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**Original article****Everlasting Blooms: Unlocking India's Potential in the Global Dry Flower Market****Dr. Babita Singh***Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog, Govt. of India**\*Corresponding author: [drbabita9@gmail.com](mailto:drbabita9@gmail.com)**Received: 23/07/2025**Published: 27/07/2025***ABSTRACT**

India's dry flower industry has established itself as an important player in global floriculture, exporting nearly 500 varieties to over 20 countries and supporting rural livelihoods, particularly for women and artisans. The sector benefits from India's rich biodiversity, year-round production, skilled workforce, and growing international demand for eco-friendly decorative products. However, challenges persist: reliance on wild collections threatens sustainability, inconsistent quality stems from primitive processing and limited planting material, and there is a lack of standardization, modern packaging, and global certifications. Weak market linkages and fragmented supply chains also restrict profitability and access to premium markets. Despite these issues, the industry's key advantages, diverse natural resources, established production clusters, and a tradition of floral craftsmanship create strong growth potential. Proactive strategies such as shifting toward organized cultivation, adopting advanced drying technologies, promoting value addition, improving packaging, and securing international certifications are vital. Enhanced government support, digital market access, and skill-building initiatives will further empower rural communities and boost the sector's competitiveness. With sustained modernization and strategic interventions, India's dry flower industry is well positioned to expand its share in the global market, deliver inclusive rural development, and meet the rising demand for sustainable floral products.

**Key words:** Dry flowers, export, import, value chain, processing, rural livelihood, policy support

**1. INTRODUCTION**

India's dry flower sector has transformed from a traditional cottage craft into a vital export-oriented floriculture sub-industry. The dry flower industry in India has emerged as a significant facet of the nation's floriculture sector, supplying nearly 500 varieties to more than 20 countries and generating annual revenues close to ₹100 crores. Leveraging India's botanical diversity, year-round production capacity, and skilled rural workforce, the sector has established an international presence, with major export destinations including Malaysia, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, France, and the United States. The industry creates employment for many, particularly rural women, and supports

a wide range of products, from simple dried blooms to value-added crafts, potpourri, and home décor. Despite this promise, India's dry flower sector remains constrained by persistent challenges. A majority of raw materials are still sourced from wild collections, leading to concerns over biodiversity and sustainability. Production is affected by farm fragmentation, seasonal and climatic variability, and a lack of certified, high-quality planting material, which contributes to inconsistent output and variable product quality. At the processing level, the reliance on basic drying techniques and the absence of standardized practices results in color loss, deformity, and limited shelf life. Inadequate packaging, restricted value addition, and weak market linkages further limit growth, while fragmented supply chains leave producers dependent on intermediaries and vulnerable to low farm-gate prices. On the export front, Indian products encounter high tariffs in several markets and suffer from a perception of lower quality relative to those from Argentina, China, and Kenya. Policy and institutional gaps, such as limited coverage under key floriculture schemes, insufficient research and development, and a lack of international certification, continue to hamper sectoral advancement.

The utilisation of dry flowers also plays a pivotal role in enhancing the bioeconomy of horticulture produce by transforming floral waste and surplus into high-value products, thereby promoting resource efficiency and sustainability. Through processes such as drying, dyeing, and crafting, dried flowers are repurposed into potpourri, natural dyes, decorative crafts, cosmeceuticals, and aromatherapy products, creating new income streams and reducing post-harvest losses that are common with fresh blooms. This sector supports rural livelihoods, particularly for women and artisans by fostering cottage industries and micro-enterprises, while meeting the global demand for eco-friendly, biodegradable, and non-perishable decorative items. Integrating the dry flower value chain into the horticultural bioeconomy aligns with zero-waste principles and circular economy models, helping maximize the economic and environmental value derived from horticultural crops by converting otherwise discarded material into exportable and locally consumed products. Empowering rural women and artisans through targeted skilling programs and fostering public-private partnerships will strengthen the industry's role in employment and economic development.

The dry flower industry in India has the potential to scale new heights in global trade, contribute meaningfully to rural livelihoods, and support the country's broader ambitions in sustainable and value-added agriculture with a coordinated approach addressing production, processing, marketing, and policy constraints.

