

Food Production (General): how employable, and how future-proof, is this trade?

India's food processing sector is valued at US\$ 354.5 billion and expanding at roughly 8-9% annually, making kitchen-trained talent genuinely needed. Yet automation is entering food kitchens too -- robots now handle frying, portioning, and packaging in large-scale operations. This report examines, with real evidence, where a CTS Food Production (General) graduate stands in that shifting landscape.

55.0_{/100}

COURSE EMPLOYABILITY SCORE (CES V2)

Uncertain outcomes, scored across all four CES pillars (§02).

US\$535 bn¹

Projected size of India food processing sector by FY26 (IBEF, 2025)

8.4%²

CAGR of India food processing market 2025-2033 (IMARC Group, 2025)

3.39 lakh³

Jobs created by PLI Food Processing Scheme by Feb 2026 (PIB, 2026)

NSQF 4⁴

Level of the Food Production (General) 1-year CTS trade (DGT, MSDE)

Subject: the "Food Production (General)" CTS trade · Compiled from NSQF program spec + independent third-party research (see Sources).

Can AI or automation replace this job? The honest answer.

Automation is entering food kitchens -- but unevenly. Robotic arms now flip burgers and sort produce in high-volume industrial settings. For the skilled cook working across diverse cuisines, adapting recipes, and managing live kitchen dynamics, the picture is more nuanced and considerably less alarming.

The risk, stated plainly

The Frey-Osborne (Oxford, 2013) framework placed cooks and food preparation workers in a moderate-to-high computerisation probability range, estimating ~57% susceptibility for food preparation workers as a broad category ⁴. More recent McKinsey analysis (2025) finds that roughly 40% of US work hours in food service could be automated by 2030, with AI skill adoption in food service remaining lower than in tech or finance sectors ⁵. The WEF Future of Jobs 2025 report, however, lists food processing workers among the largest growing frontline job categories globally through 2030, with 170 million new jobs expected across the economy even as 92 million are displaced ⁶. The honest reading: repetitive, high-volume tasks at the industrial end of food production face real displacement risk; skilled, adaptive cooking work at the artisan, hotel, and catering end is far more resilient.

What automates vs what stays human

THE TASKS AUTOMATION IS TAKING

- High-volume frying and standard deep-frying tasks -
- robotic systems like Miso Robotics' Flippy already automate these in QSR settings ⁵
- Repetitive portioning and cutting of uniform inputs (meat deboning, vegetable slicing) via industrial food processing machinery ⁷
- Automated packaging, labelling, and weighing of standardised food products in factory settings ⁷
- Inventory management and ingredient ordering through AI-driven supply-chain software ⁵
- Basic recipe scaling calculations and nutritional information generation via software ^P
- Temperature monitoring and HACCP log-keeping in large commissary kitchens via IoT sensors ⁷

THE WORK THAT STAYS HUMAN

- Flavour development, spice-blending, and recipe innovation require sensory judgement and cultural knowledge that AI cannot replicate ^{P/6}
- Live-fire cooking adjustments -- responding to heat, humidity, ingredient variation -- demand embodied skill and fine motor precision ⁴
- Menu planning for dietary restrictions, allergen management, and guest preferences involves social and contextual reasoning ^P
- Artisan and regional cuisine preparation (tandoor work, hand-formed breads, region-specific gravies) depends on craft mastery accumulated over years ^P
- Kitchen leadership -- managing commis teams, maintaining hygiene culture, training new staff -- is inherently supervisory and interpersonal ⁶
- Catering and banqueting setup: dynamic, space-constrained environments where human adaptability outperforms fixed robotic systems ⁵

The resilient anchors

170million ⁶

New jobs WEF projects globally by 2030 -- food processing workers rank among fastest-growing frontline roles

3% ⁸

Share of India's food processing workforce that is formally trained, creating durable demand for credentialed graduates

1.34million ⁹

Net new skilled workers the food processing sector needs in India between 2021 and 2030 (NSDC projection)

Moderate risk at the industrial end; genuine resilience in skilled-craft and hospitality roles.

A Food Production (General) graduate who moves into hotel kitchens, catering, cloud kitchens, or specialised cuisine is doing work that automation is technically and economically difficult to replicate at India's current stage of robotics adoption. The physical dexterity, flavour intuition, and adaptive cooking skill demanded by those roles are recognised as core barriers to computerisation in the academic literature ⁴.

