

Press Release

CII Food and Beverage Conference “Security, Sustainability and Stewardship” 30th October, 2025, New Delhi

Collective Actions and Partnerships at River Basin Level with adoption of innovative technological options key to Water Stewardship and Sustainability: CII Food and Beverage Conference

Mr. Indraneel Dutt, Co-Chairman, CII Mission on Water and Managing Director & CEO, Ion Exchange (India) Ltd. shared that Water is the lifeblood of the food and beverage sector and an indispensable resource that underpins food security, economic stability, and public health. He was speaking at the 2nd Edition of Conference on Water Stewardship in Food & Beverage Sector: “Security, Sustainability and Stewardship” organised by CII Water Institute, CII at New Delhi today.

As one of the fastest-growing industries, the challenge before the food and beverage sector is to ensure that growth does not come at the cost of sustainability, underlined Mr Dutt. He emphasized that the Food and Beverage sector must shift from conventional water management to holistic water stewardship—recognizing water as a shared, finite, and strategic resource critical to food security, economic stability, and public health. He highlighted that with the sector’s high dependence on water across its value chain, industries must adopt innovative solutions such as advanced recycling, hybrid treatment systems, digital monitoring, and predictive analytics to optimize use and reduce freshwater dependency. Along with this, he also stressed on collaboration beyond the factory gate, he called for joint efforts with farmers, municipalities, and technology partners. He concluded that embedding security, sustainability, and stewardship will define the sector’s resilience and competitiveness in the years ahead.

Mr. Devashish Dasgupta, Director (Corporate Relations), Diageo India, in his address, emphasized that water is not just an operational necessity but the very foundation of sustainability for the Food and Beverage sector. Highlighting India’s growing water stress, he urged a shift from managing water scarcity to fostering shared water stewardship, through partnerships among industry, government, and communities.

He noted that water knows no boundaries—what happens upstream affects everyone downstream—making collective action at the river basin level essential. Citing national programmes like *Namami Gange* that has aligned public policy and participation to drive transformation, he showcased “The Godavari Initiative” a multi-stakeholder initiative that Diageo India has co-founded across India’s second-largest river system to restore aquifers, strengthen watershed management, and improve water availability for both industry and agriculture. He showcased how collective action, and accountability can drive real impact, and emphasised that such models must be replicated across geographies, fostering coalitions built on shared data, investments, and accountability.

He also stressed that water stewardship must extend beyond factory boundaries to include ecosystem restoration and community engagement, reaffirming that “in water, there are no competitors—only co-stewards” working towards a water-secure and resilient future.

Mr. Sidhartha Roy, Principal Manager, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), highlighted that ensuring safe, healthy, and sustainable food systems begins with responsible water management. He reaffirmed FSSAI’s commitment to integrating water safety within the larger vision of “Eat Safe, Eat Healthy, and Eat Sustainable.” Emphasizing that water is not merely a resource but a shared responsibility, he announced that FSSAI has fulfilled its commitment to merge BIS standards for packaged drinking water within its regulatory framework—aligning with the government’s “One Nation, One Standard” vision. He shared that a new testing and certification scheme will soon be implemented to ensure consistent quality. Stressing collaboration with industry, farmers, and communities, he called for innovation, water recycling, and reuse practices to build a resilient, resource-efficient, and climate-ready food ecosystem.

Mr. Amit Verma, Director (GTF, E&F-I), NITI Aayog, Government of India, emphasized that water stewardship must move beyond compliance to become a core business strategy for industries. Highlighting the growing stress on India’s water resources and the competing demands from emerging sectors like green hydrogen, he called for a shift toward efficiency, innovation, and collaboration across the value chain. He underscored the need for adopting IoT, AI, and zero-liquid-discharge technologies to enhance water-use efficiency and reduce dependency on freshwater. Mr. Verma also proposed exploring a market-based mechanism for “water credits,” rewarding industries that invest in conservation and reuse. Stressing that sustainable water management

requires strong public–private partnerships, he urged industries to view every drop as an economic and environmental asset, ensuring resilience and shared responsibility for India’s water future.

Shilpa Nischal, Executive Director, CII Water Institute, emphasized that achieving *water neutrality* is central to ensuring both water and food security. She concurred, as water knows no boundaries, making basin-level and supply chain-based approaches essential. Alongside this water quality issue also needs to be addressed. She shared that the concept is gaining recognition in the industry and over 100 plants have adopted the *Water Neutrality Guidelines* developed by NITI Aayog, focusing on water quantity offsets, quality restoration, and ecosystem health. Concluding, she reaffirmed CII’s vision for industry-wide *water neutrality by 2030* through collaboration, stewardship, and shared accountability.

30th October, 2025
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