

Economic Report India

July 2025



<u>Food Processing and Packaging Machinery - vdma.eu - VDMA</u>

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Food demand in India continues to rise

Food sales in India are growing steadily, but consumption is changing. Companies are investing in new plants in this complex, regulated environment. The pharmaceutical industry and the cosmetics market are also growth areas in India and are generating demand for packaging.

Overall economic outlook (as of April 2025)

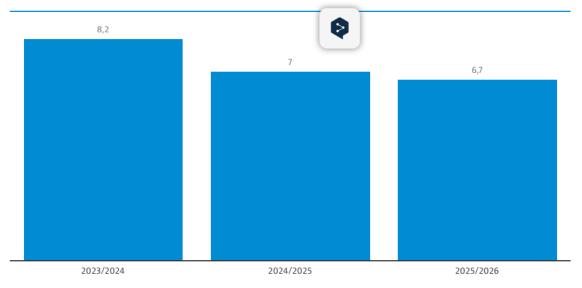
India's economic growth is stronger than in all other major economies. Consumption is increasing and companies are investing, although there is still room for improvement.

Economic development: India as the growth engine of the global economy

India is currently the fastest growing major economy in the world and is ahead of many other emerging and developing countries in Asia in terms of economic development. In recent months, economists have adjusted the growth rates for the gross domestic product upwards. According to estimates by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Indian economy should grow by 7 percent in the 2024/2025 financial year (April 1 to March 31). The experts have thus raised their forecast from spring 2024 by 0.4 and 0.2 percentage points respectively.

For 2025/2026, the World Bank and IMF expect economic growth of 6.7 and 6.5 percent respectively. Background information on this and other economic data can be found in the series <u>Wirtschaftsdaten kompakt</u>.

Economic development in India remains promising (real year-on-year change in percent)



Financial years from April 1 to March 31; estimate or forecasts. Source: World Bank 2024

Underutilized capacities inhibit private investment

According to the World Bank, gross fixed capital formation increased by 7.8 percent in 2024/2025 and by a similar amount in the following year. Nevertheless, there is still room for growth. A new private-sector investment cycle on a broad front has not yet begun; average capacity utilization is too low. According to the Indian central bank, it was 74 percent in the manufacturing sector in the second quarter of 2024.

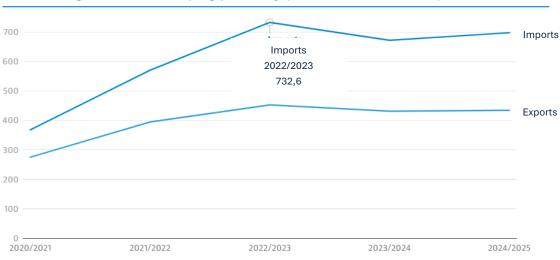
So far, it has mainly been sectors that have benefited from government spending on infrastructure expansion that have invested. The government made it clear in the budget that it will continue to provide funds for this purpose. In addition, subsidies in the form of Production Linked Incentives (PLI) are likely to stimulate investment. The financial services provider S&P Global expects the photovoltaic and battery manufacturing sectors in particular to benefit greatly from PLI-driven investments in the coming years. However, the experts assume that the peak of investments supported by subsidies will be reached in the financial year 2025/2026.

Consumption picks up

In the financial year 2024/2025, private consumption is expected to grow by 5.7 percent - significantly more than in 2023/2024 (4 percent). Nevertheless, this result would be rather weak for India. Economists point out that positive impetus for consumption is currently coming predominantly from people with high incomes and from rural areas. Consumers from the middle and lower urban middle class, on the other hand, tend to spend less on everyday consumer goods, for example. For example, faltering urban consumption is causing a short-term dip in demand for food.

Foreign trade will probably exceed the previous year's result

Trade in goods shows more upward momentum again in 2024/2025. According to UN Comtrade, the country recorded an import value of 697 billion US dollars (US\$) and an export value of US\$ 434.4 billion for the financial year.



India's foreign trade is developing positively (in billions of US dollars)

Source: UN Comtrade 2024; Ministry of Trade and Industry 2024

Top topic: How is the relationship with the USA developing?

