

News from the World Of Spices

December 2020



From the Chairman's desk

Dear Member,

The World Spice Organisation team wishes all our members a very Happy New Year 2021 and hopefully we will see a far happier and normal year as compared to the one gone by.

WSO undertook some major activities in the last quarter of 2020 despite the constraints on us due to the pandemic. These are given below in brief:

Industry response to the new regulations concerning spices

WSO has been taking care to ensure that all relevant information on the latest regulations related to the spice sector is circulated in a timely manner to the members. We also have submitted our suggestions for modifications of different standards and regulations released by BIS, ISO, FSSAI and other regulating bodies. WSO's suggestions were taken into consideration in the final gazette notification regarding the microbiological specifications of spices released by FSSAI. Similarly, our representatives participated in a meeting with the FSSAI Scientific Panel on Spices and Culinary Herbs to present our case on black pepper.

National Sustainable Spice Programme (NSSP)

The activities under NSSP have restarted as far as possible, given the restrictions imposed due to the Covid virus, by harnessing the possibilities of using virtual media to connect with the participants. Several rounds of communication were held with the selected Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs) in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states to ensure their suitability for participation in the Chilli and Turmeric Sustainable Spice programmes. Sustainable agriculture practices document to be followed under NSSP was circulated among all FPOs for reference. Documents on the raw material Quality specifications to be complied with by farmers are also being developed and will be updated soon in the NSSP / WSO website.

A two-day NSSP Guideline Setting program was conducted for Master Trainers / Experts of five NGOs representing nearly 20 FPOs operating in the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana region on 3rd and 4th of December 2020. This session aimed at educating the participants on different aspects of Sustainable Agriculture Practices, its importance and methods for implementation at the farm level. We intend extending this programme to cover Cumin, Coriander and Pepper farmers in the coming months. We expect these experts to conduct training programmes for the respective trainers under them so that the practices are passed on to all the farmers attached to the FPOs.

International Spice Conference – ISC 2021

As most of the members are aware, the All India Spices Exporters Forum (AISEF) will be holding the International Spice Conference (ISC) 2021 in January as a virtual event in view of

the current situation. This conference will be held over five sessions between January 13, 2021 and March 11, 2021. The theme of ISC 2021 is "Beyond Tradition: Shaping a New Spice World" and will be of special interest to WSO members because there will be separate sessions on Sustainability and Climate Change. We are planning to bring in well known experts and practitioners of these two important subjects and are sure that it will benefit our industry to listen to them.

Once again, I wish all our dear members the very best in the New Year with the hope that we will continue to show our resilience and inner strength in the face of such adverse conditions.

With best regards and wishes,
Ramkumar Menon

Why we must scale up climate-smart agriculture to feed a hungrier world

- Climate-smart agriculture, or CSA, is an approach to food production that can improve productivity, increase resilience to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- At scale, these practices have the potential to feed the planet.
- Scaling up will require massive stakeholder engagement, cooperation and investment on every level.

With the world's population estimated to hit 9.8 billion by 2050 – a 2 billion increase over the next 30 years – our current food production systems face an enormous challenge, made even more daunting by climate change. Experts say agriculture must increase its output by a startling 50% in the next 30 years – while *halving* its carbon footprint.

To address the world's ballooning food needs in the midst of a worsening climate crisis, we must dramatically scale up climate-smart agriculture (CSA), an approach to food production that can improve productivity, increase resilience to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

And it's possible. As we have learned from implementation for over a decade in Africa and at the farm level around the world, localized

2020: Undeclared Allergens Continue to be the Leading Cause of U.S. Food Recalls

For many years now, undeclared allergens have been the leading cause of food recalls in the United States. With one month remaining in 2020, this continues to hold true with 13 out of 26 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food recalls caused by undeclared or misbranded allergens. Meanwhile, of the 338 U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recall press releases that FMI has tracked this year[1], 177 have been caused by a variety of errors associated with allergens. Many of these recalls are due to labeling errors, such as the omission of allergens on product packages and using incorrect labels on product packages.

