

Post Event Report

Gulfood

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Dubai World Trade Centre

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1. Introduction

Gulfood 2021 marked the most successful return for food business worldwide as the only live, in-person food & beverage sourcing event of the year. The 26th edition of Gulfood – Gulfood 2021 – was held at Dubai World Trade Centre between February 21-25, 2021. The event featured 20 halls packed with diverse products. Exhibitors from 85 countries participated in the event. Importantly, buyers and attendees from 156 countries had the opportunity to meet up with the exhibitors. There was strong participation from countries like Brazil, Turkey, Egypt, Italy, Russia, Spain, UAE, USA, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

2. Sectors

This year exhibitors participated, broadly, in seven sectors including Pulses and Grains/Cereals, Dairy, Meat & Poultry, Beverages, Fats & Oils, Power Brands, and World Food. However, within these seven sectors, a wide range of products (as well as equipment) were on display. Following is a list of products/equipment that was presented during the event:

Product Index		
1. Back of House Equipment Bakery Machines, Boilers, Chefs Knives Containers, Freezing/Chilling Cabinets Fryers/Grills/Toasters, Ice cream/ Gelato Machines, Ovens, Utensils, Weighing Scales	6. Dry Goods Canned Products, Instant noodles, Instant soups, Pasta, Spices and Seasonings	11. Meat & Poultry Dried Meat, Organ Meat & Offal, Poultry, Processed Meat, Unprocessed Meat
2. Bakery Baked Goods, Baking Supplies, Cakes/Deserts Crisp Bread/Specialty Bread	7. Free-From Products Dairy Free Products, Fat-Free Products, Gluten-Free Products, Lactose-Free Products, Nut-Free Products, Sugar-Free Products, Vegetarian Products	12. Snacks Cereals/Fruit BARS, Crackers, Dates & Date Palm Products, Dried Fruit & Vegetables, Finger Food, Healthy Snacks, Nuts, Popcorns
3. Beverages Bottled Water, Carbonated Soft Drinks, Coffee, Syrups, Energy Drinks, Iced Tea Juices Nectars, Tea	8. Front of House Equipment Bakery & Confectionery Buffet ware, Bar or Counter, Blenders, Coffee Machines, Food Warming Cabinets, Menu Systems	13. Specialty Food Gift Packs/Hampers, Gourmet & Fine Food, Ready-To-Eat, Value-Added Food
4. Chilled & Fresh Food Eggs & Egg Products, Fresh Fruit & Vegetables, Fresh Ready Meals	9. Frozen Food Frozen Baked Goods, Frozen Dairy Products, Frozen Fruit & Vegetables, Frozen Meat, Frozen Ready Meals, Ice Cream	14. Tableware Cutlery/Silverware, Glassware/Crystalware, Table Accessories
5. Dairy Alternative Milk Products, Butter, Cheese, Cream & Cream Products, Dried Milk Products, Ice Cream, Milk, Yoghurt	10. Grains/Cereals/Flours Breakfast Cereals, Coffee Beans, Pulses, Rice, Wheat	

3. Pakistan's Participation

UAE represents one of the major markets for Pakistani food products, specially rice, fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen and fresh meat, sweets & confectionery products. More importantly, Dubai is a major re-export hub serving markets in GCC, Africa, and Far East. Many big buying houses are located in Dubai, representing contact points for Pakistani firms. Gulfood, therefore, provides a decent platform to Pakistani firms to engage potential buyers from across the world, in addition to the local market.

A total of 68 exhibitors from Pakistan participated in the event this year (**Annex A: List of Pakistani Exhibitors**). Out of this total, 22 firms participated under the banner of Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP). Pakistan/TDAP pavilion was well located at the main entrance of Zabeel Halls(**Annex B: Pictures of TDAP Pavilion**). Food products exhibited by Pakistani firms, this year, included rice, spices, confectionery, sweets & bakery items, herbal products, and chicken (frozen/ready-to-cook) products. During the five days event, Pakistani exhibitors had ample opportunity to interact with local and international buyers and visitors. Feedback provided by the exhibitors showed their general satisfaction with TDAP arrangements, specifically the location of pavilion and stall dimensions.

This year, because of COVID-19 related precautions, organizers had recommended social distancing and a maximum capacity of only three persons inside a stall. Therefore, business meetings inside exhibitor stalls were not possible. As an alternate arrangement, a common meeting area of 70 sqm. was constructed for the use of TDAP exhibitors. The space was utilized by all exhibitors for their business meetings, during the five days of event.

