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TRANSFORMING AGRO-BASED INDUSTRIALIZATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF UTTAR PRADESH FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY POLICY 2023

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ABSTRACT

Uttar Pradesh has a unique historical dilemma: it produces an enormous amount of raw agricultural output without much processed food as added value. Food processing in Uttar Pradesh (UP) is only 6% of total production, compared to 10% nationally and much lower than 30% in China, 70% in Brazil, and 80% in Malaysia. The UP Government implemented the Food Processing Industry Policy 2023 to address this issue through the Department of Horticulture and Food Processing. This paper analyses the objectives of the policy, the structure of incentives, and whether it can revolutionize agro-based industrialization in the state. By using the secondary data analysis based on the government policy documents, Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) data, Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) reports, and published scholarly literature, the research compares the policy provisions with the structural constraints that have historically hindered the growth of the food processing industry in UP. It is also evident in the analysis that the policy presents substantive fiscal incentives such as capital subsidies of up to 35, complete stamp duty exemption, and interest subversion, and cold chain infrastructure support its transformative potential is deeply concerned with the entrenched issues of insufficient infrastructure, inadequate entrepreneurial capacity of farmers, and poor farm-to-market connections. The article is relevant to the literature on state-level industrial policy in India by placing the 2023 policy of the state of UP in the context of the overall national food processing development strategy and the One District One Product (ODOP) program of the state.

ISSN: 2350-1278
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Keywords: food processing industry, uttar pradesh, industrial policy, agro-processing, ODOP, secondary data analysis, value addition, post-harvest losses.

1. INTRODUCTION

Food processing industry plays a strategic role in the development path of India, as the pivotal point between the agriculture and manufacturing sector (Kumari and Kumari, 2016). India is the second-largest food producer globally but its contribution to the world food trade is a dismal 1.5% a clear pointing figure of the disconnect between raw food production and value-added processing (Hyder and Bhargava, 2016).. The industry contributes around 32 % of the food market, 14 % of the manufacturing GDP, and more than 70 lakh individuals are employed in registered and unregistered units, in India (Das and Biswas, 2021). The contribution of it to manufacturing and agriculture in the country has been recently reported to be approximately 7.93% Gross Value Added (GVA) and 8.45% GVA respectively (Kathirvel, Haribalan and Neya, 2025).

Uttar Pradesh is possibly the best example of states where the development of food processing should be promoted in India. The state produces about 16 % of the vegetables in India and 31 % of the potato in India, and also leads the country in mango (24 %), amla (40 %), and mentha (50 %) production (Sunanda and Singh, 2022). However, the tertiary level of food processing within UP is 6% only and the state has over 6,500 organized food processing units and 35,000 unorganized units figures that may be seen as small in comparison with the agricultural base (Sunanda and Singh, 2022). Singh and Tripathi (2017) described the community of farmers in UP as being stuck in the state of a low income equilibrium and suggested that the development of entrepreneurial capabilities and the furthering of micro agri-entrepreneurship is an immediate necessity to stop this loop.

The biggest effort by the state government to make this change is the promulgation of the Uttar Pradesh Food Processing Industry Policy 2023. The paper will attempt to critically analyze the policy based on secondary data discussing whether the incentive architecture is sufficient to address the structural impediments that have continued to inhibit the growth of food processing in the state.

The study will have the following objectives:

- To analyze the main terms and the incentive framework of the UP Food Processing Industry Policy 2023.
- To examine the present position of food processing in Uttar Pradesh based on the secondary data indicators.
- To assess whether the policy is sufficient to deal with structural limitations to the expansion of food processing.
- To evaluate the conformity of the policy to the national food processing development programs such as ODOP, PMKSY, and PLI programs.
- To offer policy suggestions on how to enhance implementation and impact.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The academic literature on India's food processing sector has grown substantially over the past two decades, reflecting the industry's rising policy prominence.

Kumar (2017) reviewed the food processing industry's relevance to UP's economic development and emphasized the sector's role in strengthening the agriculture-industry relationship, noting that the "development of agriculture is hidden in the development of

ISSN: 2350-1278
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 7.9)
Journal Website www.nrjitis.in

these industries" at the state level. Pachauri (2011) examined the farming–food processing chain in UP and found that farmers, being "short in financial and technical abilities," find it difficult to link their farming operations with food processing and are thus unable to capture the rewards of value addition.