India will also have to come to terms with a new Trump administration after the US elections. The USA has announced tariffs of 26 percent against India, previously the average tariff rate was 3.3 percent. According to Trump's announcement on April 9, 2025, the new tariffs will be suspended for 90 days. When coming back into force afterwards, they will also cause economic upheaval in India.

For years, India has been generating surpluses in foreign trade with the USA in goods and services. The export of pharmaceuticals in particular, but also the export of electronics (especially smartphones) to the USA has increased significantly. If the tariffs are implemented as announced by Trump before April 9, 2025, this would be less dramatic for India than for other nations. The economy is largely domestically oriented. Factors such as domestic consumption are much more important for the economy than exports.

German perspective: Growing confidence in India's economic development

"India is an enormously important growth market for German industry. Particularly in the areas of digitalization, Industry 4.0, mobility, renewable energies, energy-efficient production and the healthcare sector, but also beyond that. German industry is very interested in deepening its involvement in India. The conditions for this have improved significantly in recent years thanks to the expansion of infrastructure and other political and social measures in India," says Friedolin Strack, Head of the International Markets Department at the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and Spokesman of the Management Board and Coordinator Germany, Asia-Pacific Committee of German Business.

In the "AHK Asia-Pacific Business Outlook" for fall 2024, India and the Philippines are by far the most popular countries when it comes to German companies' investment intentions. In addition, compared to spring 2024, more companies say they want to build up local staff. At the same time, companies complain about bureaucratic hurdles and high import duties, among other things.

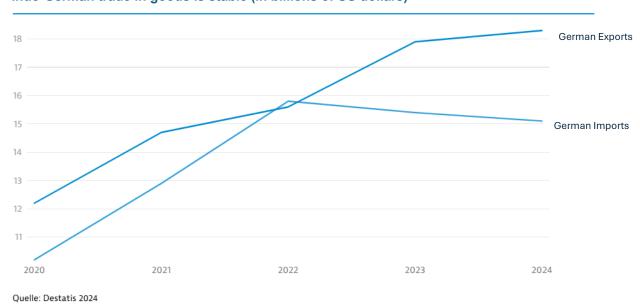
"More German investment, especially from SMEs, would flow to India if bureaucratic hurdles were consistently removed, infrastructure further expanded and import duties lowered. Reliable framework conditions based on the rule of law are central to the expansion of economic cooperation."

Friedolin Strack, Federation of German Industries, (BDI)- Head of International Markets & Spokesman of the Management Board and Coordinator Germany, Asia-Pacific Committee of German Business

India and the EU continue to negotiate a free trade agreement. A deal is currently not in sight. In 2024, the value of German exports to India amounted to USD 18.3 billion, according to Destatis. Germany's imports from India were worth US\$ 15.1 billion.

India is an important growth market, particularly for the export-oriented European mechanical engineering industry, and an important partner for de-risking in connection with China. "Numerous member companies are currently expanding their business activities in India and are investing heavily there," says Ulrich Ackermann, Head of the Foreign Trade Department at VDMA (Europe's largest Machinery Industry Association). He demands: "India is one of the last high-tariff countries in the mechanical engineering sector. That's why we finally need a free trade agreement between the EU and India."

Indo-German trade in goods is stable (in billions of US dollars)



The Business Location report provides an overview of the local conditions. All information on India can be found on the <u>GTAI-Länderseite</u>.

Market Trends Food Industry

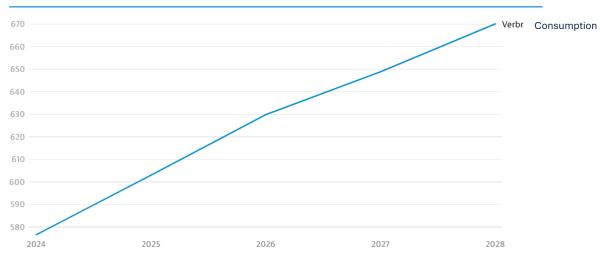
Demand for packaged and processed foods continues to grow strongly. Fish is one of the growth areas. Consumers are increasingly paying attention to quality. Food sales in India will continue to grow in the coming years. According to the statistics portal Statista, industry sales are expected to reach almost 888 billion US dollars (US\$) in 2025, an increase of 8.7 percent compared to the previous year. This makes India the second largest food market in the world after China. The trillion mark is expected to be exceeded by 2028. Compared to 2024, this would be an increase of 16 percent.

