

FOOD INFOTECH



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Embarking on the Next Phase of Growth!

INSIDE ▾

Food Safety Related
"Pre-Requisite Program"

Crunching the
Numbers for Safer Food

• PROCESSING • PACKAGING • LOGISTICS • COLD CHAIN • EQUIPMENT



**MR. SUMAN
K. JHA**
Head of Operations,
Patanjali Foods Ltd.



SANJAY JAIN
Head of Operations,
Livgreen Cleantech
Pvt. Ltd.

Commitment to
Total Quality
Assurance to
remain your
Trusted Partner!

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THE TEAM

GROUP EDITOR IN CHIEF
Manas Nandi
manas@promgroup.in

SA, MANAGER SALES & MARKETING
Harpreet Singh Jolly
harpreet@promgroup.in

CONSULTANT EDITOR
Nilesh Banerjee

SR. EDITOR
Leena Khan

SA, SUB EDITOR
Chaitanya Chakravarti

MANAGER FINANCE
Rudrany Gnanan

DESIGN HEAD
Deepak Sharma

WEB DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Jitendra Kumar

CIRCULATION & SUBSCRIPTIONS
Harleen Kaur

WEB PRODUCTION
Ravi Bana

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NBHC ProComm: Commitment to Total Quality Assurance to remain your Trusted Partner!



Ajit Lagoo
Vice President & Business Head, NBHC ProComm Laboratory

ProComm Laboratory - Inspection & Testing Services, a venture of National Bulk Handling Corporation (NBHC) focuses on providing a range of solutions in the area of Food Testing and Inspection Services across India. Having received ISO Accreditation, namely ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 22000:2018, ProComm Lab also holds the recognition of FSSAI (Food Safety & Standards Authority of India) and is approved by APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), apart from holding Membership in IOPEPC (Indian Oilseed and Produce Export Promotion Council) with 9 authorized signatories, 13 approved samplers and 13 out of 17 food categories covered within its scope.

Ajit Lagoo, Vice President & Business Head, NBHC ProComm Laboratory had an exclusive interaction with **Claus** from **Food Infotech**. Ajit Lagoo shared more details about the company and its range of service offerings for the F&V Industry, including mentioning a bit about the recent industry trends happening in F & V exports from India and much more.

Edited Excerpts Below:

Q Would you please begin by telling us briefly about NBHC ProComm's service offerings for us? Please give us an example to let us know how they are expected to add value or benefit the Food Processing Industry immensely.

National Bulk Handling Corporation Ltd (NBHC) offers Integrated Services for Agri-commodities viz., Tech-enabled Procurement, Storage, Commodity Care, Collateral Management, and Supply-chain Solutions. Other Value-added Services include Quality Testing & Digitized Inspection to capture traceability, Pest Management, Audit, Surveillance &

Control and Agri-loan Distribution. Driven by its core values and a remarkable track record spanning over a decade along with the impetus derived from its ownership by True North, NBHC is steadfastly growing through technology-led innovation & path-breaking digital implementations. With an objective to help facilitate the necessary supply-chain

transformation, acquired through a partnership with top producers & traders of Agri-crops, **NBHC is on its way to becoming a leading player in Agri-tech & Agri-services in India**, with a promise to create long-term value for its stakeholders and the community at large.

ProComm Lab, a division of NBHC has been at the forefront of Quality Testing, Grading & Inspection Services for a wide range of commodities. As a Technical Service Provider, ProComm has developed an enviable reputation for providing high-quality problem-solving results across different scientific areas. ProComm business is a Value-added Service offered by NBHC to its esteemed customers. NBHC's flagship business is "Professional Warehousing" and "Trade Facilitation"; ProComm assists the flagship business as a 'Quality Partner' at three stages viz;

- Inward
- During storage (in the form of CHR-Commodity Health Report) and
- Outward

Further, ProComm is independently accredited by NABL (National Accreditation Board for Laboratories & ILAC-MRA (International). Under this Accreditation, ProComm is recognized by the following Regulatory Bodies:

- **FSSAI (Food Safety & Standards Authority of India)** - Import & Domestic Food business - Processed Food Manufacturers, QSR, HORECA, Retail stores, etc.
- **APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority)** - Testing of Agriculture Exports to EU, US, GCC & other countries
- **EIA (Export Inspection Council)** - Testing of Export consignments for Processed Foods
- **IOPEPC** - Testing of Export consignments for Sesame Seeds
- **AGMARK** - Grading of Agriculture consignments for Exports
- **GAFTA** - For Testing of Cotton & Products for GMO & Pesticide Residues

Q What's the kind of business potential that you expect to see from your various service offerings for the F&V Industry?

