



The Power to Empower

Advancing Women-Led Development:

An Analysis of Policies by the
Ministry of Food Processing Industry
and Opportunities for Women-Led
Businesses with Proposed Areas of
Collaboration with FICCI FLO

Copyright & Disclaimer

© FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), 2026. All rights reserved.

This publication is intended for knowledge-sharing and informational purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the content, FICCI FLO makes no representations or warranties regarding its completeness or reliability.

The views and analyses presented are based on research undertaken by contributors under the guidance of FICCI FLO and do not constitute professional, legal, or policy advice. References to government policies and institutions are for analytical purposes only and do not imply any formal endorsement or affiliation.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed without prior permission from FICCI FLO.

Foreword

It gives me immense pride to present this focused white paper on the initiatives of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, aligned with India's national vision of women-led development. As India advances towards becoming a more inclusive and value-driven economy, the food processing sector holds immense potential to empower women through entrepreneurship, value addition, and integration into formal supply chains.



Flagship initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme, Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI), and the Mega Food Parks Scheme have significantly strengthened the ecosystem by promoting micro-enterprises, enabling value addition, and creating robust infrastructure for food processing. Supported by institutions such as NABARD, state-level agencies, and industry stakeholders, these initiatives have opened up avenues for women to participate across the agri-value chain—from farm to market. This white paper builds on these efforts through focused analysis and actionable collaboration pathways. Developed by a cohort of young researchers and interns at FICCI FLO, it examines the implementation landscape of these initiatives and identifies opportunities where FLO can partner with the Ministry and its ecosystem stakeholders to strengthen women-led micro-enterprises, enhance market access, promote branding and packaging capabilities, and support integration into formal and export-oriented value chains.

For over four decades, FICCI FLO has been committed to advancing women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship, capacity building, and leadership development. With its strong national footprint and diverse membership base, FLO is uniquely positioned to act as a bridge between policy frameworks and grassroots impact, enabling scalable and sustainable models of enterprise development, particularly in sectors like food processing that have deep rural and semi-urban linkages.

This initiative also reflects our commitment to fostering research-led engagement and nurturing young talent. Undertaken within a structured institutional framework under the guidance of the Rashmi Sarita - Executive Director, the work has been further enriched through consultations and deliberations with key industry stakeholders, ensuring both analytical rigor and strong alignment with sectoral realities.

We believe this paper will serve as a catalyst for deeper collaboration between FICCI FLO and the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, contributing to strengthening women's participation in the food processing sector, enabling enterprise growth, and enhancing livelihoods. As India moves towards the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, such partnerships will be instrumental in ensuring that women emerge as key drivers of value creation in India's food economy.

Poonam Sharma

National President of FICCI FLO
(2025-2026)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	8
Introduction: FICCI FLO's Vision for Women-Led Development	9
Reiteration of FICCI FLO's Core Mission and Objectives	
Context of Collaboration with Government of India	
Overview of the Food Processing Sector and its Socio-Economic Impact	11
Current Status and Growth Trajectory	
Role in Rural Development and Employment Generation	
Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI): Schemes and Achievements	13
Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY)	
Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLISFPI)	
Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME)	
Analysis Framework: Mapping MoFPI Schemes to Women's Economic Empowerment	26
Direct and Indirect Impact on Women	
Gaps and Opportunities for Enhanced Participation	
World Food India: A Global Stage for Women-Led Growth	30
Proposed Collaborative Initiatives	
Conclusion and Way Forward	32
Works Cited	33
About FICCI FLO	36

Executive Summary

This report provides a structured analysis of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) schemes implemented over the last decade, with a specific focus on identifying tangible opportunities for advancing women's economic empowerment and women-led development.

India's food processing sector demonstrates significant growth, contributing substantially to the national economy and employment. Key MoFPI initiatives, including the Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY), Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI), and Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme, have driven this expansion.

The analysis reveals that while some schemes, particularly PMFME, have direct provisions and significant potential for women's economic upliftment through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and micro-enterprises, others offer substantial indirect benefits or present opportunities for enhanced gender mainstreaming. A notable observation is the increasing Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR), especially in rural self-employment, which aligns powerfully with the objectives of formalizing micro-enterprises in this sector.

FICCI FLO, with its established expertise in women-led development and a nationwide network, is uniquely positioned to partner with MoFPI. In this report, we have outlined critical areas for synergy, including strengthening access to finance, tailoring skill development programs, enhancing market access, providing essential infrastructure support, and institutionalizing gender-focused policy advocacy and monitoring.

These proposed collaborations aim to align FLO's initiatives with national priorities, ensuring that the growth of the food processing sector translates into equitable and impactful economic empowerment for women across India.