The average annual food sales per capita in 2025 will be US\$ 606.

Consumers turn to processed and packaged foods

The increasing turnover is primarily due to growing sales volumes. Forecasts predict food consumption of 603 million tons in 2025, which would be 4.6 percent more than in the previous year.

Food consumption in India is growing steadily (in millions of tons)



Forecasts from 2025 onwards. source: Statista 2025

In 2025, sales growth is expected to be positive for all major product groups. Vegetables will lead the way (up 5.6 percent compared to 2024), followed by fish and seafood (up 5.3 percent) and fruit and nuts (up 4.3 percent).

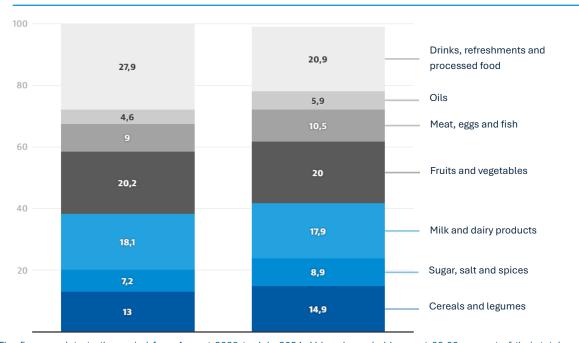
Food consumption is growing across all product groups (in millions of tons; selected products)

Product Category	2024	2025	2026	2027
Bread and cereal products	224.4	235.3	246.4	253.4
Vegetables	113.1	119.5	125.8	130.4
Dairy products and eggs	115.4	119.3	123.3	127.2
Fruit and nuts	76.6	80.3	147.0	159.9
Sauces and spices	12.6	13.2	13.8	14.2
Oils and fats	9.5	9.7	9.9	10.2
Spreads and sweeteners	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.3
Meat	5.7	5.9	6.0	6.2
Fish and seafood	5.3	5.6	5.8	5.8
Sweets and snacks	4.9	5.1	5.3	5.4

Forecasts from 2025 onwards. source: Statista 2025

However, growth is lower than in the two previous years, as private consumption is cooling due to global economic uncertainties. Consumption is economically significant in India and accounts for around 60 percent of gross domestic product. Spending on food and drink is by far the largest item. They account for 47 percent of consumer spending in rural households and 40 percent in urban households. Households in cities in particular are currently keeping their money together. This can be seen, among other things, in the fact that smaller pack sizes and more generic products are being purchased.

A particularly large amount of money is spent on drinks, refreshments and processed food (share of total expenditure on food)



The figures relate to the period from August 2023 to July 2024. Urban households spent 39.68 percent of their total monthly consumer spending on food, while rural households spent 47.04 percent.

Source: National Statistics Office 2025

However, this does not affect the long-term positive development of demand. Development trends such as rising disposable incomes and the growing population remain intact. They will ensure an increase in food consumption for decades to come.

"India is a long-term growth market. Minor dips in growth in private consumption do not detract from this."

Oliver Mirza, Managing Director and CEO, Dr. Oetker India

Consumption and eating habits are changing, boosting demand for processed foods. The easier storage and hygiene of packaged food are seen as selling points for these products. Many consumers also consider them to be of higher quality than food sold loose. Experts point out that this trend is no longer limited to large cities, but is also increasingly being observed in medium-sized and small towns.

Distribution is changing

Consumers mostly buy their food from the corner grocery store, supplemented by fresh fruit and vegetables from street vendors. However, the formalization of retail is gaining momentum. Statista estimates that small retailers, mostly from the unorganized sector, have a market share of 83 percent.

However, the number of shoppers in formalized supermarkets and hypermarkets such as Reliance Fresh and D-Mart is steadily increasing. Customers appreciate the convenience of shopping in more spacious stores and the fact that they can get all their goods in one place. Statista estimates that 7 percent of groceries are now sold in such outlets. The market leader here is Reliance Fresh with an estimated 19,000 stores.

However, logistics and storage remain a challenge. Even in large supermarkets and food chains, there are regular supply problems and unavailability of individual goods. In addition, products are often stored improperly or handled incorrectly during delivery. Companies should therefore pay attention to robust packaging and well-developed distribution networks.

