

The Indian Edible Oils Scene - a Review

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Viewed in the Global Context, India is the largest producer of all oil seeds. It has the largest number of commercial varieties of oil seeds such as ground nut,rape and mustard, Sesame, Kardi, Niger, Soyabean, Sunflower, Castor, Copra, Cotton, Linseed, Rice bran and number of minor seeds of tree origin. It ranks first globally in respect of acreage especially under groundnut, sesame and niger, second in linseed and fourth in rape/mustard seed. Also it is the biggest grower of paddy which yield rice bran and cotton in terms of area and cotton seed oil. Also, India us the third biggest coconut growing country in the world.

Oil seeds constitute a major agricultural crop in India next only to food grains, cultivated over nearly 19.8 million hectares making it to almost 11% of the total cultivated area. The edible oil industry of the country has come of age. As a result, the demand supply gap has been narrowed down from 18-19 lakhs valued at Rs. 1061 crores in 1987-88 to mere two lakh tons valued at Rs. 40 crores in 1992-93. This growth was achieved both as a result of increase in the acreage of land brought under edible oil seed cultivation as also the yield per acre.

Several steps taken by the Government farmers , trade and industry are responsible for the happy state of affairs in the edible oil scene of India. This would also lead on to conclude that the consumer , the industry and so the Government are mighty happy and there is no cause for worry as for edible oil at least in the near future. But even a casual observer of the industry comes across several conflicting statements by people and disturbing news sometimes that leave them with a feeling that after all, all is not well and there is more to it than meets the eye.