



NIFTEM has potential to become Harvard of food processing tech, says Badal

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The National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) is a one-of-its-kind institute, and has the potential to become the Harvard of the food processing technology and management sector. It is university which, despite being nascent, has already been ranked 50th out of 3,007 universities in India. This was stated by Harsimrat Kaur Badal, minister for food processing industries, Government of India, at the sixth annual meeting of the NIFTEM Industry Forum in New Delhi.

Badal said, “Like people the world over, Indians are also becoming increasingly aware of healthy food habits. I have asked NIFTEM to explore how it can come up with Brand NIFTEM, which is healthier, fresher and cheaper.”

She added, “I foresee a lot of potential for the new facilities created at NIFTEM. The food testing laboratory should become a nodal lab for FSSAI and both domestic and international companies to rely on for testing of their products.”

The minister said, “NIFTEM should become the brand of the healthiest version of the processed food that they have to offer.”

She added, “The ministry, along with NIFTEM, had explored how NIFTEM could open up its incubation centres to new entrepreneurs can try out new things, while also providing them a market by opening at least two outlets - one at NIFTEM and one in the ministry premises.”

The minister invited suggestions from the food processing industry on how to best utilise the facilities at NIFTEM and make them beneficial to all stakeholders.

Badal invited the industry gathering to partner with NIFTEM and evolve as a guide to help the ministry form policies for the food processing sector.

Jagdish Prasad Meena, secretary, ministry of food processing industries (MoFPI), said, “In four years, the ministry has been able to bring the sector to forefront not just in the country but also at global level.”

He highlighted that the ministry received three or four foreign delegations every month as compared to only a few in a year till a few years ago.

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The secretary stated that the industry needed to do much more and establish itself as a creator and not just an imitator of foreign products, adding that the industry must come out with products that are globally competitive.

He added that great attention needed to be paid to research and development (R&D) and quality certifications for this.

On that note, Meena invited the industry to integrate itself with the R&D facilities that NIFTEM offers.

He added that the industry needs to pay more attention to quality of its product and proper certification to avoid rejection of exports by foreign countries.

The secretary also called for the development of protocols for storage of food crops in cold storages.

He highlighted that even specialised multi-product cold storages in the country are being used as common cold storage, whereas each food crop requires its own standards of storage.

The sixth meeting of NIFTEM Industry Forum was aimed at strengthening industry-NIFTEM collaboration.

NIFTEM, a premier institution under the aegis of the ministry of food processing industries, is a sector-specific institution to cater to various stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, food processing industry, exporters, policy-makers, governments and existing institutions.

The meeting is aimed at identifying challenges being faced by the Indian food industry, bridging the industry-academia gap by industry-oriented research projects, promoting science-technology collaboration based on innovation by developing new technologies, new product development and refining exciting technological infrastructure, which can be commercialised in future for the development of the food processing sector.

A technical session on pilot plants and operating terms of reference was chaired by Chindi Vasudevappa, vice-chancellor, NIFTEM, for a newly set-up incubation facility at NIFTEM, which has four pilot plants for fruit and vegetables, meat and poultry, milk and dairy, ready-to-eat and Indian traditional food.