4. Sideline Events

On the sidelines, apart from the conventional exhibits, several shows/talks were featured in the event. A three days Gulfood Innovation Summit was organized during the event that included thought provoking conversations from global food authorities, business leaders, food technologists, sports stars, startup founders and senior analysts on succeeding in a fast-shifting food landscape. The key themes that were covered during these talks included food security, cooperation/adjusting food retail supply chain, technology, hospitality and trade facilitation.

Under the theme 'Tastes of the World', chefs from Italy, Germany, Portugal and the Middle East combined to showcase their genius that keeps them ahead. A separate kitchen was on display showing how creative ingredients combine with the most advanced kitchen and tools. A 'Flour Kitchen' was dedicated to the wonderful world of wheat flours displaying innovative wheat creations and pizza acrobatics. A 'Pastry Lab' provided visitors with an opportunity to dive into the magic and succulent science of pastry-making, with dessert maestros leading the line-up.

Several Chef Talks that unlocked the stories behind their culinary triumphs were also featured during the event. Thrilling culinary competitions were also held before a high-profile jury. A latte/coffee art grading battle was held after 3 days certified latte art courses. In partnership with 'The Marketing Society' several lectures were arranged on topics such as purpose driven marketing, evolution of consumer behavior, food/digital launches addressing post-covid consumer needs, and the future of food marketing and advertising.

5. Changing Consumer Demand

Food consultants are of the opinion that food products with scientifically proven health benefits are more popular than ever before. Food manufacturers, in order to maintain their market share, would have to position themselves accordingly to meet changing demand. As demand for healthier food continues to grow, it is imperative for manufacturers to invest in market research to understand how and where to position their products.

For example, dairy and juices are popular immunity-boosting breakfast foods. Research, in this area shows that yoghurt and yoghurt-based drinks are the most popular product for immune support across all geographic markets. A close second are juices made from fruit and vegetables. Non-dairy milks, like coconut, almond, oats, and soya have also seen a tremendous uptick in this space. Companies should also consider fortifying existing products with approved nutrients. French food giant, Danone, for example, reformulated its yoghurt with Vitamins B6 and D.

Here in the Middle East, according to a survey, consumers consider the top immune-boosting ingredients to be spices, such as turmeric, ginger and black pepper. They also rate Vitamin C highly and we expect products fortified with these vitamins and minerals to grow in demand. Overall, supermarkets are the top destinations for consumer shopping for fortified food and beverages, suggesting that it is important to position any new products in this category in mainstream retail channels.

COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated awareness of holistic diets. These range from keto and paleo diets to plant-based and 'free-from' diets. 'Free from' has seen increased demand from consumers searching for health and wellbeing. Dairy-free, gluten-free and sugar-free products are also often associated with gut health, adding to their appeal. The popularity of both paleo and keto diets is also worth noting. With an increased following over recent years, both diets have inspired innovation among manufacturers, especially within the 'on-the-go' snacks market. South African biltong; baked vegetable crisps; cauliflower and sweet potato; and protein bars have all performed exceptionally well in this segment.

Lastly, plant based dietary choices have seen the most growth over the past year and demand continues to rise. Outpacing all other food categories in growth amid the pandemic, plant-based 'meat' sales shot up 148 percent in 2020. As a further indication of this category's huge potential, overall plant-based food market is predicted to grow from \$5 billion in 2021 to more than \$74 billion by 2027.

6. Recommendations – Takeaways

- a. The food and beverage industry is the second largest industry of Pakistan. Pakistan is one of the largest milk producers in the world, with dairy sector contributing 11 percent to the GDP. However, out of the seven broad sectors on display during the event, Pakistani exhibitors mainly participated in only one

sector i.e. Pulses and Grains/Cereals. Even within this sector, rice exhibitors represented majority of the participants. Notable omissions included Meat & Poultry (K&N being the only Pakistani exhibitor), and Dairy sectors. Ensuring food security is a priority for UAE government and is a trade avenue where Pakistani firms can make inroads in international markets using the platform provided by Gulfood.

It is suggested that TDAP encourages participation in all sectors that are available in Gulfood including, food example, appliances/back-of-house equipment, tableware, front-of-house equipment; in addition to the usual food products. Moreover, number of participants should be limited to a fixed number, so that space reservation and stand construction is planned accordingly as a prior.