1. Introduction: FICCI FLO's Vision for Women-Led Development

1.1. Reiteration of FICCI FLO's Core Mission and Objectives

FICCI FLO, the women's wing of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), operates with a clear and ambitious mandate: to become the dominant voice for women in their business and professional endeavors across India.¹ This mission is underpinned by a vision to serve as a thought leader for working women, rural women, & young girls through workshops and health awareness sessions, and actively advocate for policy changes that support their interests and safeguard their economic well-being.¹

The fundamental objective driving all FLO initiatives is the economic empowerment of women, achieved by providing them with essential resources, opportunities, and comprehensive support to thrive in the marketplace.¹ This strategic focus on women's economic upliftment positions FLO as a crucial partner in India's broader developmental agenda.

By championing women's participation in the economy, FLO directly contributes to the nation's goals of inclusive growth and "women-led development." This alignment with overarching national priorities is fundamental for securing governmental engagement and ensuring that FLO's efforts are integrated into larger policy frameworks.

1.2. Context of Collaboration with Government of India

The strategic importance of this structured analysis lies in its ability to facilitate impactful collaboration between FICCI FLO and the Government of India. FLO possesses a nationwide network and a proven track record in fostering women-led development.¹ This research serves as a critical tool, enabling FLO to meticulously align its initiatives with existing national priorities and identify specific areas where synergies can be maximized. The aim is to formulate targeted proposals that can lead to a significant and measurable impact.

FLO's history of engagement with government bodies, including presenting policy advocacy initiatives to Chief Ministers and senior government officials across various states, underscores its capacity for high-level interaction.⁴ These include **Women Rising with Nirmala Sitharaman** (Engagement with the Union Finance Minister on fiscal policy and women in AI), **Skill Development for Viksit Bharat Conclave** (2026 session on aligning women-led growth with national economic goals), **MSME Policy Dialogue: From Policy to Prosperity** (Technical workshop with the Ministry of MSME on credit access and "SHE Marts").

Furthermore, FLO's active pursuit of partnerships, such as with the Philippine Women's Economic Network (PhilWEN) and WEConnect International, demonstrates its commitment to fostering women-owned businesses through market access and global connections.¹ This track record of successful advocacy and collaboration reinforces FLO's credibility, indicating that it is not merely identifying challenges but is prepared to propose and implement actionable solutions within a collaborative framework. This established model of engagement is a strong foundation for the proposed partnership with MoFPI.

2. Overview of the Food Processing Sector and its Socio-Economic Impact

2.1. Current Status and Growth Trajectory

India's food processing industry has demonstrated robust and consistent growth over the past decade, solidifying its position as a dynamic and vital component of the national economy. The sector's Gross Value Added (GVA) experienced a significant increase, rising from ₹1.34 lakh Crore in 2014-15 to ₹2.08 lakh Crore in 2021-22, reflecting substantial economic expansion.⁵

This growth trajectory is further evidenced by the sector's attractiveness to foreign investment, with a notable inflow of USD 6.185 billion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity during April 2014-March 2023.⁵ The increasing share of processed food exports in overall agri-exports, which climbed from 13.7% in 2014-15 to 25.6% in 2022-23, highlights the sector's growing competitiveness and integration into global markets.⁵

Beyond its economic indicators, the food processing sector holds significant socio-economic importance as one of the largest employment providers within the organized manufacturing sector, accounting for 12.22% of total employment.⁵ The sector's average annual growth rate (AAGR) of approximately 11.18% over the five years ending 2019-20, significantly outpacing the 4.19% growth in agriculture, underscores its dynamism and potential as a catalyst for broader economic development.⁶

This robust growth profile suggests that strategic interventions within the food processing sector can have an amplified positive effect on women's economic empowerment. The expansion of this value-adding sector provides fertile ground for increasing female participation and fostering women-led enterprises.

2.2. Role in Rural Development and Employment Generation, with Emphasis on Women's Participation

The food processing sector plays a pivotal role in rural development by adding value to agricultural produce, thereby directly contributing to increased farmer incomes and improved rural livelihoods. This sector is particularly effective in creating off-farm employment opportunities, which are crucial for diversifying rural economies and providing alternative income streams, especially for women.

A critical observation in this context is the significant, yet often informal, presence of women within the food processing landscape. Data indicates that unorganized enterprises within the food processing industry contribute to 74% of total employment, with women comprising approximately one-third of this workforce.⁷ This represents a substantial, often overlooked, segment of the female labor force actively engaged in economic activity.

The existence of such a large informal female workforce presents a unique opportunity for formalization, which can unlock benefits such as enhanced access to credit, improved market linkages, and greater social security. The growing Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) in India, particularly the surge in rural female self-employment from 13.6% in 2017-18 to 24.2% in 2021-22, further underscores this potential.⁸

This upward trend indicates a growing pool of women who are actively seeking and engaging in entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. By strategically focusing on the formalization and growth of these existing women-led micro-enterprises within the food processing sector, government schemes and collaborative initiatives can effectively convert this latent entrepreneurial drive into structured, sustainable economic growth. This approach not only supports the formalization goals of the sector but also directly empowers women by integrating them more fully into the formal economy.

3. Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI): Schemes and Achievements (Last Decade)

The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has implemented several flagship schemes over the past decade to bolster the food processing sector, enhance infrastructure, reduce post-harvest losses, and stimulate economic growth. These schemes, while broad in their objectives, offer significant avenues for advancing women's economic empowerment, either directly or through strategic interventions.

3.1. Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY)

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY) was launched with the core objective of reducing post-harvest losses in agriculture and allied sectors, while simultaneously boosting the development of the food processing sector through critical infrastructure creation.⁵ Initially approved with an allocation of ₹6,000 crore for the period 2016-2020, the scheme was subsequently extended and restructured for the 15th Finance Commission Cycle with an allocation of ₹4,600 crore.⁵

PMKSY has achieved substantial outcomes since its inception. As of December 2023, a total of 1401 projects have been approved under its various component schemes, with 832 projects already completed. This has resulted in the creation of a significant processing and preservation capacity totaling 218.43 Lakh Metric Tons (MT).⁵ The approved projects have successfully leveraged an impressive investment of ₹21,217 Crore, directly benefiting approximately 57 lakh farmers and generating over 8.28 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities across the country.⁵ Furthermore, an evaluation study on cold chain projects under PMKSY highlighted significant reductions in waste, up to 70% in fisheries and 85% in dairy products, demonstrating the scheme's effectiveness in improving efficiency and reducing losses in the value chain.⁵

A noteworthy aspect of PMKSY, particularly its Watershed Development Component (WDC-PMKSY), includes explicit provisions for women's representation and participation. The guidelines for WDC-PMKSY mandate the inclusion of at least two women representatives in the 11-member Watershed Committees, ensuring women's agency in decision-making processes related to water resource management and agricultural development.⁹ Moreover, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) formed under WDC-PMKSY are specifically structured to have a maximum number of women members, further empowering them at the grassroots level.⁹

The existence of these provisions within a major national scheme means that a framework for women's participation is already embedded, offering a direct opportunity for organizations like FLO to strengthen implementation and expand reach. This can involve capacity building and facilitating market linkages for women-led SHGs and FPOs within these watershed development areas, leveraging existing policy for broader impact.

Table 3.1.1: PMKSY Financial Outlay and Key Achievements (2014-2024)

Metric	Value	Source Snippets
Initial Allocation (2016-20)	₹6,000 Crore	5
Allocation (15th FC Cycle)	₹4,600 Crore	5
Total Projects Approved (since inception)	1401	5
Total Projects Completed (since inception)	832	5
Processing & Preservation Capacity Created	218.43 Lakh MT	5
Investment Leveraged	₹21,217 Crore	5
Farmers Benefited	57 Lakh	5
Direct/Indirect Employment Generated	8.28 Lakh	5
Waste Reduction (Fisheries/Dairy)	Up to 70%/85%	5

This table quantifies the overall achievements of PMKSY, demonstrating the significant scale of its impact on infrastructure development, investment, and employment generation within the food processing sector. This comprehensive overview provides a crucial baseline for understanding the broader economic environment within which women's empowerment initiatives can be integrated and amplified.

Proposed Areas of Collaboration for Women under this Scheme

- 1. Women-led Micro Food Parks:** Mini or Micro Food Parks should be established which should be exclusively managed by women SHGs or FPOs within rural clusters. These smaller-scale hubs can specialise in region-specific products (pickles, millets, spices) and link directly to Mega Food Parks for scaling. It in return create local employment for women, reduces raw material wastage, and builds community-led processing models.
- 2. PMKSY “She-Brand” Seal:** A quality certification and brand identity should be created for food products entirely processed, packaged, and quality-tested by women beneficiaries under PMKSY. This seal can be marketed as a premium trust mark in retail outlets.
- 3. Women-led “Waste to Wealth” Enterprises:** Enable women entrepreneurs to set up small-scale units that turn food processing waste into compost, animal feed, or eco-friendly packaging, which creates new income opportunities while reducing waste and fostering a circular economy.

