



# Estonian-Indian Partnership

*Her Excellency Katrin Kivi presented her credentials to the Honourable President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, in September 2019 to be the third Resident Ambassador of Estonia to India. Liquid spoke to her on the trade relations between Estonia and India, the focus of Estonia on food and beverage and what the future holds.*

**As the Ambassador of Estonia, what is your role in promoting Estonia in India?**

It has been a real privilege to represent Estonia as Ambassador to India and call this wonderful city of New Delhi my home. Like any Ambassador, I have not only been boosting bilateral political ties between our two countries but am constantly trying to promote my Estonia as well – to create more awareness about how beautiful and wonderful my country is, introduce our culture and history, our traditions, music, literature, architecture and cuisine!

At our Delhi Mission, we have three Estonian diplomats and are supported by locally employed staff. Enterprise Estonia is very active through its Trade and Investment Advisor. In my business diplomacy activities, I am assisted by Honorary Consuls in Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai.

In December 2021, our two nations celebrated 30 years of successful diplomatic relations and in March this year, the first resident Ambassador of India assumed office in Tallinn – both

countries have brought our relationship to the next level. I am proud that the Estonia-India friendship has withstood the test of time, and is firm in the face of global geopolitical turbulences.

**What is the level of understanding and interaction between Estonians and Indians?**

Many Indians have made their way to Estonia to discover our country as a tourism destination. Some of them have stayed to work as IT or banking specialists, engineers or lawyers, doctors or chefs, in various places across Estonia. Some Estonians who came to India have found themselves or their love here and vice versa. An Indian filmmaker Varun Trikha recently came to search for his true self in our country and produced a film *Raise Me a Memory*.

Introducing a country of 1.3 million population to India whose population is 1000 times bigger, is a challenge. Being Estonian is a profession and each and every one of us counts! For most Indians, Estonia has been a well-kept secret so far, but I want to reveal it.

**What are the key sectors of bilateral co-operation and trade?**

Digitalization, cyber-security and innovation are the primary drivers of our bilateral relations. Estonian and Indian partners are collaborating on digital transformation, blockchain, artificial intelligence, healthtech, cleantech, and fintech.





Oil and petroleum products and wood pulp account for almost 60% of Estonia's merchant exports to India which touched €100 million in 2021. In the same year, Estonia imported a more varied basket of carbon, natural minerals and insulated wires from India worth €41 million.

Estonia agri-food exports to India are led by spirits and liqueurs – primarily artisanal Gin and Vodka – which are making their mark internationally because of the stronger presence of different herbs, berries and spices (elderflower, rhubarb, cloudberries, ginger, pepper, smoked juniper). Gourmet cheese and processed foods follow closely. Year-on-year new products are introduced to the F&B sector.

**What are the strengths of Estonian produce?**

Estonian food products are building a reputation for hailing from the country with the cleanest air in the

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world. We are the second largest organic farming country in Europe.

Modern technology makes our production and logistics as efficient, automated, and sanitary as possible with minimum environmental impact. The industry sanitary standards are on par with hospital operating theatres. Specialist innovators in well-equipped labs develop new products and keep a close eye on quality. Food safety is guaranteed. Food producers are ensuring the traceability of origin of the ingredients.

Estonians are very health-conscious, thus food companies strive toward natural qualities, avoid the use of artificial additives, too much salt and sweeteners, and maximize the content of the core ingredient. More attention is also being paid to high nutritional value, health benefits and a balanced diet.

**Who are the major trade partners for Food & Beverage?**

The majority of Estonian companies are export-oriented, focused on neighbours like Latvia, Finland and Sweden. But nothing restrains our companies from exploring the rest of Europe, North America and the rising but complex Asia market opportunities.

The long-standing traditions of the Estonian food sector are rooted in dairy and alcohol. Estonian bacon, butter and eggs have been the largest export articles

of Estonia since the 1930s. Vana Tallinn is without doubt our most famous spirit, revered by its loyalists.

**Why is Estonia looking at India now?**

I think the question should be 'Why not India'?

The Indian market for imported and international food and beverage is showing a noticeable growth trend. India is emerging as a favorite market destination for many national and international players in this business. In addition to evolving food preferences based on the global offer, dual-income households, increasing health awareness, more dining-out options, and rising aspirations are all converging to bring a tectonic shift to the Indian plate, especially in urban households.

We have much to offer each other. Globally-oriented Estonian companies are working to tap into the potential that a reforming and transforming India presents. Going forward, Estonia intends to further

deepen trade in food and beverages with India.

In Estonia, we believe that love passes through the stomach which means that delicious food and beverages make people curious towards each other, win hearts and minds, and cement friendships. This is why I am particularly proud to contribute to this special Estonia edition of your magazine *Liquid*.

**What was the impact of Taste Estonia at Aahar?**

The Estonian stand at the Aahar Food Show in New Delhi reverberated with the theme of 'organic, innovative, healthy and sustainable brands' enhancing the visibility of Estonian products among Horeca professionals, foodies and influencers.

The established quality standards, commitment to environmentally friendly solutions and the drive for sustainability make Estonian food products very acceptable.



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Price sensitivity, volume game, understanding the pulse of consumers and high import duties are some of the factors to be borne in mind before plunging into the Indian market. But considering the vastness of the opportunities, and with the active support of customized, tailor-made market entry and strategy tools, such fears can be easily allayed.

**What are the challenges in the agro-products market in India?**

Consumers in India are more discerning with evolving preferences. Indians are scouting the world for unique flavors and delicious foods. They demand healthier, smarter, more sustainable food.

Estonia is stepping up to the challenge. Our companies are quick to react and adapt to changing behaviour thanks to our relatively small size, forward-thinking mindset and innovative approach to scientific advancements, and are able to export our clean Nordic flavours.

**What can the Indian market look forward to from Estonia?**

India with its massive demand offers the opportunity for Estonian companies, startups, innovation and entrepreneurs to explore opportunities across food and beverage as also other sectors.

Trade is always a two-way street, and Estonia offers some progressive platforms like E-Residency, Startup Visa Programme, Digital Nomad Visa to create an interface with its dynamic ecosystem that supports free entrepreneurship and minimal bureaucracy – allowing businesses to focus on the development of their products and services.

To conclude – there is still a lot more I can and will do in India to promote our culture, education, tourism and people-to-people contacts along with our food and beverages. 