Having accurate allergen information is critical to the estimated 32 million people in the United States who suffer from food allergies. According to Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE), each year over 200,000 Americans require emergency medical care due to allergic reactions caused by food. Within the last decade, the prevalence of reported food allergies has significantly increased, with an estimated 8% of children and 11% of adults impacted by food allergies. The symptoms and severity of food allergy

<p>CSA practices have the potential for far-reaching positive impacts on the global food system when scaled. Read More</p>	<p>reactions can vary, ranging from a mild response (such as itchy, tingling tongue) to life-threatening anaphylaxis. Read More</p>
<p>FSSAI frames regulations for regn of foreign food manufacturing facilities</p> <p>In a major move in line with the US FDA, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has decided to frame new regulations related to inclusion of registration and inspection of foreign food manufacturing facilities.</p> <p>In this regard, the apex food regulator has issued a Draft on Food Safety and Standards (Import) Amendment Regulations, 2020, on November 16, and sought comments from stakeholders within 60 days.</p> <p>In the Import Regulations of 2017, the FSSAI proposed to add a new 'Chapter XIV' on registration and inspection of foreign food manufacturing facilities, wherein based on specific risk, categories of food products imported into India will be decided for which inspection or audit of foreign food manufacturing facilities producing such categories of foods shall be mandatory.</p> <p>According to the draft, the facilities falling under such categories and desirous to export such articles of food to India should register with the food authority before exporting to India.</p> <p>"Foreign food manufacturing facilities either directly or through importer may apply for registration," reads the draft. The draft also prescribes processing of applications for registration of foreign food manufacturing facilities.</p> <p>It says that the food authority will nominate officials from FSSAI and relevant ministries or departments for the purpose of inspection under these regulations. FSSAI will also prescribe the manner in which the inspection will be done.</p> <p>Read More</p>	<p>FSSAI proposes amendments in import regulations for food products</p> <p>Food regulator FSSAI has proposed amendments in import regulations, making registration and audit mandatory for foreign food manufacturing facilities that exports certain categories of food products to India.</p> <p>The categories of food products would be specified by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) from time to time based on the risk. The FSSAI has sought comments from public on its draft regulations "Food Safety and Standards (Import) Amendment Regulations, 2020". It seeks to amend the import regulations of 2017.</p> <p>As per draft regulations, "Food Authority may from time to time based on the risk specify the categories of food products to be exported to India, for which inspection or audit of Foreign Food manufacturing facilities producing such categories of foods shall be mandatory."</p> <p>The foreign food manufacturing facilities falling under such categories and desirous to export such article of food to India should register with the food authority before exporting to India, it added. Foreign Food manufacturing facility either directly or through importer may apply for registration, the draft said.</p> <p>On receipt of a complete application, the Food Authority would process the application for inspection and issuance of registration or rejection of the application. "Officials from FSSAI and relevant ministry/ organization/ department for the purpose of inspection of foreign food manufacturing facilities shall be nominated by the Food Authority," the draft regulations said.</p> <p>Read More</p>

Unregulated food industry a public health nightmare

FOOD safety remains still elusive as in almost all steps of food production, safety standards are compromised. There are documented evidences that the food comes in contact with hazardous chemical substances or get adulterated in every stage. It is reported how the unregulated use of pesticide and chemical fertiliser has contaminated produces. There are reports that suggest metal and toxic wastes released into the earth by way of unplanned disposal find their way to cow milk. Studies show a high level of lead consumption as a result of prolonged consumption of some canned cooking oil and adulterated turmeric. In May 2019, the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution found 18 food items, including mustard oil, drinking water, vermicelli, turmeric, chilli and curry powder, salt, clarified butter and noodles to be substandard. With pesticide residues, colouring agents and formaldehyde in fruit and vegetables, public health is largely at risk. Government agencies, including the Standards and Testing Institutions responsible for regulating the food market have been lax in enforcing food safety laws.

The food minister acknowledges that food safety standards are regularly violated, but squarely blames the people for this as they do not care for safety. Rights activists, however, blame the government for its insincerity and business entities for the continued violation of regulations out of profiteering interests. The Bangladesh Food Safety Authority can hardly perform its role for lack of human resources.

