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India's Rigid Packaging Industry Is Entering a New Growth Phase

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As India's packaged food, quick-service restaurant (QSR), and food delivery sectors continue to expand, the role of rigid packaging is evolving from a protective layer to a strategic enabler of food safety, convenience, branding and sustainability. Food manufacturers are increasingly seeking packaging solutions that combine functionality with innovation, while meeting stringent quality and environmental standards. In this interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Himanshu Gupta, Business Head,

Rigid Packaging, Cosmo Plastech, shares his insights on the changing dynamics of the rigid packaging market, emerging requirements from food brands, the growing importance of collaboration and speed-to-market, and how innovation and sustainable technologies will shape the future of India's food packaging ecosystem.

Indiaâ??s packaged food and QSR sectors are witnessing rapid growth. How is this transformation reshaping demand patterns in the rigid packaging industry?

Indiaâ??s packaged food, quick-service restaurant (QSR), and food delivery segments are undergoing a structural transformation driven by urbanisation, rising disposable incomes, changing lifestyles, and increasing preference for convenience. This growth is significantly influencing demand patterns in the rigid packaging industry, creating opportunities for packaging companies to move beyond conventional formats and deliver more value-added solutions.

Food brands today require packaging that not only protects products but also enhances consumer convenience, shelf appeal, and brand differentiation. The rise of ready-to-eat, ready-to-cook, dairy, frozen foods, sauces, condiments, and takeaway meals is driving demand for high-performance rigid packaging formats such as tubs, containers, trays, cups, and lids. At the same time, consumers are increasingly expecting packaging that is leak-proof, tamper-evident, lightweight, and easy to use.

Another notable trend is the growing importance of food safety and regulatory compliance. Brands are seeking packaging partners that can consistently meet stringent quality standards while ensuring product integrity across complex supply chains.

At Cosmo Plastech, we see this evolution as a long-term growth opportunity. The rigid packaging industry in India is growing at over 10% annually, supported by strong demand from FMCG and food sectors. Our focus is on providing end-to-end rigid packaging solutions tailored to evolving customer requirements through advanced thermoforming and injection moulding technologies.

With the rise of ready-to-eat meals, cloud kitchens, and convenience food brands, what new packaging requirements are emerging from food manufacturers today?

The rapid expansion of ready-to-eat meals, cloud kitchens, food delivery platforms, and convenience food brands has fundamentally changed packaging expectations. Food manufacturers today are looking for packaging that can maintain freshness, preserve taste and texture, withstand transportation challenges, and provide a superior consumer experience.

One of the biggest requirements is packaging that offers excellent barrier properties and product protection. Food products often travel longer distances and spend more time in distribution networks, making durability and contamination prevention critical. Manufacturers are therefore seeking packaging that offers superior moisture resistance, tamper evidence, leak prevention, and temperature resilience.

Convenience is another major driver. Consumers increasingly prefer packaging that is microwave-friendly, easy to open, resealable where applicable, and suitable for on-the-go consumption. In parallel, brands want packaging designs that maximise shelf visibility and strengthen brand identity.

Food manufacturers are also demanding greater flexibility in packaging formats. As product portfolios expand and consumer preferences become more diverse, packaging suppliers must be capable of delivering customised solutions across different sizes, shapes, and applications while maintaining cost efficiency.

At Cosmo Plastech, our design and development capabilities allow us to work closely with customers to create customised rigid packaging solutions that combine functionality, aesthetics, and food safety. Our products are designed to deliver excellent clarity, durability, and product protection, making them suitable for a wide range of food and FMCG applications.

In a fast-moving food ecosystem, how important are scalability, consistency, and speed-to-market for packaging partners, and how is Cosmo Plastech addressing these expectations?

Scalability, consistency, and speed-to-market have become critical success factors in todayâ??s food ecosystem. Food brands operate in highly competitive markets where product launches, promotional campaigns, and regional expansions often happen at an accelerated pace. Packaging partners must therefore be capable of responding quickly without compromising quality or reliability.

Scalability is particularly important because many emerging food brands experience rapid growth once they establish market acceptance. Packaging suppliers must be able to support this growth seamlessly, ensuring uninterrupted supply and maintaining product consistency across locations and production volumes. Consistency is equally important because packaging directly impacts consumer perception and product performance. Variations in dimensions, sealing performance,

clarity, or quality can affect both product safety and brand reputation. Food manufacturers therefore prefer partners with robust manufacturing systems and strict quality controls.