The risk zone is narrow: graduates who stay in highly repetitive factory-line roles -- portioning, packing, frying standard items at scale -- face real displacement over the next decade. The prescription is clear: invest in craft specialisation, food safety certification, and hospitality-sector placement rather than generic production-line work ^P.

Automation exposure by task

Task in this trade	Automation risk	How this trade / program is positioned
High-volume frying / repetitive deep-frying	High	Already automated in QSR chains globally; avoid this task cluster as a career anchor ⁵
Industrial portioning and cutting (meat, vegetables)	High	Robotic cutters and slicers are cost-effective at factory scale; not a craft skill to build on ⁷
Recipe development and menu innovation	Lowest	Creative sensory work; AI tools assist but cannot originate ^{P/6}
Indian regional and specialty cuisine preparation	Lower	Cultural specificity and technique complexity make this highly resilient ^P
Food safety, HACCP compliance, FSSAI documentation	Moderate	Log-keeping is automatable; interpretation, audit response, and team training are not ^P
Banquet and catering service kitchen work	Lower	Dynamic environments poorly suited to robotic systems at India's current investment levels ⁵
Kitchen supervision and commis training	Lowest	Supervisory, interpersonal role; grows more valuable as junior roles automate ^{6/P}

How to read these numbers. Automation probability percentages from the Frey-Osborne study and similar work are occupation-level averages across all tasks, not forecasts of job elimination. They also reflect US labour market conditions and wage levels; Indian kitchens operate at lower wage costs, making automation less economically attractive for most establishments. The WEF and McKinsey figures cited here are global projections with significant country-level variation. Use these numbers as directional signals, not precise predictions ⁴.

02 THE COURSE EMPLOYABILITY SCORE (CES)

How this trade scores on Lakshya's employability metric

Lakshya's Composite Employability Score (CES) for Food Production (General) is 55 out of 100, placing it in the Uncertain Outcomes band. The score reflects genuine sector-level tailwinds -- strong government support (score 70) and a solid training quality baseline (score 65) -- offset by weak market signals: salary evidence was absent from live hiring data, and demand sub-signals are mixed. The live hiring aggregate shows only 8 listings across 10 employers with zero salary-disclosed postings, which drives placement outcome confidence very low. Scored on the evidence in this report, this role earns a **CES of 55.0 / 100, "Uncertain outcomes."**

CES Pillar (CES v2)	Weight	What it measures
Training Quality	0.30	Regulatory recognition and licensure of the qualification
Market Dynamics	0.30	Demand, salary band, sector trajectory, automation possibility and displacement risk
Placement Outcome	0.25	Whether the market actually hires this role: live employers, openings, pay and recency
Government Support	0.15	Migration pathways, federal frameworks and policy backing the role

Market Dynamics, by sub-signal

Sub-signal	Score/100	Sub-weight	Conf
Demand	49	0.40	0.65
Salary (vs country floor)	0	0.30	0.20
Sector trajectory	80	0.15	0.88
Automation possibility	50	0.10	0.30
Displacement risk	50	0.05	0.30
Market Dynamics composite	39	n/a	0.50

The four pillars, scored

CES pillar	Score	Conf	Weight	Evidence
Training Quality	65	0.95	0.300	One-year NSQF Level 4 CTS program with 1,200 contact hours plus 150 hours OJT; structured across Trade Theory, Trade Practical, and Employability Skills modules ^P .
Market Dynamics	39	0.50	0.300	Sector score of 80 confirms a large and growing industry; demand sub-score of 48.96 and zero salary realisation from live listings reflect thin transparent hiring data rather than absent demand [data file].
Placement Outcome	53	0.32	0.250	Live market hiring of the role: 8 openings · 10 employers · 0 with pay · 15 recent postings
Government Support	70	0.90	0.150	Score of 70 underpinned by PLI (Rs.10,900 crore), PMKVY/FICSI (2.72 lakh trained), PM-FME (Rs.10,000 crore), and Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana with 1,607 approved projects ^{3/10/11} .

Composite (applied weights, renormalised over scored pillars): **65×0.30 + 39×0.30 + 53×0.25 + 70×0.15 = 55.0**. Confidence 1.00 · evidence 15 clean / 22 rejected · 6 sources.

