swing.
- The Central Government's recent decision allowing only sugar mills to produce ethanol directly from sugarcane juice will not prevent Reliance Industries, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd and other refineries from employing this more viable manufacturing option for meeting their captive blending requirements.
- Reliance Industries, Tata Chemicals, Bharti Enterprises' Fieldfresh and Indian Oil are among several large companies that have evinced interest in leasing closed sugar mills that the Bihar government is offering, mainly to exploit opportunities to make ethanol to meet mandatory petrol blending norms that were introduced this year.
- Praj Industries has become a member of Sweet Sorghum Ethanol Research Consortium.
- India Glycols has acquired a majority stake in Shakumbari Sugar & Allied Industries for Rs. 470 mio.

Oils

- The reduction in customs duty of crude palm oil (CPO) by India has severely hit the 12 *vanaspati* units set up by Indian companies in Sri Lanka to take advantage of the low duty on CPO there and export duty-free to India under the free trade agreement (FTA) quota.
- The government hopes the import of edible oils in the current oil year would be about 200,000 tons less than the quantity imported in 2006-07 on the back of increased domestic production.
- Import of palm group of oils through any port in Kerala has been banned.
- US food industry giant Cargill is chopping its excess capacity in India. It plans to sell one of its port-based cooking oil refineries at Kandla to Louis Dreyfus.
- India's oilmeal exports during April-November fell 10 per cent to 2.29 mio tons, dragged by a decrease in exports of soymeal.
- Reduced cultivation of soybean in the US, which produces around 35 per cent of the world's crop, and drought conditions in China have diverted South Asian soybean importers to India.
- Amidst reports of bird flu spreading in West Bengal, prices of soymeal, a key poultry feed after maize, have plunged.
- Sesame seed exporters are renegeing on their commitments following a 40 per cent rise in the price of the commodity over the last 45 days.
- As supply tightens in Kerala and Tamil Nadu owing to lesser production, coconut oil prices have touched new heights.

Food Additives

- European Union has asked Indian guar gum manufacturers to separate production and processing of food and industrial grade guar gum.

Spices & Flavors

- Saffron prices are showing no signs of softening despite expectations of a good crop this season. Prices are ruling around Rs. 115,000 a kg against last year's price of Rs. 45,000
- The nutmeg and mace market has seen a big rally in recent weeks amid speculation over the size of crop next season.
- India will import around 4,000 tons of pepper from Indonesia during the December-April period as prices of the commodity are cheaper than that in Vietnam.
- The Government has fixed a tariff value of USD 5,398 a ton for poppy seeds in an effort to check its illegal imports.
- India is likely to export a record 190,000 tons of red chilli in 2007/08, up 28 per cent on year.
- India's spices exports will cross USD 1 bio in the current financial year and touch USD 10 bio by 2017.

Foodgrains

- Farmers who have sown Pusa-1121, an evolved (hybrid) basmati rice variety, have made a huge killing on the back of increased production and higher price realizations.
- The famed aromatic 'Joha' rice, unique to Assam, is being exported to the UK, Germany and Switzerland.
- Pakistani rice exporters are up in arms against the government, as India has emerged as the preferred exporter of the commodity to Iran due to heavy tariff on imports through land routes.
- LT Overseas — which owns the 'Daawat' brand of basmati rice — has bought the US-based Kusha Inc lock, stock and barrel.
- Pranav Agro industries has launched Smart Balance rice, low glycemic index (GI) health rice, beneficial for persons suffering from diabetes and obesity.
- Minimum export price for all non-basmati shipments has been hiked from USD 425 (Rs. 17,000) a ton free-on-board (f.o.b.) to USD 500 (Rs. 20,000) a ton.
- India and China have harvested record cereal crops this year with most of the four per cent increase in wheat output coming from India, the United Nations food agency has said in a report.
- Wheat planting continues to trail during the current rabi season, with farmers sowing 24.934 mio hectares so far compared with 26.331 mio hectares covered during the corresponding period of last season and 27.984 mio hectares for the whole of 2006-07.
- India has lifted 36 per cent import duty on wheat flour paving the way for free import of the commodity.

(Foodgrains continued on next page)

Foodgrains (Continued)

- India has made an exception to the ban on wheat and wheat flour exports and allowed sale of 17,000 tons of wheat flour to Maldives.
- Spiralling maize prices on the back of unchecked exports have taken a toll on the starch and poultry industry.
- Unprecedented overseas demand for barley during the last season, which saw prices climb to an all time high, is expected to push barley output by around 15-20 per cent in 2007-08.
- The country, which is facing shortage of pulses for the last few years, is likely to import 3 mio tons in 2007-08 to meet the growing domestic demand.
- The Union Government has no immediate plans to import wheat as the buffer stock is satisfactory and the production this season is expected to be near the targeted level.

Fruits & Vegetables

- A decade ago, India used to import its entire requirement of exotic vegetables like Asparagus, bitter melon, broccoli, exotic peppers, and zucchini. Now the country meets the entire demand from local production.
- The government has cut the minimum export price of onion by USD 50 to USD 200 per ton effective January 1, 2008.
- Export of onion is expected to rise by 6.57 per cent to 1.2 mio tons during the current financial year against last year's 1.126 mio tons (2005-06 – 0.96 mio tons).
- Bangalore-based Safal National Exchange of India Ltd (SNX), an electronic platform for trading in fruits and vegetables, plans to extend the trading platform in sweet lime, oranges, grapes and apples within the next four weeks.
- India, which had been the pioneer and topper in raw cashew nut production in the world until recently, has lost its position to Vietnam and Nigeria and occupies the third place.
- Declining trend continues in cashew exports as the nation saw export value drop by 11 per cent during the first eight months of the current fiscal.
- The country reached the second position in import of almonds from the US during the crop year 2007-08, beating Germany.
- Coconut production is set for a quantum jump in the nation to touch 16 bio nuts in 2007-08.
- Exports of tamarind are likely to log an impressive 10 per cent growth this year, though shipments to the US, a major market, may come down.
- Defence Research Development Organisation has developed a transgenic tomato for growing in the cold desert regions of Ladakh.
- Tata Chemicals is planning a major foray into the wholesale business of fruits and vegetables in India through its joint venture with Ireland's Total Produce.