At the national level, Bhardwaj (2013) conducted a dynamic analysis of food processing industries in India using secondary data from the Annual Survey of Industries and found that while the sector showed positive growth across all decades, it remained dominated by primary processing industries such as oils, grain milling, and sugar. Trends showed a steady reduction in employment in the sector accompanied by a steady increase in the capital-labor ratio hence capital-biased technical progress. Discussing the role of the food processing industry in the GDP, FDI inflows, and export competitiveness in India, Kaur (2015) has found that the sector has a massive potential to develop agricultural economy, yet it needs a specific policy promotion to increase its global competitiveness.

Addressing the specific question of post-harvest losses as one of the main arguments in favour of food processing policy, Murthy et al. (2009) have provided an estimate that every year India loses about 20 fruits valued at about Rs. 13,569 crores (assuming 30 % loss), and maintained that the expense of averting losses was lower than that of the production of the same. Even more recent sources approximate 3040% of all fruits and vegetables grown in India are wasted between picking and consumption, which translates into economic losses of over INR 90,000 crores every year (V., 2024).

Agarwal (2014) compared the food park scheme and food processing SEZs in India, and finds that on the whole, the schemes have not achieved any critical mass of economic activity and their performance has been lackluster, with a few exceptions. The paper found that policymakers should have a long-term vision, a firm commitment, a pragmatic and adaptable approach, and active learning and institution building.

In relation to the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme which is now a part of the food processing ecosystem at UP, Patel (2025) analyzed the economic impact of the scheme in UP and found that the scheme has been instrumental in closing the gap between the traditional artisans and contemporary markets through financial aid, branding, training, and internet accessibility. A study by Sharma and Kumar (2023) on the effect of ODOP scheme to the metal craft industry in Moradabad, UP, showed that it had a positive effect on production capacity. According to Pandey and Tiwari (2023), the scheme has been a huge success in the creation of jobs and in offering a better income to the rural artisans, although a medium level of perception (40 %) about the scheme was found among manufacturers (Tiwari, 2024).

The latest of the assessment of agribusiness and food processing sector of the University of Pretoria is presented by Masih and Barker (2025), who conducted the SWOT analysis of the sector and established that, even though the agricultural output is significant, the sector is underdeveloped, according to both national and international levels.

In particular, Pradeep Kumar and Sohanlal (2022) studied the performance of the food processing industry sector in UP and emphasized that, although agricultural production levels are high, food processing in the country is incredibly low and agricultural produce waste is extremely high. Tomar and Lal (2023) analyzed the Bundelkhand region of UP and discovered that three district (Lalitpur, Hamirpur, and Mahoba) were not engaged in food processing at all, with the rest of the region experiencing only slow positive growth in the period of 2004-2018.

ISSN: 2350-1278
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 7.9)
Journal Website www.nrjitis.in

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This paper will use descriptive and analytical research design, which will be done using secondary data only. The methodology aligns with the way other researchers who have studied food processing policies in India (Bhardwaj, 2013; Kumari and Kumari, 2016; Das and Biswas, 2021) have done it.

3.2 Data Sources

The following are the sources of secondary data to be used in this study:

Policy Document: Uttar Pradesh Food Processing Industry Policy 2022–2027, Department of Horticulture and Food Processing, Government of Uttar Pradesh (promulgated 2023).

Government Report: Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) Annual Reports; Annual Survey of Industries (ASI); National Sample Survey (NSS) 73 rd round.

Statistical Database: Reserve bank of India Handbook of statistics; Department of promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) FDI statistics.

Scheme Documents: ODOP scheme report; PM Kisan Sampada Yojana guidelines; PMFME guidelines; PLI scheme of food processing.

Published Literature: India and UP have peer-reviewed journal articles and research papers on food processing.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis uses three tier model:

Descriptive Analysis: Preparation and presentation of secondary data on the performance indicators in food processing sector in terms of number of units, employment, investment and output as well as value addition in UP compared to national aggregates.

Policy Content Analysis: Some of the provisions in the UP Food Processing Industry Policy 2023 are systematically analyzed and compared with previous UP policies (2004, 2012, 2017), as well as policies of other states as leaders.

Gap Analysis: Determination of the structural bottlenecks that hinder food processing in UP, and measuring the ability of the policy to overcome them.