Speed-to-market is becoming increasingly critical as brands compete to capture evolving consumer trends. Faster product development cycles require packaging companies to collaborate closely with customers and accelerate design, prototyping, and commercialisation timelines. Cosmo Plastech is addressing these requirements through advanced manufacturing infrastructure, strong quality systems, and customer-centric product development processes. Our capabilities in thermoforming and injection moulding enable us to deliver customised packaging solutions efficiently and at scale. Additionally, our globally recognised FSSC 22000 food safety certification provides customers with confidence in our quality and compliance standards.

Sustainability is becoming a major focus area across the food value chain. How do you see rigid packaging evolving to balance functionality, food safety, and environmental responsibility?

Sustainability is no longer a niche consideration; it has become a core business priority across the food value chain. Consumers, regulators, and brands are increasingly demanding packaging solutions that minimise environmental impact while maintaining product performance and food safety. The future of rigid packaging will be shaped by a balanced approach that combines sustainability with functionality. Packaging must continue to protect products, extend shelf life, and ensure food safety, as food waste itself carries a significant environmental cost. Therefore, sustainable packaging solutions must be designed without compromising product integrity.

We expect to see increased adoption of lightweight packaging designs, improved material efficiency, recyclable structures, and greater use of recycled content where suitable. Innovation in polymer science and packaging design will play a key role in enabling circularity while maintaining performance standards. At Cosmo First, sustainability is deeply embedded in our growth strategy. Across our businesses, we continue to invest in sustainable materials, recycling-oriented innovations, and energy-efficient operations. The company has also developed sustainable solutions such as chemically recycled PCR-based films and PVC-free alternatives in other segments, reflecting our broader commitment to environmentally responsible innovation. For rigid packaging specifically, our focus remains on developing solutions that optimise material usage, support recyclability, and deliver high levels of food safety and functionality for customers.

Collaboration between packaging companies and food brands is increasing significantly. How is Cosmo Plastech working with both emerging startups and established food companies to develop customised packaging solutions?

The packaging industry is increasingly moving toward a collaborative innovation model. Food brands today are looking for packaging partners who can contribute strategically to product development rather than simply supplying standard packaging formats. Startups often require agility, rapid prototyping, and flexibility as they experiment with new products and business models. Established food companies, on the other hand, typically seek scale, operational efficiency, quality consistency, and innovation that supports brand differentiation. Both segments value partners who can understand their specific requirements and translate them into effective packaging solutions.

At Cosmo Plastech, collaboration is central to our approach. We work closely with customers from the concept stage to understand product characteristics, filling processes, distribution requirements, consumer expectations, and sustainability objectives. This enables us to develop customised packaging solutions that address both functional and commercial needs. Our expertise in injection moulding and thermoforming allows us to offer a wide range of packaging formats and configurations. We are also focused on establishing direct relationships with brands, enabling deeper engagement and faster response to evolving market requirements. This collaborative approach helps customers improve product presentation, enhance consumer experience, and optimise packaging performance.

Looking ahead, what role will innovation, advanced manufacturing capabilities, and material technologies play in differentiating rigid packaging players in Indiaâ??s competitive food packaging market?

Innovation and technology will be the primary differentiators in Indiaâ??s increasingly competitive food packaging market. As consumer expectations evolve and food brands seek greater efficiency, packaging companies will need to move beyond traditional manufacturing capabilities and focus on value-added innovation.

Product and choice of material will play a significant role in developing packaging that offers enhanced barrier properties, improved durability, reduced material consumption, and better sustainability credentials. Advances in polymers, additives, and packaging design will create opportunities for smarter and more efficient packaging solutions. Advanced manufacturing technologies will also become increasingly important. Automation, precision moulding, digital quality control systems, and integrated production processes will help packaging companies improve consistency, reduce lead times, and enhance cost

competitiveness.

Equally important will be innovation capabilities. Companies with strong R&D ecosystems will be better positioned to anticipate market trends, develop differentiated products, and address emerging customer needs. At Cosmo First, innovation remains a key growth pillar across businesses. The company has significantly strengthened its R&D capabilities, with over 30 highly qualified scientists, dedicated research infrastructure, and a growing innovation pipeline focused on speciality materials and sustainable solutions. For Cosmo Plastech, we are continuously working to combine advanced manufacturing, customer collaboration, and innovation-led product development to create packaging solutions that deliver superior performance, sustainability, and value for food brands. As the food packaging ecosystem continues to evolve, companies that can offer customised, high-quality, and future-ready solutions will be best positioned to lead the market.

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