## **2. Trade Dynamics and Outlook of Dry Flowers**

India's dried flower export landscape is characterized by a wide international footprint in both mature and emerging markets. The concentration of export growth in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, suggesting strong regional partnerships and consumer preferences. Modest but strategic import sourcing, with Nigeria as a leading supplier and steady, though smaller, contributions from Europe, East Asia, and Latin America. India's combination of export strength, growing market demand, and adaptable trade relationships provides a solid foundation for further expansion in the global dried flower market. The trade structure emphasizes both the sector's resilience and its ability to adapt to shifting consumer trends, trade regulations, and climate considerations. India's dried flower trade in 2023 reflected both tradition and innovation, securing its place as a global leader while offering

scope for future growth through market diversification, improved quality, and targeted export strategies.

◆ **India's Dried Flower Export:** India, in 2023, established itself solidly as one of the world's significant exporters of dried flowers, moving \$11 million worth of these products to global markets and ranking 10th among 148 exporting nations. This export profile reflects a strong

◆ orientation towards Southeast Asia and the Middle East, with ongoing demand from mature markets in Europe and North America. In the year-on-year growth context, Malaysia stood out as

the fastest expanding market, increasing its intake by \$1.82 million between 2022 and 2023. Israel and Qatar also emerged as notable growth markets for Indian

dried flowers, highlighting India's growing appeal and competitive edge in both traditional and new destinations

Export Growth Timeline of Dry Flowers	
<b>Early 1980s</b>	Initial exports to Europe and the US began, mostly via family-run businesses.
<b>1990s-2000s</b>	Liberalization and government schemes fueled production and export. Major clusters formed in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.
<b>2010s</b>	Demand surged from the craft, gift, and event industries. Increased focus on value-added products such as potpourri and crafts.
<b>2020s</b>	Online and digital platforms accelerated domestic and export trade. Government and APEDA recognition helped formalize the sector.

**Import Profile and Sourcing Patterns:** On the import side, India brought in \$1.04 million worth of dried flowers in 2023, positioning itself as the 50th largest importer among 184 countries. The

overwhelming majority of these imports (\$939,000) were sourced from Nigeria, supplemented by smaller volumes from France, China, Ecuador, and the Netherlands. Nigeria's prominence as the main supplier signals strong trade ties and possibly unique floral offerings suited to Indian craft or processing needs. Between 2022 and 2023, imports from Nigeria surged by \$774,000, marking it as the fastest growing origin, followed by increases from France and Kenya. This highlights India's

India's Current Position in the Global Market	
<b>Global Rank</b>	In 2023, India ranked as the 10th largest exporter of dried flowers globally, accounting for about 5% of the world's dry flower trade (oec.world/en)
<b>Major Destinations</b>	USA, Germany, UK, Netherlands, Japan, UAE, Canada, and Australia (export import data)
<b>Export Value</b>	India exported \$11 million in dried flowers in 2023, out of a total floriculture export of \$86.6 million
<b>Market Share</b>	Despite being the world's second-largest producer of flowers, India's share in the global dry flower market (and overall floriculture exports) remains below 1% due to challenges in quality, branding, and supply chain management.

expanding and diversifying import network, which may enhance local processing and re-export opportunities.

### 3. Export Advantages of Dried Flowers Compared to Fresh Flowers

Dried flowers offer exporters in India clear advantages over fresh flowers: they are easier to store and ship, resilient to delays and climate challenges, less costly, can be traded year-round, and face fewer regulatory hurdles. This makes them especially suitable for India's fragmented supply base and long export routes, turning post-harvest surpluses and lower-grade blooms into valuable export commodities that support rural livelihoods.