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FDA policy change on retail lists takes final step

The FDA is out with "final guidance" for industry and agency staff for the release of retailers that receive recalled foods so they might be more easily identified by consumers.

Current FDA policy prohibits the release of such retailer lists to protect the disclosure of "confidential" business ties. USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) routinely releases retail lists and has done so since 2007 when Dr. Richard Raymond was Under Secretary for Food Safety during the Bush Administration.

FDA Friday announced the availability of final guidance entitled "Public Availability of Lists of Retail Consignees to Effectuate Certain Human and Animal Food Recalls; Guidance for Industry and FDA Staff."

FDA says it intends to focus on recalls where there is a reasonable probability that the use of, or exposure to, the food will cause serious adverse health consequences or death to humans or animals (Class I recalls).

FDA may also publicize retail consignee lists for other food recalls as described in the guidance. FDA says it's goal is to publicize retail consignee lists for these food recalls where providing this additional information will be of the most use to consumers to help them identify recalled food and to determine whether that food is in their possession as effectively and quickly as possible.

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7 Trends Expediting Modernization in Food Industry

For a long time, companies could effectively run food safety programs using only manual methods of quality management, such as pen, paper, spreadsheets and emails. Those practices have served the food industry well, but it was only a matter of time before food safety and quality management systems became mostly an exercise of technology.

Even before COVID-19, industry trends and government requirements (e.g., FSMA, the FDA's New Era of Smarter Food Safety) were setting roadmaps for modernizing food safety and quality management with technology. Additionally, the food industry is thirsty for better performance, more insights and data-based decisions—all things that need more sophistication than manual systems.

From my viewpoint, I see at least seven additional trends that are also expediting modernization in our industry.

1. A shift toward proactive mindset versus reactive habits.
2. Empowerment of employees to act as chief quality officers.
3. An increase in virtual audits and self-assessments.
4. Continuous quality monitoring is overtaking point-in-time audits.
5. Consolidation of multiple programs into single software solutions.
6. Innovations to share costs with suppliers.
7. Standards bodies are accelerating plans to update requirements.

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'Food-o-copeia' — India's plan to boost corporate compliance of food standards

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is preparing to launch a "food-'o'-copeia", or a crisp compilation of regulations and procedures that need to be followed while manufacturing and selling food products in India.

In doing so, India's apex food regulator is drawing from a concept popular in the pharmaceutical industry, where a book called 'pharmacopoeia' serves as a one-stop guide for medicinal drugs, listing their quality specifications, effects, directions for use, and general requirements.

"To improve the compliance of food regulations, the FSSAI is working on the creation of 17 category-wise monographs — 16 based on product category and one based on general requirements — which would comprise the food-'o'-copeia," FSSAI CEO Arun Singhal told ThePrint.

The 16 product categories will include milk and milk products, fats and oils, cereals and pulses, fish and fish products, meat and meat products, and nutraceuticals, among others.

Currently, there are over 21 regulations covering food products, and combing through each of them to identify the standards that apply to different products is a tedious task for stakeholders such as field officials, food business operators (FBOs) and consumers. The food-'o'-copeia is expected to resolve this challenge, Singhal said.

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FAO guide helps national agencies rank food safety risks

A new guide published by the FAO was created to help countries more effectively inform domestic food safety priorities.

Risk ranking helps to identify which food safety issues have the greatest public health impact by taking into account the likelihood and severity, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The guidance provides direction to national food safety authorities on how to start ranking the public health risk posed by foodborne hazards and foods in their countries using a three-step approach.

It focuses on the ranking of microbial and chemical hazards based on their impact on public health and represents the first step toward a systematic and evidence-based approach to identify the main risks in food safety.

With limited human and financial resources, it is impossible for national authorities to efficiently address all food safety threats. It is important to rank concerns and prioritize efforts so that resources can be allocated to best minimize foodborne illness risks. Several countries have started using risk-based food safety systems.

Risk ranking provides national authorities with the scientific basis to make informed regulatory decisions; enhance disease surveillance; determine how food inspections are allocated; oversee inspection and enforcement efforts; and inform the public of food safety threats.