3.4 Limitations

he research is based on the published secondary sources that can be lagging in time. It was issued as a policy in early 2023, and no full data regarding outcomes of its implementation is available yet. The analysis as such is prospective and assessive as opposed to empirical-impact based.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview of UP's Agricultural and Food Processing Landscape

Uttar Pradesh's agricultural strength is well documented. The state produces approximately 16% of India's vegetables, 31% of potatoes, 24% of mangoes, 40% of amla, and 50% of mentha (Sunanda and Singh, 2022). However, the value of horticulture produce in the state is estimated at about Rs. 14,000 crore, with post-harvest losses valued at approximately Rs. 3,000 crore (Pachauri, 2011).

ISSN: 2350-1278
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 7.9)
Journal Website www.nrjitis.in

The food processing level for fruits and vegetables in UP remains at 6%, compared to the national average of 10% and international benchmarks of 30% (China), 70% (Brazil), and 80% (Malaysia). The state has over 6,500 organized food processing units and 35,000 unorganized units, along with four agro parks at Gorakhpur, Barabanki, Saharanpur, and Varanasi developed by UPSIDC (Sunanda and Singh, 2022).

Table 1: Comparative Level of Food Processing Across Countries

Country/State	Processing Level (%)
Malaysia	80
Philippines	78
Brazil	70
Western Countries	70
China	30
Thailand	30
India (National)	10
Uttar Pradesh	6

Source: Government of Uttar Pradesh, Food Processing Industry Policy 2022–2027

4.2 Key Provisions of the UP Food Processing Industry Policy 2023

The policy, formally titled "Food Processing Industry Policy 2022–2027," was promulgated in 2023 by the Department of Horticulture and Food Processing with the stated target of raising tertiary food processing from 6% to 20%. The incentive structure encompasses the following categories:

A. Capital Subsidy

35% of incurred expenditure on plant, machinery, and technical civil work for new food processing units, up to Rs. 5 crore.

25% subsidy for expansion and modernization/upgradation, up to Rs. 1 crore.

B. Land Benefits

100% exemption from stamp duty for land purchased for food processing industry establishment.

Notional CLU fee of Rs. 10,000 per case (replacing the standard 20% of circle rate) for food processing units in agricultural zones.

C. Interest Subvention

100% interest subsidy on project loans for micro and small food industries, reimbursed for five years (maximum Rs. 50 lakh).

7% interest subvention for other units for five years (maximum Rs. 50 lakh).

Full interest subsidy for reefer vehicle and mobile pre-cooling van loans for five years (maximum Rs. 50 lakh).

ISSN: 2350-1278
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 7.9)
Journal Website www.nrjitis.in

D. Cold Chain and Infrastructure

35% subsidy for cold chain and value addition infrastructure.

50% subsidy up to Rs. 10 crore for frozen storage/deep freezer, value addition, and processing infrastructure.

35% grant for agro processing clusters (minimum 5 units with Rs. 25 crore investment, maximum Rs. 10 crore grant).

E. Transport Subsidy

25% of actual transportation cost from manufacturing location in UP to destination port of importing country (excluding Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan).

F. Solar Power Subsidy

50% subsidy on solar power plant installation (up to 75 KVA) for food processing units not in industrial areas.

90% subsidy for food processing plants owned and operated by all women.

G. Marketing Support

35% grant on eligible project cost for exhibitions, events, and brand promotion (maximum Rs. 5 crore).

Table 2: Summary of Key Fiscal Incentives under UP Food Processing Policy 2023

Incentive Category	Benefit	Maximum Limit
Capital Subsidy (New Units)	35% of plant & machinery cost	₹5 Crore
Capital Subsidy (Expansion)	25% of plant & machinery cost	₹1 Crore
Stamp Duty Exemption	100%	Full exemption
Interest Subsidy (Micro/Small)	100% for 5 years	₹50 Lakh
Interest Subsidy (Others)	7% for 5 years	₹50 Lakh
Cold Chain Infrastructure	35–50%	₹10 Crore
Transport Subsidy (Export)	25% of transport cost	Not specified
Solar Power Subsidy	50% (up to 90% for women-owned units)	Up to 75 KVA
Agro Processing Cluster Grant	35% of eligible cost	₹10 Crore
Marketing/Branding Support	35% of eligible cost	₹5 Crore