Advantages of Dried Flowers over Fresh Flowers			
1.	<b>Extended Life</b>	<b>Vase</b>	Dried flowers last for months or even years without losing structural integrity, while fresh flowers wilt within days. This makes dried flowers ideal for long-duration shipping and storage.
2.	<b>Seasonal Flexibility</b>		Dried flowers can be produced and stored well in advance, ensuring year-round supply and mitigating the risks of harvest failures or seasonal market fluctuations.
3.	<b>Lower Harvest Losses</b>	<b>Post-</b>	Fresh flowers are highly perishable and suffer high wastage (up to 30–40%) due to delays, temperature changes, and handling during export. Dried flowers are resistant to spoilage and handle transit delays far better.
4.	<b>Logistics and Cost Efficiency</b>		
a.	<b>No Cold Chain Needed</b>		Dried flowers do not require expensive refrigerated storage and transportation, significantly reducing export logistics costs.
b.	<b>Lighter and Compact</b>		They weigh less and can be packaged more compactly than fresh flowers, lowering shipping costs and decreasing carbon footprint.
c.	<b>Minimal Handling Damage</b>		Dried flowers are less prone to bruising or crushing, so they reach end markets in better condition.
5.	<b>Market Appeal and Versatility</b>		
a.	<b>Strong Demand</b>	<b>Global</b>	Dried flowers are used for home décor, gifting, potpourri, crafts, and arrangements. Their longer shelf life matches international consumer demand for durable, natural décor.
b.	<b>Zero Waste</b>		Flowers unable to fetch a premium price as fresh can be dried, processed, and marketed, enhancing the value-chain and reducing waste for Indian producers.
c.	<b>Product Innovation</b>		The dry flower sector supports a range of high-value products, bouquets, sachets, wall hangings, and natural craft items, not possible with fresh flowers.
6.	<b>Regulatory and Trade Advantages</b>		

<b>a. Fewer Phytosanitary Barriers</b>	Dried products are less susceptible to quarantine pests and diseases, making it easier to comply with international sanitary and phytosanitary regulations.
<b>b. Lower Risk of Rejection</b>	Consistent quality, reduced perishability, and improved compliance reduce the chances of export rejections and financial losses.
<b>7. Employment and Rural Benefits</b>	
<b>a. Labour-Intensive Processing</b>	The sector generates continuous rural employment, especially for women and artisans, as processing can be done throughout the year and is not restricted to harvest time.
<b>b. Empowering Small Growers</b>	The entry barriers are lower, and value addition at the village level is easier, resulting in wider participation and rural income enhancement.

#### 4. India’s Advantage in Dried Flower Exports

India has emerged as one of the world’s top exporters of dried flowers, consistently ranking among the top three globally alongside Argentina and China. While Argentina leads in shipment volumes and China excels in high-tech preserved flowers, India possesses several unique advantages that give it a distinct competitive edge in the dried flower export market.

##### a. Rich Biodiversity and Agro-Climatic Diversity

- ◆ **Variety of Raw Materials:** India benefits from a vast range of agro-climatic zones, allowing year-round production of nearly 500 flower and foliage varieties suitable for drying and export. This diversity enables Indian exporters to cater to changing global trends and preferences more flexibly than Argentina (which is known for a narrower range focused on native species) or China (which often relies on industrial-scale cultivation and preservation).
- ◆ **Continuous Supply:** The ability to harvest and process plant material throughout the year ensures reliable and uninterrupted export volume.

##### b. Cost-Effective, Skilled Rural Workforce

- ◆ **Labor-Intensive Production:** India’s dried flower sector utilizes a large pool of skilled rural artisans, especially women, for intricate tasks such as sorting, drying, dyeing, and crafting. Labor costs are competitive and considerably lower than those in Argentina and China, providing price advantages without sacrificing quality.
- ◆ **Community Employment:** The flourishing cottage industry model delivers high social impact, aiding rural development alongside export growth.

##### c. Tradition, Craftsmanship, and Product Range

- ◆ **Handcrafted Value Addition:** India’s long tradition of floral crafts enables production of a wider variety of value-added products, including potpourri, wall hangings, scented sachets, and custom home décor, distinguishing Indian exports from mass-produced, industrial outputs more common in China.

- ◆ **Customization and Design:** Indian producers excel at customizing products to suit diverse markets and tastes, offering tailored colors, packaging, and designs to meet the expectations of buyers in the US, Europe, and Japan.

**d. Market Access, Flexibility, and Responsiveness**

- ◆ **Adaptability to Trends:** Indian exporters are adept at capturing global décor and gift trends, quickly introducing new products and styles in response to market demands, an agility not always matched by the larger, factory-driven approach of some countries.
- ◆ **Export Experience:** Decades of steady export growth have created strong business relationships with wholesalers, importers, and retailers worldwide.

**e. Sustainable, Eco-Friendly Production**

- ◆ **Natural Appeal:** Indian dried flower exports appeal to international markets that prioritize sustainability and eco-friendliness, capitalizing on low chemical use and minimalistic processing.
- ◆ **Circular Economy Practices:** Many Indian firms excel at transforming lower-value or surplus blooms that would otherwise be discarded into high-value dried products, aligning with global zero-waste priorities.