Digital purchasing with fast delivery is in demand

Food deliveries are commonplace in India, whether ordered from the grocery store next door by phone or from the supermarket chain by app. The consulting firm IMARC predicts that the market for online food delivery will grow from US\$ 11.4 billion in 2024 to US\$ 96.3 billion in 2033.

In addition, the start-up sector is focusing on "quick commerce". This is the option of digital shopping combined with delivery between 5 and 20 minutes after ordering. Quick commerce companies such as Zepto and Blinkit are rapidly gaining new customers, especially in large cities. They are expanding their delivery network as well as their network of smaller warehouses in cities.

Old funding is being revised, new regulation is coming

The "Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities" program aims to increase food processing capacities. Companies or individuals are reimbursed up to 35 percent of the capital costs when they purchase food processing and refrigeration equipment. New guidelines for the program were published in January 2025. Probably the most significant change is that projects outside of mega food parks and agro processing clusters are now also eligible. This should create more demand for food processing machinery across India.

In addition, the rules for the declaration of ingredients on food packaging will be tightened. The Supreme Court in India ruled in April 2025 that the Food Safety and Standards (Labeling and Display) Regulations must be amended by July 2025. Companies will then have to provide more detailed information about the ingredients used in processed foods. In addition, a labeling system in the form of a food traffic light or a similar procedure is likely to be introduced to classify foods according to their content of health-relevant nutrients.

Sector Structure of the Food Industry

Large corporate groups dominate the sector, although many smaller companies are active in the market. Investments are being made, but exports are stagnating.

India is one of the largest food producers in the world and is one of the leaders in the production of agricultural products such as cereals (especially rice and wheat), fruit and vegetables as well as dairy products. Nevertheless, the agricultural and food industry often lags behind in terms of efficiency and processing depth in international comparison. The widespread estimate that around 10 percent of the food produced is processed is probably now outdated.

In 2021, management consultants Deloitte stated that only 4 percent of fruit and 3 percent of vegetables are processed in India, but 92 percent of rice. India also has processing capacities for meat (34 percent) and milk (21 percent). More recent data is not available, but the figures are likely to have changed only slightly since then.

Food production in India is slightly down (selected products; in million tons; percentage change compared to previous period)

Product	2023/2024	2024/2025*	Change
Sugar cane	453.2	435.1	-4.0
Cereals	308.1	307.9	-0.1
Milk and dairy products	239.3	n.a.	
Vegetables	207.2	214.6	3.5
Fruits	113.0	113.2	0.2
Oil seeds	39.7	41.7	5.0
Legumes	24.2	23.0	-5.0
Fish and seafood	18.4	n.a.	-
Spices	12.5	12.0	-3.9
Meat	10.3	n.a.	

Financial years from April 1 to March 31; deviations due to rounding possible; * Figures provisional.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare 2025; Department of Fisheries 2023; Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying 2025

Many small companies shape the food industry

The National Statistical Office reports over 41,500 registered food processing factories in the latest available data for 2023. Most of the companies are located in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Maharashtra. Around half of the companies are involved in grain milling. The state of Punjab is also one of the most important locations here. The production of oils and fats and the production of beverages and milk and dairy products follow at a distance. The industry employs a total of 2.2 million people, making it one of the country's most important employers.

Number of companies and employees by sector in the Indian food industry

Sector	Number of companies	Employees
Production of milled cereal products and starch	20,738	479,769
Production of vegetable and animal fats and oils	2,726	119,035
Production of beverages	2,293	180,334
Production of dairy products	2,176	210,900
Processing fruit and vegetables	1,346	90,481
Processing fish and seafood	706	111,882
Meat processing	187	31,822
Other	11,396	978,243
Total	41,568	2,202,466

The figures relate to the financial year from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.source: National Statistical Office 2024

Large companies generate billions in sales

Many of the companies are small and micro enterprises. The informal sector, which is difficult to quantify, also plays an important role in food processing. The consulting firm Grant Thornton assumes that 75 percent of the companies in the industry are micro-enterprises from the informal sector. However, the food industry is dominated by large Indian companies, including ITC, Parle Agro, MTR Foods, Britannia Industries, Amul and Haldiram, as well as multinational manufacturers such as Nestlé, PepsiCo, Mondelez, Coca-Cola and Unilever.