3.2. Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI)

The Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industries (PLISFPI) was approved by the Union Cabinet on March 31, 2021, with a substantial outlay of ₹10,900 crore. The scheme is designed for implementation over a six-year period, from 2021-22 to 2026-27.⁵ The primary objectives of PLISFPI are to foster the creation of global food manufacturing champions that align with India's natural resource endowments, promote Indian food brands in international markets, increase off-farm employment opportunities, and ensure remunerative prices for farm produce, ultimately leading to higher incomes for farmers.⁵ A significant component of the scheme, the Production Linked Incentives Scheme for Millet Based Products (PLISMBP), carved out with an outlay of ₹1000 crore from savings, specifically incentivizes the production, value addition, and sale of millet-based products.⁵

PLISFPI has already demonstrated remarkable achievements. As of December 2023, the scheme has attracted an investment of ₹7,099 Crore, nearing its target of ₹7,722 Crore. It has significantly boosted processed food sales turnover, achieving ₹2.01 Lakh Crore, which substantially exceeds the initial target of ₹1.20 Lakh Crore. Furthermore, the scheme has generated 2.36 Lakh employment opportunities, closely approaching its target of 2.50 Lakh.⁵ A total of 176 proposals have been approved under various categories of PLISFPI, including 30 proposals specifically for millet-based products, with 22 of these being from MSMEs.⁵

While PLISFPI aims to increase off-farm employment, the available information does not explicitly detail specific guidelines or outcomes related to women beneficiaries or the gender impact of the scheme.¹¹ Applicants for the scheme can include proprietary firms, partnership firms, Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs), companies registered in India, cooperatives, and Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs).¹¹ The absence of gender-disaggregated data on beneficiaries and outcomes represents a critical information gap. Although women are likely benefiting from the employment opportunities created, without systematic measurement, the full extent and nature of their participation remain unquantified.

This lack of specific data hinders the ability to assess the scheme's precise impact on women, identify any unique barriers they might face, or design targeted interventions to maximize their benefit. This observation underscores the need for more comprehensive data collection to inform future policy and ensure equitable distribution of benefits.

Table 3.2.1: PLISFPI Financial Outlay and Key Achievements (2021-2027)

Metric	Value	Source Snippets
Total Allocation	₹10,900 Crore	5
Allocation (15th FC Cycle)	₹7,099 Crore	5
Total Projects Approved (since inception)	₹2.01 Lakh Crore	5
Total Projects Completed (since inception)	2.36 Lakh	5
Total Proposals Approved	176	5
Millet-based Proposals Approved	30 (22 MSMEs)	5
PLISMBP Allocation	₹1,000 Crore	5

This table highlights the significant economic growth and job creation spurred by PLISFPI. By presenting the overall employment generation without explicit gender disaggregation, it implicitly points to an area where more granular data could reveal specific opportunities for women. The focus on millet-based products, often grown in rural areas, also suggests a niche where women-led MSMEs could be strategically supported to access the scheme's benefits.

Proposed Areas of Collaboration for Women under this Scheme

1. A special category should be created under PLISFPI for women-led micro and small food processing brands. Women can be encouraged by providing higher incentive rates for women-owned businesses in value-added food products such as ready-to-eat snacks, nutritional supplements, or traditional packaged foods. Additionally, they can be provided with marketing and branding support to make it accessible to others as well.
2. Specialised training modules for women can be introduced in high-margin categories like fortified foods, plant-based proteins, organic packaged products, and export-compliant food items, and these can be paired with guaranteed placement or buy-back agreements with PLISFPI beneficiary companies.
3. A portion of the budget allotted for R&D should be given to women innovators that focus on encouraging women to develop healthier, local, and sustainable food products, for example, millet-based snacks, immunity-boosting powders, or regional delicacies in ready-to-eat form.
4. **Raw Material Traceability Badges for Women Farmers:** We can launch a **“Women Grown, PLISFPI Processed”** QR tag on packaged products, allowing consumers to scan and discover the real story behind their food from the woman farmer’s name and location to her journey of growth. This transforms purchases into meaningful, story-led choices while creating a premium, impact-driven brand identity for PLISFPI products as per the behavior of the generation, people are more inclined towards these innovations.
5. **Work from Home Food Processing Modules:** There are many women in India who have the calibre to work and innovate, but who cannot leave home due to childcare or cultural constraints. **Compact processing & packaging kits** can be provided to women For products like spice mixes, dehydrated herbs, or handmade confectionery, so that they can operate from home. The processed semi-finished goods can be picked up weekly by PLISFPI units for final packaging and export.

