

An exclusive conversation with Mr. Rohit Bhatia

Managing Director, Kagome Foods India



Please give us a brief overview about your company.

Kagome Foods India is the fully owned subsidiary of Kagome Japan, the No. 1 Tomato Company in Japan since 1899. Kagome Foods India has a range of preservative-free tomato products that drive convenience, consistency, and customizability offering an enhanced cooking experience to chefs.

Kagome offers various tomato-based food solutions for HoReCa, QSRs and Cloud Kitchens. The company's launch portfolio comprises products like Crushed Tomatoes, Tomato Puree, Tomato Soup Base, Tomato Makhani Gravy Base, Italian Pizza Pasta Sauce, Classic Pizza Pasta Sauce, and Thick Tomato Concentrate. Our entire product range is **preservative free, with no artificial flavours or colours**. With a strong seed-to-table presence, combined with its Japanese lineage, the company offers 'Global quality products at Local Prices'.

The company has a state-of-the-art

manufacturing facility at Nasik, with world class processing and packaging equipment. The manufacturing facility conforms to the highest global food safety standards and is **FSSC 22000 certified**.

What are the ranges of products you are dealing and what are your USP?

Kagome Foods India has a range of preservative-free tomato products, that drive convenience, consistency, and customizability, offering an enhanced cooking experience to chefs. Kagome Foods India's launch portfolio comprises of products like Crushed Tomatoes, Tomato Puree, Tomato Soup Base, Tomato Makhani Gravy Base, and Italian Pizza Pasta Sauce.

With fresh tomatoes, restaurants often grapple with seasonal inconsistencies in quality (colour, flavour) and price. Moreover, it takes considerable time and effort in boiling, peeling and crushing tomatoes.

To address these challenges, Kagome has developed its signature product, **Crushed Tomatoes**. Rich red colour, fresh flavour and a chunky texture, along with consistent taste and price throughout the year, make Crushed Tomatoes ideal for extensive use in the food service kitchens.

Crushed Tomatoes can be used in a wide range of tomato-based applications in Indian and Italian cuisines like Makhani and Kadhai based dishes, tomato soup, shorba, pizzas, pastas and more. Kagome Crushed Tomatoes add taste and freshness, just like raw tomatoes. The company has several exciting products targeted at Chefs, in the pipeline.

By launching more products such as Crushed Tomatoes, Kagome Foods India's vision is to usher in a Tomato Revolution maximizing the adoption of processed tomato products, by creating a comprehensive new value



chain from seed to table.

Kagome's USPs:

- Seed to table value chain - Only company with a presence in the end-to-end value chain, from seed to table. Kagome's wholly owned subsidiary (seed) company, supplies specialized, tested and approved seeds to farmers in Nashik, who grow them under the expert guidance of our agronomy teams. Our agronomists impart guidance to farmers to grow high yield, high-quality tomatoes at a low cost. These juicy tomatoes are harvested only when they are fully ripened, sorted and crushed in state-of-the-art plants customized for processing tomatoes.
- Global Quality at Local Prices - Our rigorous quality controls, ensure safety and reassurance, enabling us to offer global quality products at local prices.
- Preservative free portfolio - Our entire product range is preservative free, with no artificial flavours or colours.
- Japanese technology -In India, the norm is to process tomato products on the mango line. However, Kagome has made significant investments in factory infrastructure, to customize our processing line for tomato-based products, to make them better suited for use in restaurants

What are your predictions about the growth of processed tomato in India and how you see the demand for your products? Are you also selling your products online?

The food processing industry is one of the largest industries in India. It ranks fifth in terms of production, consumption, and exports. Food processing has a key role to play in linking Indian farmers to consumers in both domestic and international markets. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) is making huge efforts to encourage investments across the value chain. The food processing sector has enormous potential to propel all round development, given its entire footprint across agriculture, industry and services. It can lead to gainful employment opportunities and put purchasing power in the hands of the people in both rural and urban regions.



Focusing specifically on tomato processing, India is the second largest producer and consumer of Tomatoes in the world with a production of 20 million tonnes. It is ready for large investments across food supply chains. Processed tomato products account for less than 1% of India's total consumption of tomatoes, presenting a huge opportunity to Kagome Foods India, while in the US the processed tomato consumption is in excess of 75%.

Presently, the company is not selling its products online. However, we have a strong offline distribution network in the key metros of Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Bangalore and Pune, with a plan to cover the top 10 foodservice markets in India shortly.

Please give us a brief about your R&D team and their contribution to making quality and hygienic products?

Kagome has a close knit, multiple nationality R&D team, with experts from India and Japan working together to deliver Global Quality Products at Local Prices. This brings to the table an unmatched understanding of the local requirements of the Indian market, along with global best practices in quality and food processing. This has culminated in a unique product portfolio, which is completely preservative free, with no artificial flavours or colours. We have some new to the market products and formats, like Crushed Tomatoes and Tomato Soup Base.

Our state-of-the-art manufacturing facility at Nasik is built with world class processing and packaging equipment. Our facility conforms to the highest global food safety standards and is FSSC 22000 certified. Stringent Japanese quality control, along with food safety best practices embedded at each stage of manufacturing ensure highest quality and hygienic products, which are gently processed to retain their natural flavour and texture.

What is Kagome's plan of job opportunities in India?

Kagome's approach to developing the seed-to-table value chain is unique and increasing its operations will create employment. The next 5 years will see job creation across sales, manufacturing and supply chain.

What are your future plans for expansion?

- Increase farmer partners under our Contract Farming Program, from 200 (presently) to 1,000
- Expand our distribution reach from our existing markets of Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Bangalore and Pune, to cover the top 10 foodservice markets in India
- Expand our product range, to focus on a wider range of tomatoes and possibly onion-based products
- Further investments in value chain and factory infrastructure