**f. Competitive Pricing and Diverse Product Mix**

- ◆ **Cost Advantage:** Comparatively lower labor and production costs allow Indian products to remain competitively priced for bulk as well as high-value, customized orders.
- ◆ **Range and Depth:** India’s export basket includes simple dried stems, intricate crafts, natural confetti, potpourri, and more, serving both mass and boutique segments.

**g. Strategic Government and Institutional Support**

- ◆ **Export-Friendly Policies:** India’s dried flower export industry benefits from export-oriented status, encouragement from APEDA, and integration into commercial floriculture and MSME development schemes.
- ◆ **Cluster and FPO Initiatives:** Targeted cluster development and support for Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) enhance supply chain organization and export readiness.

**5. SWOT Analysis of Dry Flower Industry in India**

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Rich biodiversity: Nearly 500 cultivable and collectible dried floral varieties.	- Heavy dependence on wild collection for raw materials, raising sustainability concerns.
- Year-round production due to varied agro-climatic zones.	- Inconsistent quality from basic processing and lack of standardization.
- Large, skilled, low-cost rural workforce, especially women artisans.	- Inadequate advanced drying, packaging, and value addition infrastructure.

- Established export traditions and international demand;	- Limited market linkages and fragmented supply chains, dependence on middlemen.
- Natural, eco-friendly processing aligned with global sustainability trends.	- Lack of global certifications, traceability, and organized branding.
- Strong production clusters in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh.	- Modest R&D and limited technology transfer to rural enterprises.
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
- Rising global demand for eco-friendly, sustainable décor; trend toward natural products.	- Increased international competition (e.g., Argentina, China, Kenya).
- Product innovation- Designer potpourri, wellness, aromatherapy, wall art, crafts.	- Tariff and non-tariff barriers in key export destinations.
- Expansion into new markets- Southeast Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Australia.	- Environmental and biodiversity risk from overharvesting wild sources.
- Adoption of certifications (organic, fair-trade) to access premium markets.	- Climate variability affecting yield and raw material quality.
- E-commerce and digital platforms for direct global retail, empowering small producers.	- Slow adaptation to international standards and market preferences.
- Policy support for cluster development, skill-building, and export facilitation.	- Negative perceptions from inconsistent quality or lack of branding.

## 6. Strategies and Way Forward to Strengthen Dry Flower Market

India stands at the threshold of immense opportunity in the global dry flower market. To expand its share and establish lasting leadership, the country must adopt a multi-pronged growth strategy focused on value addition, sustainability, innovation, market expansion, quality compliance, digital enablement, and robust producer empowerment. Aligning its products with international wellness and sustainability trends, supported by strategic government and industry action, will unlock this sector’s next phase of growth and global prominence.

- ◆ **Product Diversification, Innovation and Value Addition:** High-value product development is essential, offering premium, design-focused products such as designer potpourri, scented sachets, floral wall art, eco-friendly confetti, and botanicals for aromatherapy can broaden export portfolios and target luxury markets. Integration with wellness and lifestyle trends will leverage the global emphasis on natural, sustainable, and chemical-free décor and wellness products, positioning Indian exports to meet surging demand for eco-conscious options. Research and development (R&D) into biodegradable craft and packaging solutions will further enhance appeal, particularly in Europe and North America, where sustainability is increasingly a consumer priority. Customization and niche design, leveraging India’s strong craft heritage will open boutique and luxury market opportunities not easily accessible to mass producers.

