

Superfoods in the Market: Unlocking New Agribusiness Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to explore the multifaceted potential of superfoods in enhancing nutrition and promoting public health, while also addressing their role in agricultural sustainability and hidden hunger. It tries to address the market dynamics, policy support, and the associated agribusiness opportunities in superfood segment. Additionally, it highlights constraints and other deterrents factors in superfoods against unlocking avenues for consumers in the field of agribusiness.

INTRODUCTION

“We are what we eat” — a statement that highlights the deep connection between diet and overall well-being that impact on physical health, mental clarity, and overall well-being. In recent years, the concept of *superfoods* has gained increase attention in the realms of nutrition, health, and wellness. Superfoods are naturally nutrient dense foods rich in essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other

bioactive compounds. These foods ¹ are believed to support immune function, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and promote all round health benefits. In contemporary address, the term "superfood" has gained considerable attention, although it is primarily a marketing gimmicks rather than a formal medical or official classification. However, the

¹Quinoa, chia seeds, blueberries, turmeric, moringa, and various millets are now frequently incorporated into daily diets as super food across the globe.

increasing consumer interest in superfoods is often rooted in addressing various health concerns. These concerns encompass a range of common ailments, including hormonal imbalances, acne, sleep disturbances, bloating, and hair fall.

The growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disorders has shifted consumer preferences toward healthier dietary options. In the Indian context, this has led to the resurgence of traditional crops like millets, amaranth, and moringa—once marginalized in modern diets—now being rebranded and promoted as superfoods due to their high nutritional value and adaptability to diverse agro-climatic conditions. Non-bovine milk, derived from animals like goats and camels or plant-based sources, is a nutrient-dense superfood known for its health benefits, easy digestibility, and environmental sustainability. It also promotes women-led entrepreneurship through value-added products in the Agri-allied and wellness sectors. Camel milk is beneficial for children with autism and individuals with diabetes, while goat milk is easily digestible, anti-inflammatory, immunity-boosting, and ideal for those with gastrointestinal sensitivities or chronic health conditions.

The Secret Superpower & Gap Analysis

The supposed health benefits associated with superfoods are often attributed to their rich array of bioactive compounds. This diverse group of substances includes flavonoids, vitamins (both water and fat soluble), phytosterols, phenolic acids, fatty acids, anthocyanins, minerals, and carotenoids. These compounds are theorized to exert various physiological effects, contributing to the overall "superpower" attributed to these foods in promoting health and well-being.

Despite their health benefits and increasing popularity, the superfoods market remains in a nascent stage, especially in developing economies like India. Key challenges such as affordability, accessibility, lack of awareness, and insufficient scientific validation hinder their widespread adoption. Furthermore, issues of sustainability and equitable value chain development continue to be an area of concern. Post COVID-19 pandemic, consumers increasingly seek foods that not only fulfil the basic need (i.e., satisfying hunger) but also enhance human health and well-being. As a result, more attention has been given to some kinds of foods, termed "superfoods," making big claims about their richness in valuable nutrients and bioactive compounds as well as their capability to prevent illness, reinforcing the human immune system, and improve overall health. Certain superfoods, such as curcumin and kale have been reported to have a potential role to protect against COVID-19.

Untapped Market Identification & Agribusiness:

The global superfood market is segmented across several key dimensions, providing a structured framework for analysis. These dimensions include the type of superfood, the distribution channels through which they are sold, and their applications within the food industry. Distribution channels encompass supermarkets and hypermarkets, traditional grocery stores, specialty superstores, and online platforms. Finally, applications of superfoods are seen in bakery and confectionery products, snacks, and beverages (Arumugam *et al.* 2021).

The target market for superfoods, positioned as "New Healthy Luxury Food Products," comprises several distinct consumer segments. These segments include fitness enthusiasts and athletes, who are likely drawn to the performance-enhancing and health-promoting



qualities of these foods. Working professionals are identified as another key demographic, potentially seeking convenient and health-conscious dietary options. The elderly is also considered a target group, possibly due to the perceived health benefits of superfoods in addressing age-related concerns. Women represent a specific consumer segment, potentially aligning with broader health and wellness trends. Medical consumers, who may use superfoods to manage specific health conditions, form another segment. Finally, eco-conscious buyers, driven by concerns for sustainability and ethical sourcing, are also identified as a significant part of the target market (MacGregor *et al.* 2021). In 2024, the Indian superfoods market was valued at approximately USD 5.9 billion. Projections indicated that it would reach USD 12.5 billion by 2033, exhibiting a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 8.7 percent from 2025 to 2033.

The adoption of superfoods is often correlated with higher levels of education and income, likely due to their premium pricing and perceived exclusivity. The early adoption of innovative products in higher socio-economic groups because super foods are expensive and exclusive, attractive to distinguish oneself from the other groups, this means, eating superfoods has become a contemporary expression for wealthy or higher status individuals to show their social status. The economic landscape of superfoods is characterized by several key factors (Groeniger *et al.*, 2017). Pricing strategies often involve premium prices, which, while generating revenue, can limit affordability for lower-income consumer groups. Market growth is driven by a "bandwagon effect," fuelled by prevailing health trends and increasing disposable incomes. For farmers, the cultivation of superfoods can yield high profits, but it also entails risks associated with

price volatility and shifts in market demand. Consumption of superfoods appears to be a modern expression of social differentiation among higher socioeconomic groups (Groeniger *et al.*, 2017).

The superfood sector also shows a trend towards sustainability using eco-friendly packaging, employing biodegradable and compostable materials. Additionally, superfoods are finding applications in the cosmetics industry, with natural skincare brands utilizing ingredients like turmeric and avocado for sustainable beauty products. The superfood market is shaped by a mix of driving forces and challenges. A key strength lies in the inherent health benefits of these foods; think of the antioxidant power of blueberries or the omega-3s in chia seeds, which resonate strongly with health-conscious consumers. This is amplified by current health and wellness trends, like the growing popularity of veganism, which boosts demand for plant-based superfoods. However, weaknesses are apparent. The often-high price tag of items like goji berries or acai can make them inaccessible to many consumers. Furthermore, the lack of standardization can be confusing; one brand's "maca powder" might differ significantly from another's. Supply chain limitations can also be a factor, as seen with fluctuations in quinoa availability.

Additionally, the government is providing support for organic and millet farming through incentives aimed at increasing their cultivation. There is also a push for the inclusion of millets in key public programs, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. These efforts indicate a multi-pronged approach to improve nutritional outcomes and support, and future sustainable agricultural practices. India is focusing on expanding its role in the global superfood market. This is evidenced by promotional efforts for indigenous foods such

as Makhana (foxnut). The government is also taking steps to support Makhana producers and develop the necessary infrastructure, such as the framework for the 'Makhana Board' in the Union Budget 2025-26, designed to foster the production, processing, and marketing of this product specifically highlighting "Mithila Makhana" and its Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

CONCLUSION:

Superfoods represent a substantial opportunity for both health-conscious consumers and the agribusiness sector in broader perspective. Their diluted image as a superior food for higher income groups may be reduced by making the products accessible to everyone as one of the mass marketing strategy. The increasing demand, propelled by growing health awareness, product innovation, and supportive government policies, is driving rapid expansion of superfoods within the market segment. The consumption of diverse fruits and vegetables, integral to the superfood category, plays a crucial role in sustainably preventing malnutrition, cancer, and hidden

hunger. However, challenges such as high costs, limited consumer education, and inefficiencies in the supply chain necessitate focused attention.

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