Source: Compiled from Government of Uttar Pradesh, Food Processing Industry Policy 2023 and Invest UP Portal

4.3 Critical Assessment of Policy Provisions

4.3.1 Strengths

The policy is a great improvement to the previously existing UP industrial policies. Its 35 % subsidy on capital on new units is good compared to other leading food processing states. The 100 % stamp duty exemption is a way of solving an old obstacle of acquiring land. The

ISSN: 2350-1278
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 7.9)
Journal Website www.nrjitis.in

particular focus on cold chain infrastructure with 35 to 50 % in terms of subsidies is acknowledging the centrality of post-harvest infrastructure, as India is losing 30-40 % of its fruits and vegetables between harvesting and consumption (V., 2024).

The transport subsidy provision is explicitly geographically disadvantaged to the state of UP as it is a landlocked state; it tries to counter the cost penalty on export-oriented food processing. The gender-sensitive aspect of industrial policy is brought about by the progressive solar power subsidy (90% in the case of women-owned units).

The policy is consistent with the national schemes ODOP, PM Kisan Sampada Yojana, PMFME, and PLI, which opens opportunities of synergistic mobilization of resources. Shyamli Singh (2023), contended that food parks implemented with the aid of the government and incorporated with ODOP and PM Kisan Sampada Yojana might create viable food processing industries in eastern UP and Bihar.

4.3.2 Gaps and Structural Weaknesses.

The policy has a complex incentive structure, but this has a number of structural issues:

Infrastructure Deficit: Tomar and Lal (2023) recorded that in the Bundelkhand region of UP, Lalitpur, Hamirpur, and Mahoba districts have no food processing industry whatsoever and the rest of the districts only record a slow positive growth. The subsidies of the policy assume that there is a certain level of basic infrastructure (roads, power, water) which is lacking in most districts.

Entrepreneurial Capacity Gap: The cardinal limitation as pointed out by Singh and Tripathi (2017) is the lack of entrepreneurial skills among the farming population of UP, which stated that there is an urgent need to instill entrepreneurial skills in farmers and ensuring micro agri-entrepreneurship in Uttar Pradesh. This human capital barrier can only be conquered by fiscal incentives.

Historical Track Record of Policy Failure: An assessment of the previous food park and SEZ programs in India by Aggarwal (2014) revealed that they did not primarily succeed in creating the economies of scale. The threat of another re-occurrence of this pattern is quite high unless the implementation architecture is essentially different than previous schemes.

Weak Farm-Firm Linkages: Pachauri (2011) found that the fundamental issue is that farmers can not provide linkage between their farming and food processing because of the financial and technical constraints. This demand-side constraint may not be sufficiently supplied through the policy subsidies which are supply-side subsidies.

Implementation Challenges of ODOP: ODOP was also observed to have a complementary framework, with Tiwari (2024) finding only 40% perception levels among manufacturers, and Yadav and Arora (undated) listing the lack of infrastructure, inaccessibility to finance, bureaucracy, and technological limitations as the main issues.

4.4.1 Congruency with National Policy Framework.

The UP Food Processing Policy 2023 is conducted in a larger national ecosystem of food processing promotion. On the national level, the industry has been cushioned with several tools:

Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY): This is a general framework of development and progress of food processing units.

ISSN: 2350-1278
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 7.9)
Journal Website www.nrjitis.in

PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME): Targeting the unorganized food processing segment, particularly relevant for UP's 35,000 unorganized units.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI): Providing incentives linked to incremental sales of designated food products.

Kathirvel, Haribalan, and Neya (2025) reviewed these national schemes and noted that the food processing sector now contributes about 7.93% GVA to manufacturing, "showing its growing importance in India's economy." Bandopadhyay (2022) examined the PLI scheme's application to mozzarella cheese and noted how "governments can guide the industrial environment for leading the economic development of the country."

The convergence of state-level incentives with national schemes creates a multi-layered support structure. However, Ojha and Roy (2016), examining fruit and vegetable processing policy impacts in West Bengal, cautioned that "government policies in a new liberal regime have primarily benefited the large-scale units," with the proportion of production processed commercially not increasing adequately despite significant policy interventions.