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Companies Come Together to Promote Sustainable Agriculture With Carbon Credits

Several global companies have committed to supporting farmers in the United States through agricultural carbon credits.

Indigo Agriculture, a U.S.-based agricultural technology company, announced that it had secured commitments from companies like JPMorgan Chase, IBM, Barclays, Boston Consulting Group, Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, and New Belgium Brewing for creating financial incentives for farmers through carbon credits.

This represents a major milestone in the global effort to leverage agriculture as a climate solution by creating financial incentives for farming carbon to enhance agriculture. Carbon farming loosely refers to agricultural methods aimed at sequestering atmospheric carbon into the soil. This helps increase soil's carbon content and can aid plant growth, increase soil organic matter, improve soil water retention, among other benefits. These global companies have committed to buying carbon credits at \$20/ton of carbon dioxide equivalent abated in the 2020 growing season.

"Every pound of green in a field comes from about a pound of carbon dioxide that plants pulled out of the sky. By farming in ways that store this carbon in the soil, growers have the potential to add a new source of revenue, improve their land, and help our environment," said Geoffrey von Maltzahn, co-founder and Chief Innovation Officer at Indigo Ag. "The support demonstrated by these leading brands is a testament to agriculture's power as a technology to help our climate."

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Biodiversity governance: Access and benefit sharing and its implications on agricultural resources

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was created with wild biodiversity in mind, especially medicinal plants where the source of a particular genetic resource and associated traditional knowledge can often be established easily.

The situation is different with respect to genetic resources for food and agriculture, including crops and livestock. Humans have modified these in an incremental manner and in many different geographical locations far from where they were originally domesticated.

In recognition of this situation, a special instrument has been developed for access to crop genetic resources, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

This treaty establishes a multilateral access and benefit sharing (ABS) system for a common pool of 64 most important food crops and forage crops that are held in ex-situ collections worldwide.

The practice of agriculture is a dynamic process. Since the start of agriculture, humankind has continuously modified plant genetic resources to suit the special nature of agricultural biodiversity, its distinctive features and problems needing distinctive solutions, which were acknowledged by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD at its fifth meeting in 2002. Traditional agriculture and conventional practices are exempted from the purview of benefit-sharing. However, there are various aspects related to agriculture, such as the use of genetic resources and making commercially distinct products for medicinal use, which can come under the purview of the ABS regime.

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To limit global warming, the global food system must be reimagined

If we stopped burning all fossil fuels this minute, would that be enough to keep a lid on global warming?

According to UC Santa Barbara ecology professor David Tilman, petroleum energy sources are only part of the picture. In a paper published in the journal *Science*, Tilman and colleagues predict that even in the absence of fossil fuels, cumulative greenhouse gas emissions could still cause global temperatures to exceed climate change targets in just a few decades.

The source? Our food system.

"Global food demand and the greenhouse gases associated with it are on a trajectory to push the world past the one-and-a-half degree goal, and make it hard to stay under the two degree limit," said Tilman, who holds a dual appointment at UCSB's Bren School of Environmental Science & Management and at the University of Minnesota. The world's growing population as well as its diet are driving food production practices that generate and release massive and increasing amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. According to the paper, left unchecked, agricultural emissions alone could exceed the 1.5°C limit by about 2050.

These findings are especially concerning given that we haven't stopped using fossil fuels, Tilman said. And with a 1°C average increase in global temperature since 1880, we've got only a slim margin before global warming results in widespread sea level rise, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss and other effects that will change life as we know it. [Read More](#)

Europe's Green Deal offshores environmental damage to other nations

The European Union's Green Deal risks becoming a bad deal for the planet. This ambitious package of policies, announced in December 2019, aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. It sets targets to reduce carbon emissions and enhance forests, farming, green transport, recycling and renewable energy. The EU wants to show "the rest of the world how to be sustainable and competitive", as Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, said.

Problems lurk behind the rhetoric. First, the EU depends heavily on agricultural imports; only China imports more. Last year, the region bought in one-fifth of the crops and one-tenth of meat and dairy products consumed within its borders (118 megatonnes (Mt) and 45 Mt, respectively). This enables Europeans to farm less intensively. Yet the imports come from countries with environmental laws that are less strict than those in Europe. And EU trade agreements do not require imports to be produced sustainably.

