

AMIRA FOODS

Making a presence felt in 40 countries

Amira group is one of the largest rice companies and a major exporter



Amira has a presence in 40 countries (through private labelling) and a brand presence in 22 countries

India, which once used to face an acute shortage of foodgrains, has emerged as a major exporter of agro commodities, including rice, fruits and vegetables. The Amira group, established in 1915 by the late BD Chanana, is one of the largest rice companies and a major exporter.

The group, which began exporting in 1978, has diversified into infrastructure, energy, information technology and SEZs. It has also gone in for forward and backward integration, from the procurement of seeds and organic farming initiatives through to establish the first private agro SEZ project in Haryana.

Amira has a presence in 40 countries (through private labelling) and a brand presence in 22 countries. The company's products range from basmati, specialty rice including Thai Jasmine and ethnic snacks. The \$300-million group also has a presence in agro-commodities and bulk commodity trading in pulses, sesame seeds, sugar, onion, potatoes, maize, soybean extract, edible oil, palm oil, wheat, wheat flour, rapeseed, millets and spices.

An interview with Karan A. Chanana, chairman, Amira group:

Are you bullish about the prospects for the Indian agro sector, considering the good harvest of foodgrains in recent years?

The agro sector is a sunrise industry in India, which has graduated from a country dependant on imported food to a self-sufficient nation and exporting agro commodities to various nations.

The agricultural export basket is quite diversified and some of the billion-dollar-plus exports are that of rice, high-value commodities such as fish, cotton, and fruits and vegetables. Food security is also a major subject for the Indian government.

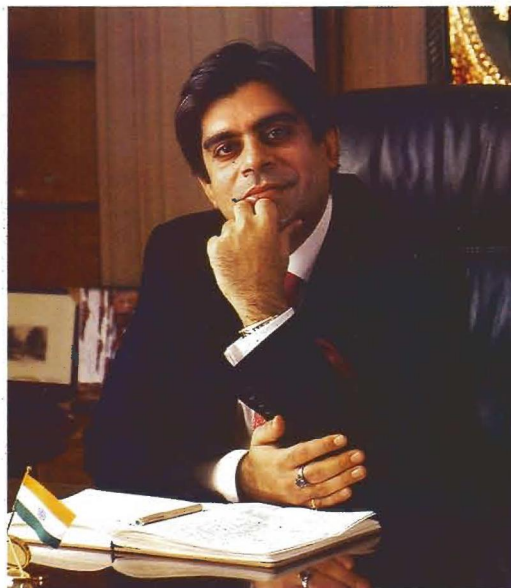
About 65 per cent of India's population comprises farmers. Rising foodgrain production needs higher processing capacity; the value chain leading to the retailer makes the industry vertically integrated.

The low-hanging fruit for the sector is agro infrastructure and brand creation for food.

As health takes centre-stage, brands gain value in the Indian consumer's space.

Is Indian basmati rice facing stiff competition in global markets?

The history of basmati pre-dates manmade borders. Basmati growing areas are limited to India and the Punjab of Pakistan. Thus, basmati is limited to this geography and there is no real competition.



Karan A. Chanana

see exponential growth in the Middle East as it has a refined culture.

Since how long have you been exporting to the Gulf? Has there been significant growth in recent years?

It's been round 30 years of our business operations in Middle East. The market dynamics of the Middle East have evolved over a period. In earlier times it was primarily a traditional basmati rice market where aroma, texture, taste were given prime importance.

Over time consumers are now progressing towards 1,121 extra-long grain basmati rice, which offers XXL length, and the separate grains which are excellent for biryani.

Basmati is interwoven into the cultural ethos of our country, a nature-given gift of the sub-continent. Representing the heritage of the rich Indian royal cuisine, we see exponential growth in the Middle East as it has a refined culture

Karan A. Chanana

