

Food Processing: Create Jobs, Save Food, Help Women and Youth

The adage “Give the man a fish and you will feed him for a day. But, teach the man to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime” is a losing proposition in the modern age, since the man who is taught how to fish invariably ends up making the middleman or the buyer of his fish wealthy. Perhaps then the adage needs to be revised as follows:

***Give the family a fish, and you will feed them for a day
Teach the family to fish, and you will feed them for a lifetime
Show the family how to process and market the fish,
and you will add income of the household and change their lives***

WHY FOOD PROCESSING?

The global processed food industry accounts for almost three-fourth of global food sales. Though the developing countries in Asia are primarily driving the growth of the industry, Pakistan lags far behind as a serious contender. Various attempts to boost the food processing industry have largely failed because they were supply-driven, capital intensive, and export-oriented from the outset. Despite such failures, it is imperative for Pakistan to recognize food processing as a priority sector and make concerted efforts on an urgent basis to fully reap the benefits of its tremendous opportunity, especially at the micro-small scale level, which could contribute toward addressing a myriad of Pakistan’s challenges.

BENEFITS OF FOOD PROCESSING

Aside from its economic viability and potential as an engine of economic growth, other benefits include:

Reduction of post-harvest loss: More than 30% of agricultural produce is wasted mainly due to a severe dearth of knowledge of efficient food processing techniques. Knowledge of low capital-intensive, “green” methods to process food would enable individuals and households to minimize currently high post-harvest losses.

Generation of employment/income: A high percentage of the agricultural workforce, especially women, are grossly underpaid and involved in physically strenuous labor. Introduction of basic food processing empowers individuals to engage in alternative income-generating activities, which are neither capital-intensive nor physically demanding, and opens possibilities to move up the value chain.

Enhancement of food security: Basic food processing/food preservation prolongs the shelf life of perishable produce and increases food security, which can be easily implemented at the individual or household level. In the absence of a cohesive national strategy to enhance food security and the emergence of an increasingly undernourished and vulnerable populace, the significance of this need cannot be under-stated.

OUR APPROACH

Previous ventures have focused on large-scale processing operations with emphasis on exports or macroeconomic earnings, which resulted in only a marginal impact at the grassroots. JIPL proposes an alternative approach and solution for Pakistan; implementation of **small-scale food processing**, using basic hygienic solar drying and frying methods. This also fosters a greater sense of individual ownership making it conducive to entrepreneurial initiatives. As the capacity of individual small-scale initiatives increase, clusters can be formed to increase the production volume for domestic consumption as well as prepare for penetrating the export market. JIPL’s approach is based on lessons learnt from its successful implementations in Uganda and Bangladesh, is both low-cost and easily replicable.



Sample Food Drying and Packaging Process