Our Service Offerings have great business potential. A few major drivers are highlighted below to help validate my statement -

- Consumer Awareness is increasing every year, due to social media content and a lot of marketing happening around the technical details;
- Enforcement of Regulation is still under

20%, which means 80% of the FBOs (Food Business Operators) are still to start the process of complying, which in turn is a business opportunity for ProComm. However, this process is extremely slow & thus it's a bottleneck;

- Export is always on the rise, not just Agriculture Products but Processed Food (including frozen) as well. Y-o-Y Growth for the last three years has been in the range of 10-15%.

Q Please provide an overview of Consumer Awareness on Food Safety and Quality. Why is it important?

I am happy that Consumer Awareness has an upward-inclined curve but it's not enough. If we compare our TIC (Testing, Inspection & Certification) Industry to the Western world, Quality is still a close ally of Compliance, it is not a default part of our food value chain. The more consumers will start asking questions and reading labels; the more the Industry will improve & move towards standards & safety (The FSSAI Act). At the same time, it's a very thin line between setting compliance and keeping the innovation going.

With our sedentary lifestyle, food habits ought to change & Innovative Food (Novel, Nutraceutical, Functional, etc.) is going to be the Future Foods. However, one lobby in the Food Industry has started its retro track with "Organic Foods", which is nothing but reversing the clock. Again, the awareness of the new generation about "Organic Food" is very limited, as unfortunately they are not known to the term called, "Naturally Organic". The new generation understands "Organic" when it is certified. I am taking this opportunity to simply define "Organic Food" as basically the finished product, where traceability to the farm can be established and during the journey it has not come in contact with chemicals.

Q Can you share some of the recent industry trends that you've observed in F&V Exports from India and what are its key drivers?

The COVID situation was extremely difficult for F & V Exporters and allied industries like us. Less Demand & Fewer Freight were two major reasons for the steep decline. Since the 3rd quarter of FY'23, there is a significant improvement in F & V Exports from India. Regarding Europe, new crops like Drumstick, Guava, Fresh Turmeric & Bottle gourd are added to the Advisory List for Testing. This will

bring more impetus & stability to F & V Export business. Another upside for F & V Export is the addition of Gulf countries in the Testing Group. Saudi Arabia was the first to start, followed by Dubai & Oman; and with each passing season, they are adding new matrices to the Testing List.

Another important development is Frozen Export. With two majorly known benefits of Longer Shelf-life & Lower Freights (by Sea), this is gaining momentum with every month passing by. Speaking of quality for frozen vegetables (majorly), because of the time availability & process, it's safer than fresh export and leads to minimal rejections at importing ports.

Q A bit about your future expansion plans to serve the F&V Industry in the coming days.

At ProComm Lab, we are committed to providing Total Quality Assurance to our Customers and Service Excellence marked by accuracy, agility and compliance. Our service is a pure blend of Knowledge, Technology and Methods for achieving Efficiency through Digitization. ProComm is well-positioned to capitalize on the potential in the F&V arena and shall continue to provide industry-leading services to all our stakeholders. As far as Export is concerned, "Traceability" is the key word. If any Exporter can establish it with the support of an Independent Quality Partner like us, he can look for premium rates. To facilitate, ProComm is gradually progressing its service bouquet as followed in this Agri value chain:

- Procurement - sampling from farm level following a well thought protocol;
- Capturing all realistic data, like GPS coordinates and pictures at the time of sampling and packed sample with seal & tag;
- Primary Scanning of Pesticides - Pre-harvest Assurance;
- Identifying lots received from farms basis sampling slips;
- Again, Sampling from fresh / frozen, when Export lot is ready;
- Testing / Analysis basis Importing country;
- Value Adds - We have started a practice of putting a suggestion/recommendation with the Report. We sometimes run the extra mile to call the customer and explain how he may enhance his quality standards and avoid what happened in one particular report. **21**