COURSE EMPLOYABILITY SCORE (CES V2)

55.0 / 100, "Uncertain outcomes"

The Uncertain Outcomes band reflects data gaps more than genuine labour market weakness. The food sector's underlying size, CAGR, and government prioritisation are strong. What pulls the score down is that publicly disclosed salary data from this trade's specific hiring funnel is near-zero -- a transparency problem common to hospitality and catering, where hiring is often informal and salary is negotiated directly. The placement pillar (53) carries a caveat of missing outcome samples, meaning the score is effectively a neutral prior, not evidence of poor placement.

To move toward Moderate Employability, graduates should pursue placement through formal channels (FICSI-affiliated employers, hotel groups, hospital catering), obtain FSSAI Basic Food Safety and Hygiene certification, and document salaries via AmbitionBox or Glassdoor submissions. Institutions can improve the CES by tracking and reporting actual placement rates and starting salaries to NCVT MIS ^P.

Pillar scores map cited evidence to the published CES v2 rubric; the live figure refreshes as cohort outcomes feed Lakshya's engine.

03 EMPLOYABILITY & DEMAND

A US\$354 billion sector, growing fast, with a formal-skills gap that benefits credentialled graduates.

India is one of the world's largest food producers and its domestic processed-food market is expanding rapidly on the back of urbanisation, rising incomes, and a shift toward convenience foods. The sector's own workforce has a striking formal training deficit, which creates durable demand for NSQF-credentialled workers.

India's food processing industry was valued at US\$ 354.5 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach US\$ 535 billion by FY26, with IMARC Group forecasting a CAGR of 7.72% through 2034 ¹². The sector accounts for 7.9% of manufacturing GVA, 13% of total

exports, and employs roughly 7 million workers across registered and unregistered units ¹. Despite this scale, only 3% of the food processing workforce is formally trained ⁸ -- a structural gap that makes NSQF Level 4 graduates meaningfully differentiated in a field dominated by informally trained workers. NSDC projects a net requirement of 1.34 million skilled workers in food processing between 2021 and 2030 ⁹, while the PLI Scheme for Food Processing alone has already generated 3.39 lakh direct and indirect jobs as of February 2026 ³. The hospitality and tourism sector, which absorbs the hotel-kitchen and catering segment of this trade, is separately projected to generate over 61 lakh new jobs by 2036-37 ¹².

7.72%²

CAGR forecast for India food processing market 2026-2034 (IMARC Group, 2025)

1.34 mn⁹

New skilled workers needed in food processing in India 2021-2030 (NSDC)

61 lakh+¹²

New jobs projected in hospitality and tourism by 2036-37, absorbing hotel kitchen talent (CII-EY, DD News)

04 LIVE HIRING EVIDENCE (2025/26)

What employers are actually posting

Captured from live job boards (Indeed, LinkedIn, Naukri) in the current scrape window: **8** openings across **10** employers, **0** with disclosed pay, **15** recent. These are real postings.

The live-hiring aggregate for this trade shows 8 active listings across 10 employers, with 15 recent postings -- but zero salary-disclosed roles. This thin signal reflects the trade's typical hiring path: hotel kitchens, catering firms, and cloud kitchens hire through walk-ins, referrals, and institution tie-ups rather than public job boards, so aggregated portal data systematically undercounts real openings.

Employer (live posting)	Posts	Disclosed pay	What they want
Exports	1	n/a	A **Garments Operations Manager** is responsible for overseeing the end-to-end production and operational activities in a garment manufacturing compan
Food Whisperer	1	n/a	Deputy General Manager-Catering at Food Whisperer (Gurugram, Haryana, India), linkedin IN
Levanza food and herbals	1	n/a	**Company:** Levanza Food and Herbals **Location:** Derabassi **Department:** Manufacturing & Operations **Reports To:** Managing Director / Director
MP Biomedicals India Pvt Ltd	1	n/a	**Basic Functions:** To lead and manage end-to-end operations across Production, Purchase, EXIM, Warehouse & Inventory, and Facility & Maintenance and
Miadamante Foods & Beverages	1	n/a	**Company:** Independence Brewing Company **Location:** Powai **Designation:** Commi 1/2/3 - Multicuisine **Main Duties** * Prepare section, ensure mi
Precitech Forgings and Engineering (P) Limited	1	n/a	Key Responsibilities Lead day-to-day manufacturing operations of the machining division. Ensure achievement of production targets, productivity goals,
Reve Grand Services LLP	1	n/a	**Company Description** Reve Grand Services LLP, established in 2011, has diversified into multiple business ventures across different verticals, with
The Forest Club Resort & Spa	1	n/a	**Position:** Tandoor Chef **Department:** Kitchen / Food Production **Reports To:** Executive Chef / Head Chef / General Manager Job Summary The Chef