5. DISCUSSION

The UP Food Processing Industry Policy 2023 is the most elaborate effort by the state to catalyze the agro-based industrialization. Nevertheless, critical reading shows that there is a conflict between the ambition of the policy and the realities that are recorded in the literature.

The objective of increasing tertiary food processing by 6 % to 20 % in policy period is ambitious because it will be more than a threefold increment. This would not only be a matter of attracting new investment by subsidizing it, but a wholesale overhaul of the agricultural value chain in the state. The experience reported by Aggarwal (2014) in which the old cluster-based schemes in the country did not result in a critical mass creation implies that fiscal incentives are not enough.

The focus of the policy on cold chain infrastructure is appropriate. Murthy et al. (2009) established that India incurs yearly losses of fruits to the tune of Rs. 13,569 crores, and the cost of precaution against loss is lower than the cost of production of the same. The 35-50 % cold chain subsidies, when well utilized, would be able to solve a binding constraint. Nevertheless, Sharma and Singh (2011) discovered that losses in vegetables after harvesting are caused by several factors such as poor storage and transportation systems, and suggested that producer cooperatives should be established as a structural intervention, which extends beyond subsidies.

The merging of ODOP scheme with the food processing policy forms a district-level institutional framework. ODOP has been reported to have enabled the closure of the divide between traditional artisans and modern markets by Patel (2025), and Dipshi and Mohammad (2025) discovered that local entrepreneurship can be increased by targeted financial intervention and that the region can be led to improve its economic growth. Nevertheless, the ODOP model was initially developed with handicraft and traditional products in mind; its relevance to contemporary food processing that requires varying levels of activity, technology, and quality control is not defined.

The gender sensitivity of the policy (90 % solar subsidy on female owned units) is commendable but small in scale. Wider gender mainstreaming in food processing entrepreneurship would necessitate specific skill training, credit facilities and marketing support other than energy subsidies.

ISSN: 2350-1278
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 7.9)
Journal Website www.nrjitis.in

In contrast to the national path, comparing the policy of UP to the national course, Chopra (2024) has discovered that subsidies and incentives are important effectively to develop food processing industry by promoting investment, creating jobs, adding value, and reinforcing the supply chain. Similar arguments by Faishal (2018) stated that the government policy reaction in the course of time has empowered the industry, and that the key limitations in the growth of the food processing industry are investment and inadequate infrastructure facilities.

7. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Uttar Pradesh Food Processing Industry Policy 2023 is a substantive policy intervention that has a full incentive architecture of capital subsidies, tax exemptions, infrastructure support and export facilitation. The policy rightly points to the most important spheres that need intervention value addition, cold chain infrastructure, transport logistics of a landlocked state, and the adoption of renewable energy.

Nevertheless, as the analysis has shown, the transformative potential of the policy depends on a number of factors, which are not directly provided in the policy:

Recommendation 1: Empower Entrepreneurial Capacity Building. Since, as the discovery by Singh and Tripathi (2017) showed, to break the trap of the low income equilibrium of UP, it is important to develop entrepreneurial skills in farmers, the policy must be complemented by an entrepreneurship development initiative of agri-food processing, with special attention to the potential entrepreneurs of farming families.

Recommendation 2: Invest in Infrastructure in Under-served Districts. The fact that there is no food processing industry at all in some districts, as evidenced by Tomar and Lal (2023), requires a spatially-focused infrastructure investment policy before or during subsidy payment.

Recommendation 3: Intensifying Farm-Firm Connections. Direct procurement contracts between food processing units and farmer producer organizations (FPOs) must be institutionalized in the policy to close the gap of linkage that is found by Pachauri (2011).

Recommendation 4: Develop Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The policy ought to be characterised by stringent outcome monitoring and a performance standard since the research conducted by Aggarwal (2014) revealed that earlier food processing cluster schemes in the country were not performing well, given the lack of performance indices and mid-term review mechanisms.

Recommendation 5: Combine Skill Development and Technology Adoption. Masih and Barker (2025) pointed to the contribution of technological advancements such as artificial intelligence to food processing. The policy ought to form connection with the institutions of technical learning in order to create skilled labour force to work in contemporary food processing factories.

Recommendation 6: Widen Gender Mainstreaming. The 90 % female subsidy on women-owned units is an excellent move but needs to be supplemented with more general support provisions to women entrepreneurs in food processing such as special credit windows and market assistance.

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