- b. As indicated earlier, on the sidelines of the event/inside the halls; several sessions were organized involving chef talks, food workshops, talks on innovation in food, and presentations on world foods. These gatherings provided a good opportunity to showcase Pakistani culinary strengths. However, there was no representation from Pakistan in these sessions. TDAP, in coordination with the office of Trade & Investment Counsellor/ Event Organizers can explore participation from Pakistan in these sessions, in order to project our culinary expertise.
- c. Food market is evolving fast and navigating this new market is not without its challenges. Compliance with various country regulations is a particular hurdle. Governments in the GCC have formulated regulations to enhance awareness about healthier food that provides medical benefits not only in the wake of COVID-19 but also amid region's ongoing rise of lifestyle disorders such as heart disease, stroke, obesity and type two diabetes. Consumers in the region also seek a reduction in processed sugar, salt, oil, allergens, and preservatives. For manufacturers, however, there is a delicate balance between preserving the consumer's taste and adhering to government restrictions and maintaining prices.

Globally, research findings or scientific-data claims printed on product labels are top purchase drivers. The health pandemic seems to have skewed the preference towards science over nature, however, and today there is greater acceptance of fortified products. Vitamins A, B6, B9, B12, C and E, and the minerals zinc, copper, iron, and selenium, all have worldwide approval, including the regulatory authorities in UAE, when it comes to general immunity claims. The global growth of 'food as a medicine' is not likely to wane anytime soon. When one considers

the rate at which food retailing and production are transforming around the world – from how food is designed to where it is grown and how it is consumed – the food industry will look dramatically different very soon. This means that manufacturers must be quicker to innovate and more agile than ever before. These trends have implications for Pakistani food sector, where more investment in research and innovation will be required to meet this changing demand. TDAP should play a proactive role in raising awareness amongst manufacturers in order to remain competitive.



Adeem Khan

Trade & Investment Counsellor

Annex A: List of Pakistani Participants

Name	Sector
A&Y Food Industries	Pulses and Grain/Cereals – Assorted food products
Ahmed Food Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted food products
Ajmair Foods Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Ambaala Bakers and Sweets	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Amir Rice Traders	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Asian Food Industries Limited	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Barkat Rice	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Bismillah Sehla Processing	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Continental Biscuits Limited	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Danpak Food Industries	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Dawn Frozen Food Company Limited	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted food/frozen products
East Rice Company	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Eastern Products Limited	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Salt/Spices
English Biscuits Manufacturers	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Engro Exim Agri Products	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Five Star Enterprises	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Garibsons (Pvt) Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Golden Harvest Foods Private Ltd.	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Bakery Items/ Breads
Guard Agricultural Research & Services	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Haji Khushi Muhammad & Company	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Hasan Ali Rice Export Company	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Hayat Industries (Pvt) Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Hemani General Trading	Tastes of the World/Power Brands – Herbal Products
Hilal Foods (Pvt) Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Ideal Rice Industries Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Ismail Industries Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Jasons Group	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Jatlee Commodities Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Jazaa Foods Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
K&Ns Foods Pvt Ltd	Poultry – Chicken products
Kafi Kitchen	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Kasur Rice & General Mills	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Khalid Foods	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Sweets/Bakery
Khan Rice Mills	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
KM Food Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Lazzat Food	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Manal Foods pvt ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Marhaba Laboratories	Tastes of the World/Power Brands – Herbal Products
Mast Qalander Group of Companies	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Matco Foods Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Mehran Bottlers Pvt Ltd	Beverages – Carbonated drinks/juices
Mehran Spice & Food Industries	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Spices
Meskay & Ferntee Trading Company	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice/wheat
Minex International	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Salt
Mitchell's Fruit Farms	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Moon Rice Corporation	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
Multi Food Industries	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Frozen food
National Foods	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Spices
Quice Food Industries	Beverages – Carbonated drinks/ Juices
Rasul Floor Mills Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Rehmet-e-Shereen	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Sweets/Bakery
Rice Experts Enterprises	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
S Amden & Company	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products/herbal
Shangrila Foods Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Soneri Group	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Soofi Foods	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Dates
Staple Foods Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Food grains
Syed Agha Rice Mills	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Rice
United King Foods Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Vania Food Industry	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Volka Food International	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery
Young's Pvt Ltd	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Assorted Food Products
Z.A. Foods	Pulses and Grain/cereals – Confectionery

Annex B: Pictures of TDAP Pavilion