3.3. Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme

The Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme was launched on June 29, 2020, as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. With an envisaged outlay of ₹10,000 crore over five years (2020-21 to 2024-25/2025-26), PMFME aims to enhance the competitiveness and promote the formalization of existing individual micro-enterprises within the unorganized segment of the food processing industry.¹ A key objective is to support Farmer-Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), and Producer Cooperatives along their entire value chain.¹

The scheme targets a transition of 200,000 existing micro food processing units into a formal framework, facilitating increased access to credit, integration with organized supply chains through strengthened branding and marketing, and access to common services like processing facilities, laboratories, and incubation services.¹⁴

The scheme is structured around four broad components: support to individuals and groups of micro-enterprises, branding and marketing support, support for strengthening institutions, and establishing a robust project management framework.¹⁴ Financial assistance for individual micro food processing units is provided as a credit-linked capital subsidy at 35% of the eligible project cost, with a maximum ceiling of ₹10 lakh per unit. Beneficiaries are required to contribute a minimum of 10% of the project cost, with the balance sourced as a bank loan.¹ For SHGs engaged in food processing, seed capital of ₹40,000 per member is provided, subject to a maximum of ₹4 lakh per SHG Federation, for working capital and the purchase of small tools.¹ Additionally, the scheme offers a credit-linked capital subsidy of 35% (up to ₹3 crore) for common infrastructure and grants up to 50% for branding and marketing support to groups of FPOs, SHGs, and cooperatives.¹

PMFME adopts a "One District One Product (ODOP)" approach to leverage economies of scale in procurement, common services, and marketing.⁵ Achievements include the identification of 19 districts with Millet Products as ODOP, the approval of 3 Marketing & Branding proposals for Millet Products, and the establishment of 17 incubation centers equipped with Millet Processing lines.⁵

This scheme is particularly significant for women's economic empowerment. The unorganized food processing sector, which PMFME directly targets, has a substantial female workforce, with approximately one-third of its employment comprising women.⁷ The scheme's explicit support for SHGs, which are predominantly women-led collectives, for seed capital, common infrastructure, and branding/marketing, makes it a powerful vehicle for women's economic upliftment.¹ The eligibility criteria for individual applicants, requiring them to be above 18 years of age and possess at least an VIII standard pass educational qualification, are inclusive, and the "one person from one family" rule ensures equitable access.⁷

Furthermore, the scheme's implementation structure includes a "Manager, Social Sector Specialist" role within the State Project Management Units (SPMUs), specifically mandated to ensure "capacity development of the disadvantaged section of the society for their coverage under the scheme" and focus on "empowerment of women & in gender issues, formation of SHG or programme for upliftment of SC/ST & women".⁷ This intentional focus on gender inclusion within the scheme's design and implementation makes PMFME the most direct and potent lever for FLO's mission, offering a clear framework for impactful collaboration.

Table 3.3.1: PMFME Financial Outlay and Key Components (2020–2025)

Metric	Value	Source Snippets
Total Allocation	₹10,900 Crore	1
Scheme Duration	5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25/2025-26)	1
Micro Units to be Assisted	200,000	1
Individual Unit Subsidy (%)	35%	1
Max Individual Unit Subsidy	₹10 Lakh	1
Seed Capital per SHG Member	₹40,000	1
Max Seed Capital per SHG Federation	₹4 Lakh	1
Common Infrastructure Subsidy (%)	35%	1
Max Common Infrastructure Subsidy	₹3 Crore	1

Branding & Marketing Grant (%)	Up to 50%	1
Millet ODOP Districts Identified	19	5
Incubation Centres for Millets Approved	17	5

This table details the financial mechanisms and key targets of the PMFME scheme, clearly demonstrating its direct relevance to micro-enterprises and SHGs. The granular information on subsidies and support for common infrastructure highlights precise entry points for FLO to guide its members and partner with the government, ensuring that women-led enterprises can access these critical benefits.

Proposed Areas of Collaboration for Women under this Scheme

- 1. Minimum 40% quota for women beneficiaries and fund allocation** should be introduced so that it makes gender inclusion measurable and enforceable, because while the PMFME scheme recognises women as a priority group, there is **no binding** target to ensure equitable participation.
2. Women entrepreneurs are not so familiar with the challenges of processing due to documentation and errors. They often face longer processing times due to documentation and collateral challenges. Creating **dedicated application windows** for women within PMFME, along with **simplified documentation requirements** (such as self-declaration of ownership and SHG verification), can significantly reduce barriers.

3. Women-led enterprises under PMFME often struggle to secure large buyers. They do not have exposure to the outside world and often lack connections, which are somewhat important in this era. The government can **reserve a specific share (e.g., 10–15%) of institutional procurement** via mid-day meal schemes, hospital supplies, and PSU canteens for products manufactured by women entrepreneurs. A **national registry of women suppliers** under PMFME should be created to connect government buyers with eligible producers.
4. While branding and marketing assistance are part of PMFME, many women lack the networks to leverage these funds effectively. Partnering with **FICCI-FLO and similar industry bodies** can deliver structured mentorship programs, covering **brand identity development, packaging standards, pricing strategies, and access to retail chains/e-commerce**. Such programs can be integrated with PMFME's 50% branding grant for maximum impact.
5. Women entrepreneurs in micro food processing often miss out on digital marketplaces due to a lack of technical know-how and upfront onboarding costs, and as per the majority's and our experience, these digital marketplaces in today's era cover a lot of market and trade. But the cost of establishing on these platforms is high. PMFME can introduce **digital vouchers** that cover the cost of onboarding women-owned enterprises onto major e-commerce platforms. District-level **digital skills workshops** can be conducted in partnership with technology companies to train women in online selling, order management, and digital marketing.
6. PMFME currently offers a 35% credit-linked subsidy, but this may not be enough for women entrepreneurs with limited personal capital. Introducing an **additional 10% subsidy top-up for women** can bridge the financing gap. Moreover, aligning with **MUDRA, SIDBI, and NABARD** to provide **collateral-free loans with credit guarantees** will ensure faster loan sanctions and reduce bank reluctance in funding women-owned enterprises.