Important sector companies in India (turnover in millions of US dollars)

Company	Important product categories	Sales 2023/2024
Nestlé	Instant noodles, sauces, confectionery, milk and dairy products	2,789
ITC	Biscuits, pasta, ready meals, drinks, confectionery, spices, snacks	2,642
Britannia	Biscuits, cakes, rusks	1,859
Hindustan Unilever	Sauces, soups, drinks, ice cream, tea	1,757
Tata Consumer Products *	Staple foods, ready meals, drinks, spices	1,747
Parle	Biscuits, snacks	1,733

Fiscal year from April 1 to March 31; part converted using the average exchange rate according to the Bundesbank for February 2025: US\$ 1 = 87.05 Indian rupees; *branded products.source: Germany Trade & Invest's own research, based on company balance sheets 2024.

Modernization programs are underway, but slowly

The construction of 41 so-called mega food parks for food processing continues to be slow. These parks are intended to offer domestic food producers optimal production opportunities and attract investment from abroad. According to Indian figures, only seven parks had been fully completed by the end of October 2024 and a further 17 were at least in operation.

The development of the "agro processing clusters" is progressing somewhat better. At the end of March 2025, 22 of 71 projects were in operation, with the rest under construction. The clusters are part of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana program and are intended to ensure the development of processing structures near food-growing areas. The main aim is to create the necessary infrastructure. This also includes warehouses and cold stores as well as sorting and packaging facilities.

The "Scheme of Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities" program is also making progress. Progress is being made in building capacities for both processing and refrigeration. The new funding guidelines could give the program a boost.

New production facilities are created

Investors have recognized the potential of the growth market and are taking this into account. Both local companies and local subsidiaries of international corporations are investing in the country. German companies such as Krones are also among the investors. The company began building a factory for the local production of filling systems in February 2025. India's generally good economic situation, proximity to customers and the ability to purchase and produce locally at low cost were arguments in favor of the decision. This should establish the company as a role model for other investors..

Selected investment projects in the food industry in India (investment amount in million US dollars)

Project	Total investment	Project status	Remarks
Expansion of the network of production facilities in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar by SLMG Beverages	919	Planning phase	SLMG Beverages is part of the Ladhani Group. The company is the largest independent bottler of Coca Cola
Expansion of existing production capacities by Lotte Wellfood	300	Planning phase	The company produces ice cream (Havemor Ice Cream)
Construction of a new production line for KitKat by Nestlé	126	Announced	The production line is to be built in the existing factory in Sanand in the state of Gujarat
Construction of a factory for processing onions by HyFun Foods	57,4	Announced	The factory is to be built near the onion-growing regions of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh
Construction of a factory for bottling plants by Krones AG	36,2	Construction started in February 2025	The plant is being built in Vemagal in the state of Karnataka
Expansion of the infant formula factory by Danone	21,5	Announced	The factory is located in Lalru in the state of Punjab. The investment is to be spread over four years
Construction of two production plants for palm oil and bottle caps by Unilever	k.A.	Announced	The plants are to be built in the Kamareddy district in the state of Telangana

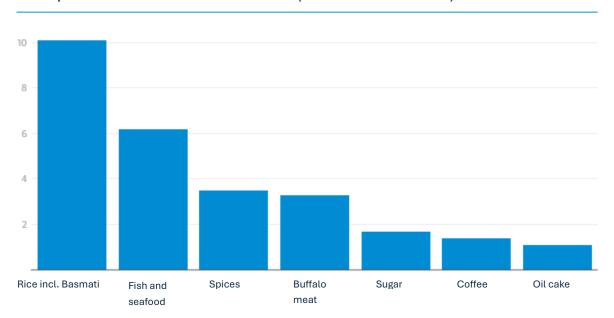
Conversion based on the average exchange rate for March 2024 according to the Bundesbank: US\$ 1 = 83 Indian rupees. Source: Research by Germany Trade & Invest 2025

According to the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, foreign direct investment in the food processing sector amounted to 608 million US dollars (US\$) in the financial year 2023/2024 (April 1 to March 31). From April to September 2024, India was able to attract a further US\$ 368 million. Between April 2000 and December 2024, a total of US\$ 13 billion flowed into the sector, according to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.