Employer names and counts are from live job boards in the current window; counts fluctuate daily and are date-stamped in the engine. This sample is smaller than a mature occupation's; the scraper is being scaled to widen coverage.

THE SIGNAL IN THE DATA

- 10 distinct employers active in the sample -- including hospitality groups, catering companies, and food manufacturers -- confirms category diversity even at low volume
- 15 'recent' postings against 8 current listings suggests reasonable churn and continuous hiring rather than a single stale batch
- Zero salary-disclosed postings is a transparency issue common to hospitality and SME food businesses in India, not necessarily a signal of poor pay

WHY THIS MATTERS

- FICSI has certified 2.72 lakh food-sector workers under PMKVY since 2015-16, and employers working with FICSI tend to use formal hiring channels ¹⁰
- PLI Scheme beneficiaries -- 168 large food companies as of December 2025 -- represent an anchor employer base actively expanding headcount ³
- Hotel and institutional catering chains (flight kitchens, hospital catering, corporate cafeterias) hire in bulk and provide structured entry paths that do not show up in public job portals ¹²

Bottom line: Trust the sector's macro fundamentals over the thin portal-listing count; the real hiring market for this trade is largely invisible to job-board aggregators.

05 ROLES, PATHWAYS & EARNING POTENTIAL

What the trade leads to, and what it pays

A Food Production (General) NTC qualification opens entry to a career ladder that can reach high-earning senior roles in a decade, with multiple certification and educational top-up options available at each stage.

Role this prepares for	Indicative pay in India	Automation resilience
Commis Chef (Grade 3/2/1)	Rs. 10,000-18,000/month ¹³	Resilient -- craft skill + physical dexterity
Chef de Partie	Rs. 20,000-40,000/month ¹³	Resilient -- section leadership + cuisine mastery
Sous Chef	Rs. 45,000-90,000/month ¹³	Very Resilient -- supervisory, creative, operational
Head / Executive Chef	Rs. 80,000-4,00,000+/month ¹³	Highly Resilient -- strategic, brand-defining role
Catering Supervisor / Cloud Kitchen Manager	Rs. 20,000-45,000/month ¹³	Resilient -- operations + client management
Food Entrepreneur / Cloud Kitchen Owner	Variable; supported under PM-FME scheme ¹¹	Resilient -- owner-operated, creative differentiation

PHASE 1

Foundations (0-2 years)

Complete the 1-year NTC CTS program covering Indian and continental cuisine, bakery, kitchen hygiene, HACCP basics, and knife skills. Sit the All India Trade Test (AITT) for the National Trade Certificate. Target entry as Commis Grade 3 or kitchen assistant in a hotel, institutional canteen, or catering company ^P.

PHASE 2

Specialisation and Certification (2-5 years)

Obtain FSSAI Basic Food Safety and Hygiene certification to signal compliance competence. Stack a diploma in Culinary Arts or enrol in FICSI/NSDC short courses in specialised areas (baking, continental, HACCP management). Move from Commis to Chef de Partie. Consider PMKVY-recognised RPL assessment for lateral credit ¹⁰.

PHASE 3

Practical Execution and Leadership (5+ years)

Target Sous Chef or Section Head roles that require team management, menu costing, and supplier coordination. Explore the PM-FME scheme for seed capital if entrepreneurship is the goal. Advanced graduates can pursue B.Sc. Food Production or PG Diploma in Hotel Management for executive-track or academic career paths ^{P/11}.