In the past 18 months, the EU has signed deals (some pending ratification) covering nearly half of its crop imports — with the United States, Indonesia, Malaysia and Mercosur, the South American trade bloc comprising Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Pacts with Australia and New Zealand are on the table. Each nation defines and enforces sustainability differently. Many use pesticides, herbicides and genetically modified (GM) organisms that are strictly limited or forbidden in the EU.

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Biodiversity monitoring programmes need a culture of collaboration

Ecological monitoring is the recording of biological diversity and its spatial and temporal changes. The lack of monitoring programs which cover a broad range of species often means that, in many countries, no clear assessments can be made about the status of biodiversity. As a result, factors which may lead to declines cannot be identified and remedied.

The necessary information, and the various stakeholders such as public authorities, scientists, specialist organizations, nature conservation associations and certain professional groups from the private sector would definitely be available in many places. However, they cannot always work in a coordinated way, as they often operate within very different institutional frameworks. Valuable knowledge and data are therefore not pooled, and gaps in the collection of data not filled. "This is why we have to create a culture of integration involving all those who are active in biodiversity monitoring," says the first author of the study, Dr. Hjalmar Kühl, ecologist at iDiv and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (MPI EVA).

This can be achieved by bringing the various stakeholder groups together. "What's needed is a framework within which decisions are not always made centrally, but in which the various groups network, trust each other and decide together what needs to be done," says Kühl. "This self-organization can increase the participants' motivation and thus ensure greater acceptance on the part of the respective interest groups and anchor the topic of biodiversity more firmly in the public consciousness." [Read More](#)

Healthy Soil: Why And How To Invest In This Sustainable Opportunity

By 2050, between nine and 11 billion people could be living on the planet. How will we have enough to eat?

In the late 1960s, the Green Revolution brought chemical fertilizers and high-yielding crop varieties with the hopes of solving the food security issue. Even though the industrialization of agriculture dramatically increased yields in the short-term, we are now reaching the point of diminishing returns. Ironically, the Green Revolution has accelerated climate change through land degradation, deforestation and natural resource misuse. The impacts of climate change negatively affect all four pillars of food security: availability, access, utilization and stability. But there is still time for a change.

The current agricultural system both contributes to and experiences the detrimental impacts of climate change. It contributes 24% of all human-generated greenhouse emissions. The food system is also experiencing the effects of climate change in the forms of increased warming, changing precipitation patterns and greater frequencies of extreme events. Furthermore, the 2019 IPCC report gave high confidence that the aforementioned manifestations of climate change will negatively impact crop yields and result in decreased global food security. Although a wide range of climate change mitigation measures must be taken across sectors, improving soil health could improve climate health.

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We can't meet the SDGs without improving farmers' incomes. Here's why

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October was a powerful reminder that agricultural development plays a pivotal role in addressing global poverty. Roughly 80% of the world's poorest people – close to 650 million – live in rural areas and rely largely on farming to make a living. This holds true even amid greater urbanization and employment growth in non-agricultural sectors. In other words, we cannot address global poverty without addressing farmers' incomes.

The past two decades have seen a growing emphasis on sustainable food production. Consumers, governments and companies are increasingly aware of the consequences of inaction and the magnitude of the challenges facing us. This has led to advances in sustainable agriculture in areas such as soil health, water and landscape management, as well as more sophisticated tools for monitoring progress along the way.

Smallholder farmers are the backbone of agriculture and food security in developing countries, where, according to estimates from The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, they account for up to 70% of national food production. What's more, it is estimated that smallholders are responsible for 30-34% of the world's total food production. With demand for sustainable farming on the rise, these smallholder farmers are being asked to do more and more to maintain access to global markets. At the same time, the majority are not financially supported or incentivized for making these commitments. [Read More](#)

Is the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy a silver bullet for sustainable agriculture?

For a long time, shelves full of food have been the norm for EU citizens. No one ever questioned the security, origin or quality of our food. However, with COVID-19, the issue has suddenly become omnipresent. Is our system resilient enough to ensure sustainable, safe, affordable and good food in Europe?