Nahrungsmittelexporte sind zum Wirtschaftsfaktor geworden

Increasingly, parts of food production are developing into important export industries. The government is supporting this. Export products include fish and seafood from aquaculture and rice in particular.

India exports billions of dollars worth of food (in billions of US dollars)



Observation period April 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025. Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry 2025

For export, the goods must be processed and packaged according to internationally competitive standards. This makes export companies important customer groups for the necessary machinery. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry reported exports of food and beverages amounting to USD 40.9 billion for the period between April 1, 2024 and January 31, 2025. This is an increase of 7.8 percent compared to the same period last year. The most important destination countries for Indian exports were the USA, the United Arab Emirates and China.

Exporting companies are facing uncertain times. This is due to the unpredictable tariff policy of the USA. If the announced tariffs of 26 percent come into force, shrimp exports in particular are likely to suffer.

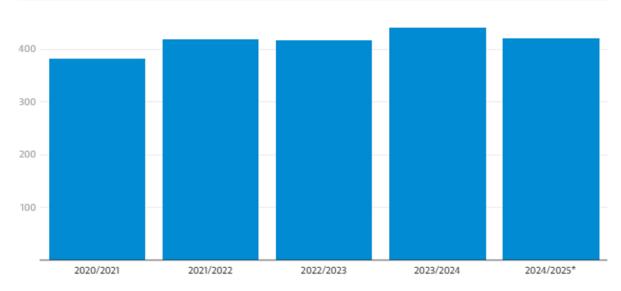
Food imports play a subordinate role. India is only dependent on imports of vegetable oils. This is mainly palm oil from Indonesia.

Pharmaceutical Industry

The Indian pharmaceutical industry is growing significantly and companies are continuing to invest. Glass packaging and packaging for injections in particular are growth areas.

Experts expect the pharmaceutical industry to grow by between 8 percent and 10 percent in the financial year 2025/2026 (April 1 to March 31). Despite the uncertainty caused by the US tariff policy and its potential impact on India, industry representatives assume that companies will continue to invest in the country and expand their production capacities.

Pharmaceutical production values in India are in the millions (in millions of US dollars; selected products)



Financial years from April 1 to March 31; conversion based on the average exchange rate for March of the year according to the Bundesbank; * Data from April 1 to February 28.

Source: Center for Monitoring Indian Economy 2025

The recent increase in production volumes for pharmaceutical products is also creating a positive mood among packaging manufacturers. Pharmaceutical packaging accounts for an estimated 25 percent of the entire packaging market in India.

Glass packaging and packaging for injections in particular are currently strong growth areas. In March 2025, AGI Greenpack announced its intention to build a new plant for glass containers at a cost of around 80 million US dollars. These are also to be used for pharmaceutical packaging. The plant is scheduled to start production in 2027 with a capacity of 500 million tons per day.

Cosmetics Industry

The subcontinent's cosmetics market is the fourth largest in the world and continues to grow. The demand for packaging is increasing accordingly. New regulations need to be observed.

The market for packaging is growing rapidly in India. There are only estimates for the exact market size, some of which differ significantly. The PackMach World trade fair assumes a market size of around 84 billion US dollars (US\$) for 2024 and forecasts average growth of 11 percent per year. In 2029, the packaging market is expected to be worth US\$ 143 billion. The analysis company Brickwork Ratings puts the market at US\$ 76.5 billion for 2024 and forecasts growth to US\$ 99 billion by 2028.

The inconsistent figures are related to the significant role of the informal sector. This also characterizes the packaging industry in India as a business location. According to experts, between 60 and 70 percent of companies in the packaging industry belong to the informal sector.

Flexible packaging dominates the packaging market

According to industry data, flexible packaging holds the largest market share. While the publication PackMach World puts the share for 2024 at just over 67 percent, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) assumes a share of 73 percent in a study from the beginning of 2025. At the same time, CII puts the market for flexible packaging in the country at US\$ 12.7 billion. Important materials used are polyethylene, polypropylene and polyethylene terephthalate (PET). It is estimated that half of India's production of polyethylene and polypropylene goes into the manufacture of flexible packaging. Just over 40 percent of the PET produced is used for PET films.

Around 60 percent of the packaging films used consist of several layers of material, which makes recycling difficult. However, industry experts report that there is a trend towards producing packaging from uniform material or replacing materials with special adhesives.