4. Analysis Framework: Mapping MoFPI Schemes to Women's Economic Empowerment

This section systematically analyzes how MoFPI schemes contribute to women's economic empowerment, identifies existing provisions, and pinpoints gaps and opportunities for enhanced participation.

4.1. Direct and Indirect Impact on Women

The various schemes under the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, while diverse in their primary objectives, collectively contribute to women's economic empowerment through both direct and indirect channels. The PMFME scheme stands out for its direct empowerment provisions. By specifically targeting micro-enterprises and explicitly supporting Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), it engages directly with significant conduits for women's economic activity across India.¹ The scheme's provision of credit-linked subsidies, seed capital for SHGs, and support for common infrastructure directly benefits women entrepreneurs and collectives, enabling them to formalize, upgrade, and expand their operations.¹ This direct approach ensures that financial and infrastructural support reaches women at the grassroots level, fostering their entrepreneurial growth.

PMKSY, while primarily focused on infrastructure development and reducing post-harvest losses, generates significant indirect benefits for women. Its emphasis on benefiting a large number of farmers (57 lakh farmers) and generating substantial employment (8.28 lakh direct/indirect jobs) creates a broader, more robust economic environment. Within this improved ecosystem, women, particularly those involved in agriculture and allied activities, find enhanced opportunities to thrive. Crucially, the specific provisions within the Watershed Development Component of PMKSY (WDC-PMKSY) for women's representation in committees and SHGs offer a direct avenue for women's agency and participation in decision-making related to water resource management, which directly impacts their agricultural livelihoods.⁹

PLISFPI, with its objective to increase off-farm employment opportunities, also holds considerable potential for women's economic advancement.⁵ Given the increasing Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR), especially the surge in rural women engaging in self-employment, these new jobs in processing and manufacturing can significantly contribute to women's economic well-being, even if not explicitly gender-targeted.⁸

A comprehensive view of these schemes reveals their interconnectedness and potential for holistic empowerment. While PMFME offers direct support to women-led micro-enterprises, PMKSY's infrastructure development and PLISFPI's employment generation create a supportive and enabling ecosystem. PMKSY, for instance, improves raw material availability and quality by reducing post-harvest losses. PMFME then formalizes and supports the micro-enterprises, many of which are women-led, enabling them to utilize this improved infrastructure and higher-quality raw materials.

Subsequently, PLISFPI incentivizes larger-scale manufacturing, which can create demand for processed goods and potentially establish market linkages for smaller, formalized units. This synergistic relationship implies that interventions aimed at women's empowerment should not be confined to a single scheme but should consider how efforts across all MoFPI initiatives can create a more robust and inclusive food processing value chain for women.

4.2. Gaps and Opportunities for Enhanced Women's Participation

Despite the significant potential and existing provisions within MoFPI schemes, certain gaps and opportunities for enhancing women's participation warrant attention. A notable gap is the lack of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data for several schemes, particularly PLISFPI.¹¹ While PMFME acknowledges the substantial presence of women in the unorganized sector, detailed metrics on women's direct benefits from credit-linked subsidies, training, and market access across all schemes are not consistently available. Without this specific data, it becomes challenging to accurately assess the full impact on women, identify precise barriers they face, or design truly targeted interventions. This absence of systematic measurement also limits the ability to hold schemes accountable for gender-inclusive outcomes, highlighting a critical area for policy enhancement.

The strategic alignment between MoFPI's focus areas and FLO's initiatives presents a significant opportunity. MoFPI's emphasis on micro-enterprises, rural development, and skill-building resonates strongly with FLO's established programs such as Financial Literacy, Digital Skilling, MSME Assist, and Rural Livelihood and Rural Enterprises.¹ This convergence is particularly timely given the increasing Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) and the remarkable surge in rural female self-employment, which increased from 13.6% in 2017-18 to 24.2% in 2021-22.⁸ This upward trend signifies a large and growing pool of women who are actively pursuing entrepreneurial and employment opportunities in sectors like food processing. The rising inclination of rural women towards self-employment provides a substantial and motivated base for PMFME's formalization efforts. By specifically targeting these self-employed women, many of whom are likely already engaged in micro-scale food processing, PMFME can more effectively achieve its formalization goals. Simultaneously, this approach empowers women by providing them with access to formal credit, market linkages, and other benefits of operating within a structured economic framework.