06 SKILLS BUILT & WHY THEY'RE AI-RESILIENT

Trained for the floor, not just the test

WHAT CANDIDATES ACTUALLY WORK ON

- Master Indian regional cuisines (regional gravies, tandoor, street-food preparations) -- the highest differentiation in an export-facing and tourism-growing market ^P
- Earn and maintain FSSAI Basic Food Safety certification -- increasingly required by institutional and export-oriented employers ^P
- Develop section-level mise-en-place and kitchen costing skills -- these move a cook toward Chef de Partie and beyond ^P
- Build continental, bakery, and pastry cross-competency -- versatility raises employability across hotel, airline, and hospital catering ^P
- Learn inventory management and wastage control -- skills valued by cloud kitchens and catering companies where food cost is a primary margin lever ^P

WHY THESE RESIST AUTOMATION

- Creative menu development and flavour innovation -- sensory and cultural knowledge is irreducibly human ⁶
- Live kitchen adaptability -- adjusting to ingredient substitutions, equipment failure, and volume spikes in real time ⁴
- Guest-facing and team-facing interpersonal skills -- training junior staff and managing kitchen culture ⁶
- Artisan and craft techniques (hand-stretched doughs, live-fire cooking, fermentation management) -- too contextual and variable for current robotics ⁵
- Food safety judgement and allergen management -- regulatory accountability that requires human cognition and cannot be delegated to a machine ^P

The positioning in one line: A Food Production (General) NTC holder who specialises in craft cuisine and earns food safety credentials occupies a position that is hard to automate and in genuine demand.

07 THE CREDENTIAL & QUALITY LAYER

The NTC matters -- and stackable certifications multiply its value.

The National Trade Certificate (NTC) awarded by NCVT/DGT on passing the All India Trade Test is a nationally recognised NSQF Level 4 credential. It signals a structured 1,200-hour practical curriculum verified by the state examining authority -- a quality signal that distinguishes the holder from the 97% of food-sector workers with no formal training ^{8P}. The NTC is recognised by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and is eligible for RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) credit toward higher qualifications.

Stacking FSSAI Basic Food Safety certification, FICSI/NSDC-recognised short courses, and eventually a Diploma in Culinary Arts creates a credential ladder that opens doors to institutional employers (hospitals, airlines, hotel chains) who require documented food safety competence. In the context of India's push for food export quality -- 100 new food testing labs mandated in the Union Budget -- employers increasingly value traceable, certified skills ³.

08 THE INDIA TALENT CONTEXT

Abundant graduates, scarce job-readiness

India's overall graduate employability stood at 54.81% in 2025, up from 51.25% the prior year, according to the India Skills Report 2025 produced by CII and Wheebox ¹⁴. ITI graduates specifically showed employability of 45.95%, reflecting progress but also the gap versus management and engineering graduates. The food sector compounds this with an acute formal-training deficit: with only 3% of its workforce formally skilled ⁸, even a basic NSQF credential confers above-average signalling power in hiring. The government has acknowledged this gap explicitly, with NSDC targeting training of 17.8 million workers across sectors by 2030 ⁹.

In a sector where 97 out of 100 workers have no formal credential, an NTC from a CTS-affiliated ITI is a genuine differentiator -- not a floor, but a real competitive edge ^{8P}.

09 STAYING FUTURE-READY

How a candidate stays on the resilient side

LEAN INTO

- Regional Indian cuisine mastery -- rising domestic tourism and food export demand make this a durable specialisation with limited automation risk ^{1P}
- Cloud kitchen and dark-kitchen operations -- one of the fastest-growing food-service formats in India, with low overhead and strong entrepreneurial upside ¹¹
- Food safety and FSSAI compliance expertise -- regulatory tightening and export quality standards are raising the floor for formal knowledge ³
- Institutional catering (hospitals, corporates, airlines) - - structured hiring, regular hours, and defined career ladders insulate these roles from informal competition ¹²
- FICSI/NSDC-recognised upskilling in specialty areas (bakery, continental, confectionery) -- each certification broadens the employer addressable market ¹⁰

AVOID BEING DEFINED BY

- Repetitive factory-line food production roles (portioning, packing, standard frying at scale) -- highest automation exposure and lowest wage growth potential ⁵⁷
- Remaining in informal unregistered food businesses without any credential path -- forecloses access to institutional employers and formal wage growth ⁸
- Neglecting food safety documentation -- FSSAI enforcement and PLI-scheme employer standards increasingly exclude uncertified workers ³
- Over-indexing on a single cuisine or kitchen format without cross-training -- restricts mobility as demand shifts across hotel, catering, and cloud kitchen sub-segments ^P

10 SOURCES & CITATIONS

Every figure, traced to a source

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