Experts estimate the share of demand for packaging materials and machines from personal care manufacturers at between 10 percent and 15 percent of the overall market.

Packaging will soon have to display more information

Since a couple of years, a government regulation has been encouraging manufacturers to recycle more. The regulations have now been tightened up. The extensions to the "Plastic Waste Management Rules", which have been in force since January 2025, set new requirements for information on packaging. From July 1, 2025, all packaging must have a QR or barcode containing information on the origin of the packaging and how it was recycled.

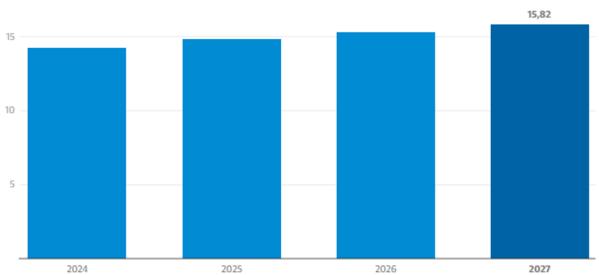
Increasing demand for cosmetics

The consulting firm IMARC estimates the market for cosmetics in India at US\$ 14.6 billion in 2024 and forecasts growth to US\$ 24.3 billion by 2033. For beauty and personal care products, the company cites a market size of US\$ 29.6 billion for 2024 and growth to US\$ 48.5 billion by 2033. The government-owned India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) stated a market size of US\$ 28 billion for the cosmetics and personal care sector at the beginning of 2025 and set a target of US\$ 34 billion by 2028.

The differences result from different definitions of cosmetics and personal care, but also from the considerable proportion of informal companies in the cosmetics market. In an analysis from December 2023, IBEF assumes that 75 percent of cosmetics companies were part of the informal sector. These small and micro enterprises still make up the majority of the industry. However, international corporations such as Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive and L' Oréal have very strong market positions. Large Indian companies such as Godrej and Dabur are also important market players. The major brands have small-scale, nationwide distribution networks.

Statista estimates sales in the cosmetics and beauty products sector at USD 33.1 billion in 2025. According to these figures, India ranks 4th worldwide behind the USA, China and Japan. By 2028, the data specialists are forecasting an increase in turnover to USD 33.4 billion and broad-based growth across all product categories under consideration. Population growth will also contribute to this, which in turn will ensure rising consumption.





Forecasts from 2025; * Technology-driven applications in the cosmetics sector, for example digital make-up simulators. Source: Statista 2025

Premiumization is an important trend

At the moment, premiumization of products is one of the most important trends in the cosmetics industry. This means offering the same or very similar products in different quality versions. Different packaging is an important distinguishing feature. This allows companies to market their products in a more targeted manner, but also requires more choice and customization options for packaging.

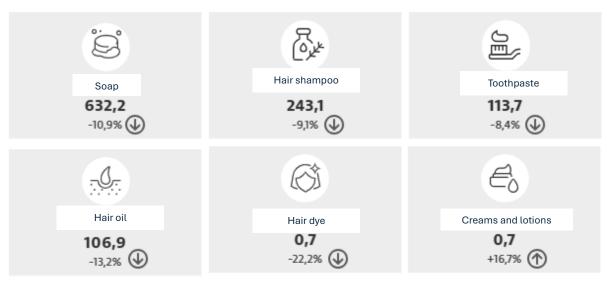
Trade fairs can help you enter the market

The Cosmoprof trade fair offers a good opportunity to explore the market. It takes place regularly at the end of the year in Mumbai, next time from 4 to 6 December 2025. German companies have the opportunity to participate in a joint stand as part of the German government's foreign trade fair program. In addition to Indian cosmetics brands, manufacturers from abroad whose products are currently in high demand in India will also be represented. These include Korean products in particular. There are also companies at the trade fair that offer contract manufacturing - a business area in which India would like to position itself more strongly.

Slight decline in production volumes

The production of important goods from the cosmetics sector and related everyday consumer goods has declined slightly in recent years. This trend is largely continuing. The reasons for this are unclear. One possibility is measurement inaccuracies by companies in the informal sector.

The production of most beauty and hygiene products in India is declining 2024/2025 *; production in thousand tons



^{*} Data from April 1 to February 29.

Source: Center for Monitoring Indian Economy 2025

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