FLO, with its specialized cells and initiatives, is uniquely positioned to act as a catalyst, providing the necessary guidance, training, and awareness campaigns to help these self-employed rural women formalize their food processing units and effectively access PMFME benefits, thereby transforming latent entrepreneurial drive into sustainable economic growth.

Furthermore, while schemes promote skill development and market access, there is a discernible need for more gender-specific programmes. These programmes should address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by women in food processing, encompassing advanced technological training, stringent quality control measures, and direct market access strategies for women-led products. Tailored support in these areas can significantly enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of women's enterprises within the sector.

5. World Food India: A Global Stage for Women-Led Growth

The World Food India (WFI) event is a flagship international initiative organized by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) to position India as the "Global Food Hub". This mega-event serves as a transformative platform, bringing together global investors, policymakers, and business leaders to explore India's dynamic food processing landscape from "farm to fork". For FICCI FLO, WFI represents a critical opportunity to align women's economic empowerment with national priorities like sustainability, rural prosperity, and entrepreneurship.

As a key strategic partner, FICCI plays a leading role in organizing these summits, which showcase innovations in processing, packaging, and food safety while facilitating billions in investment. The event specifically emphasizes the inclusion of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and micro-entrepreneurs, offering them exposure to national and global standards. By integrating the following proposals, FICCI FLO can further leverage this platform to scale women-led businesses and ensure they are at the forefront of India's journey toward becoming the "Food Basket of the World".

5.1. Proposed Collaborative Initiatives for World Food India

To maximize the impact of the MoFPI-FICCI FLO partnership, the following strategic initiatives are proposed for upcoming World Food India editions:

- **Dedicated "Women-Led Innovation" Pavilion:** FICCI FLO can curate a specialized exhibit space featuring women entrepreneurs who focus on high-margin categories like plant-based proteins, organic packaged goods, and fortified health foods.
- **"She-Trade" Reverse Buyer-Seller Meets:** Organize exclusive networking sessions at WFI to connect women-owned MSMEs and SHGs with the over 1,000 international buyers typically in attendance.

- National Registry of Women Suppliers: Launch a digital registry during the event to connect government institutional buyers (e.g., PSU canteens and mid-day meal schemes) with women-led suppliers registered under the PMFME scheme.
- WFI-FLO Startup Grand Challenge: Introduce a dedicated category in the existing WFI startup competitions for women-led innovators focusing on "Waste to Wealth" and sustainable packaging solutions.
- Lakhpati Didi Success Showcases: Utilize the "Lakhpati Didi" pavilion model to highlight success stories of women who have formalized their micro-enterprises through PMFME, providing them with a platform for global mentorship and scaling.

6. Conclusion and Way Forward

The analysis presented in this report underscores the immense and often untapped potential of India's food processing sector as a powerful engine for women's economic empowerment. The strategic imperative for a robust partnership between the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) and FICCI FLO is clear. By leveraging the strengths of MoFPI's comprehensive schemes, PMKSY, PLISFPI, and PMFME, and integrating FLO's proven expertise, nationwide network, and advocacy for women-led development, critical gaps can be addressed, and existing opportunities can be significantly amplified.

The proposed collaborations, spanning enhanced access to finance, tailored skill development, expanded market access, crucial infrastructure support, and institutionalized policy advocacy, are designed to create tangible opportunities for women. These initiatives aim to formalize the substantial informal female workforce in the sector, convert latent entrepreneurial drive into structured growth, and ensure that women benefit proportionally from the sector's impressive expansion.

For FICCI FLO, the immediate next steps involve scheduling follow-up meetings with key MoFPI officials to present these specific proposals and discuss potential areas for immediate action. Developing detailed project plans for pilot initiatives in high-potential areas, such as millet processing or rural SHG formalization, would demonstrate concrete commitment and feasibility. Establishing a joint working group with MoFPI would provide a formal mechanism for implementing the identified areas of synergy, ensuring continuous dialogue, monitoring, and evaluation. This phased, results-oriented approach will maximize the impact of the collaboration within the stipulated project duration, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable food processing ecosystem in India.