While the European Commission has presented the Farm to Fork Strategy as Europe's silver bullet for a sustainable food chain; however, I believe that the strategy is not yet there. In my opinion, we need to consider five key aspects to balance both the need to ensure our food production is economically viable, affordable and secure, and meets the need to be sustainable, protecting the environment.

First, involve all actors. The Farm to Fork Strategy needs cooperation and acceptance; the strategy can only succeed if all actors feel included and that their input is valued. We need to recognise that there is rarely a single solution to any problem.

Whereas I like the idea of the strategy, unfortunately the current text focuses too much on the "Farm" aspect, rather than the entire chain. Rather than flooding the sector with additional requirements, let us help farmers make the necessary investments and changes for the future.

Second, rely on scientific policymaking: The Farm to Fork Strategy was published in the midst of a Coronavirus crisis, and thus could not take this into account. While we can say now – fortunately – that our food sector has proved resilient, the long-term impact remains unclear.

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US asks India to postpone mandatory GM-free certification for food imports

Submits to the WTO that there is lack of technical rationale for the measure

The US is stepping up pressure on India to not move forward on its proposal to mandate 'non-GM (genetically modified) origin' and 'GM free' certificates for some agricultural imports from January 1, 2021. It has given a fresh submission at the World Trade Organization asking India to reconsider the measure and delay implementation so that all member countries can submit their comments on the proposed requirement.

"India's requirements appear to apply to imports of all listed products, regardless of whether GE (genetically engineered) varieties of those products are in commercial production in the country of export. All members exporting to India may encounter additional barriers to trade for those crops listed under annex I of India's order," the US stated voicing concerns in its submission to the WTO committee on Sanitary & Phytosanitary (SPS) measures.

The order could also result in *de facto* bans on products exported by biotechnology-producing members who do not or cannot provide such certifications, it added.

"Given the potential for significant unnecessary disruptions to trade and the lack of technical rationale or justification for this measure, the US requests that India reconsider its temporary measure and delay implementation until members can submit comments," it said. [Read More](#)

Consumers increasingly concerned about food safety and environment: Study

The study by Tetra Pak and Ipsos says there has been a 10 percent increase in global concern about food safety and future food supplies

Consumers are increasingly concerned about food safety, at the same time concern for the environment remains strikingly powerful in the pandemic times, according to a study conducted by Tetra Pak in collaboration with Ipsos.

The 13th edition of the Tetra Pak Index saw a nearly 10 per cent increase in global concern about food safety and future food supplies, compared to 2019. In addition, more than 50 per cent of consumers not only believe that improving food safety is the responsibility of manufacturers, they see it as the number one issue that companies need to tackle now and in the future, the report said.

"According to this year's research, health is deeply connected to heightened issues of food safety and hygiene -- with two-thirds of consumers saying that being healthy is being safe and 60 per cent of consumers globally saying they worry about the food they buy being hygienic and safe," the company said in a statement.

"57 per cent of consumers globally state they are likely to avoid products which have a lot of packaging, with China (71 per cent), India (60 percent) and the UK (59 per cent) over-indexing," the company added.

"Online conversations in India show a strong link between reducing food waste and preventing hunger, with a focus on the responsibilities of government, business and individuals to work together to that end.

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'Massive transformation': WEF delivers blueprint for China to tackle food safety, waste and security with green tech

A new World Economic Forum (WEF) report commissioned for the Chinese government's research and policy arm has urged the country to employ green technologies to tackle its local food safety, food waste and environmental challenges - but also warned that various barriers still lie ahead.

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Tetra Pak study reveals concerns over food safety, environment and pandemic

Tetra Pak has revealed the findings from its global research study, in partnership with market research company Ipsos, showing food safety is a major issue for society.

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Vanilla and black pepper fraud: Researchers develop method to detect adulteration in food

Researchers in Denmark have developed a food fraud detection method for vanilla and black pepper, both of which can be adulterated for 'high economic gain', DTU's Amelia Sina Wilde tells FoodNavigator.

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