- ◆ **Expansion into New Geographic Markets:** Proactively targeting emerging buyers in fast-growing economies such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Australia, and Eastern Europe can open new growth avenues as consumption shifts toward natural décor and gifting products. Leveraging e-commerce, including scaling up through global online marketplaces will empower artisans and smaller exporters to reach international customers directly.
- ◆ **Enhancing Quality, Compliance, and Branding:** Adopting international certifications will help Indian products enter premium markets, overcoming tariff and phytosanitary barriers. Implementing batch-wise quality control, standardized drying, and traceable sourcing will build buyer trust and secure long-term export contracts. National branding campaigns such as "Brand India Dry Flowers" can reposition Indian products as premium, diverse, and eco-friendly, countering past perceptions and commanding new price points.
- ◆ **Strengthening Supply Chains and Infrastructure:** Cluster-based infrastructure upgrading establishing advanced drying, processing, and packaging hubs in key regions, will create scale and consistency. Investment in cold chain and logistics, as well as streamlined port and airport handling, will minimize delays and losses, supporting reliable, large-scale exports. Encouraging contract farming and organizing farmers under FPOs or clusters will ensure consistent raw material supply and quality control across the sector.
- ◆ **Innovation and Research & Development:** Investing in research and development for new flower varieties for drying cultivars with enhanced color retention, fragrance, and sturdiness will widen the export basket and allow better margins. Waste-to-wealth initiatives, utilizing floral waste for high-value dried products, align with global circular economy trends and create additional revenue streams.
- ◆ **Empowering Rural Women and Artisans:** Large-scale skill development in drying, craft, and marketing, with a focus on women and youth, can multiply employment truly at the grassroots. Support for cottage industries and MSMEs through financial incentives, easy credit, and export facilitation will broaden participation and boost output quality across India's diverse regions.
- ◆ **Policy, Promotion, and International Partnerships:** Government-backed export missions, targeted promotion at major international trade shows, bilateral negotiation for better tariffs will enhance global competitiveness. Public-private collaboration for research and development, export infrastructure, design innovation, and digital scaling will be crucial for building long-term market leadership.
- ◆ **Shift toward Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Products:** As global demand for natural, chemical-free décor grows, especially in Western and Asian markets, India's ability to offer eco-conscious, biodegradable, and natural dried floral products will become a major differentiator, appealing to buyers who prioritize sustainability. Rapid adoption of international certifications will further favor exporters who invest in sustainable practices, and can push India ahead of Argentina and China, especially in EU and North American premium markets.
- ◆ **Digitalization and E-Commerce Expansion:** Direct-to-consumer and B2B e-commerce will accelerate, giving even small producers and artisan clusters access to global retail buyers directly.

A growing e-commerce logistics network will allow India to overcome current infrastructure gaps, and enabling frequent, flexible exports.

- ◆ **Quality, Standardization, and Traceability:** Broad adoption of international quality standards and traceability technologies (QR codes, blockchain) will be essential to retaining and expanding market share. Government and APEDA-driven stabilization towards standardization will be key for aligning with evolving global import regulations.
- ◆ **Geopolitical and Trade Policy Shifts:** Changing global tariffs or trade agreements could quickly shift competitiveness. If India negotiates reduced tariffs with the EU, US, or ASEAN, exports could become more attractive. Diversifying supply chains and building resilience in response to recent global disruptions may attract more procurement toward India.
- ◆ **Climate Change and Resource Management:** Adverse climate events or biodiversity loss in other producing countries can impact global supply. India's agro-climatic diversity and greater investment in climate-smart agriculture could foster long-term supply stability. Government action supporting the transition from wild-collection to sustainable cultivation will shape future competitiveness.
- ◆ **Market and Consumer Preference Shifts:** Growth in Asian and Middle Eastern demand, regions where India already enjoys a strong presence, may accelerate, strengthening India's hold. Design and fashion trends favoring Indian artisanal looks will further enhance India's appeal to global buyers.

By systematically advancing in these dimensions through innovation, sustainability, skill development, digitalization, market expansion, infrastructure investment, certification, and proactive policy, India is well-positioned to transform its dry flower sector, capture new global leadership, and secure inclusive, sustainable growth for its rural and artisan communities.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The future of India's dry flower industry is promising, provided that persistent issues and challenges are proactively addressed. By shifting from wild collection to organized, sustainable cultivation, and improving access to quality planting material, the sector can achieve greater yield consistency and protect biodiversity. Investment in modern drying technologies and standardized processing methods will elevate product quality, ensuring vibrant color retention and longer shelf life to meet the expectations of international markets. Enhancing packaging standards, promoting value-added product development, and integrating digital marketing platforms can boost both export volumes and profitability. Strengthening supply chains through cluster development, Farmer Producer Organizations, and better market linkages will enable producers, especially rural women and artisans, to access fair prices and global buyers directly. Addressing gaps in certification, traceability, and policy support, while scaling up targeted skill development, will further position Indian dried flowers as premium, eco-friendly products in the expanding global market. Strategic government intervention, technological modernization, quality certification, and branding will be pivotal in realizing India's ambition to lead the global dried flower trade, empowering rural communities and securing durable growth for years to come. Thus, with coordinated action and continued adaptation

to evolving consumer demands, India is well-placed to scale new heights in the dried flower trade, supporting sustainable rural livelihoods and carving out a distinctive role in global floriculture.

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