Works cited

1. Our Initiatives – Ficci Flo, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://ficciflo.org/our-initiatives/>
2. Initiatives – FICCI FLO, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://old.ficciflo.com/initiatives/>
3. We connect in Osaka | Inquirer Opinion, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/185202/we-connect-in-osaka>
4. POLICY & ADVOCACY- Women Empowerment Initiatives – FICCI, accessed on August 7, 2025, https://ficci.in/public/storage/sector/49/Add_docs/FLO-Policy-Advocacy.pdf
5. Year End Review 2023- Achievements & Initiatives of Ministry ... – PIB, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1991108>
6. ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22 – Ministry of Food Processing Industries, accessed on August 7, 2025, https://www.mofpi.gov.in/sites/default/files/mofpi_annual_report_for_web_english.pdf
7. SchemeGuidelines.pdf – pmfme – Ministry of Food Processing ..., accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://pmfme.mofpi.gov.in/newsletters/docs/SchemeGuidelines.pdf>
8. Female Labour Utilization in India – Directorate General of Employment (DGE), accessed on August 7, 2025, https://dge.gov.in/dge/sites/default/files/2023-05/Female_Labour_Utilization_in_India_April_2023_final_1_pages-1-2-merged_1.pdf
9. Empowerment of Women – PIB, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2101873>
10. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES OF PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAYEE YOJANA (PMKSY) 1.0 Introduction – Uttarakhand Irrigation Department, accessed on August 7, 2025, https://uttarakhandirrigation.com/uploads/documents/doc_9551_PMKSY-guidelines.pdf

11. Production Linked Incentive Scheme, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://plimofpi.ifcilttd.com/>
12. Home | Ministry of Food Processing Industries | Government of India, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://www.mofpi.gov.in/>
13. File No. 12015/03/2020-IT Government of India Ministry of Textiles Dated: 28th December, 2021 Operational Guidelines for Product, accessed on August 7, 2025, https://texmin.nic.in/sites/default/files/4.%20PLI%20Guidelines_28.12.2021.pdf
14. Pradhan Mantri Formalisation Of Micro Food Processing Enterprises - myScheme, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://www.myscheme.gov.in/schemes/pmfme>
15. Financial Assistance to Micro Food Processing Enterprises - PIB, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2078344>
16. Structure of SPMU with details of Responsibility, Eligibility, Qualifications, Experience, Remuneration, Selection Criteria, Ten - pmfme, accessed on August 7, 2025, [https://pmfme.mofpi.gov.in/pmfme/newsletters/docs/StructureofSateandUTProjectManagemantUnit\(SPMU\).pdf](https://pmfme.mofpi.gov.in/pmfme/newsletters/docs/StructureofSateandUTProjectManagemantUnit(SPMU).pdf)
17. Women's self-help groups, decision-making, and improved agricultural practices in India, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1143967/>
18. Home | Ministry of Food Processing Industries | Government of India, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://mofpi.gov.in/>
19. Embracing Healthy Food: The Nourishing Delights Of SHG Groups Across India | Shop Products Made By Self Help Groups - SHGeshop, accessed on August 7, 2025, <https://shgeshop.com/embracing-healthy-food-the-nourishing-delights-of-shg-groups-across-india/>
20. Ministry of Food Processing Industries. (2024, January 25). Brochure for World Food India 2024. Government of India. <https://www.mofpi.gov.in/announcements/brochure-world-food-india-2024>

21. Ministry of Food Processing Industries. (2025). World Food India (WFI) 2025: Key elements and strategic pillars. Government of India. <https://worldfoodindia.gov.in/about/key-elements>
22. Press Information Bureau. (2024, September 18). World Food India 2024: India's premier food innovation event. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NotelD=152158&ModuleId=3>

About

FICCI LADIES ORGANISATION (FICCI FLO) Empowering Women, Transforming India

Established in 1983 by a pioneering group of visionary women, FICCI Ladies Organisation (FICCI FLO) has emerged as one of India's most influential platforms for the advancement and empowerment of women. With its headquarters in New Delhi and a widespread network of 20 chapters and over 14,000 members across India, FLO has been the torchbearer for women-led development for more than four decades.

What began as a small collective of driven women professionals and entrepreneurs has evolved into a powerful nationwide movement that brings together women from diverse regions, industries, and walks of life. Through mentorship, leadership, advocacy, capacity-building, and grassroots impact, FLO enables women to rise as agents of change, both in their personal and professional lives.

For the year 2025 -26, FLO has unveiled a comprehensive, forward-looking roadmap aligned with national priorities and global best practices. Around 17 key initiatives reflect FLO's holistic and inclusive approach, focusing on sustainability, digital skilling, entrepreneurship, policy influence, and social impact.

Aligned with India's Vision: Viksit Bharat @2047

As India strides toward becoming a developed nation by 2047, FICCI FLO proudly aligns its mission with the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji—placing women-led development at the heart of the nation-building process.

Through every initiative, FLO reaffirms its unwavering commitment to empower women not just as participants—but as leaders, innovators, and change-makers. Together, we are not just empowering women—we are transforming India.



The Power to Empower

www.ficciflo.com

