

Nataraj Oil Mills

A South Indian Brand having Prominent Presence in USA



**Sesameinfo Team had an Exclusive interview with
Mr Senthilnathan Natarajan Chairman and Managing
Director (MD), Nataraj Oil Mills Pvt Ltd, India**

Journey of Nataraj Oil Mills

We have been in this business for generations since 1992, initially milling sesame oil; later, we expanded into milling groundnut oil, sunflower oil, and even palm olein. Generally, we import and distribute in India. In addition to that, we mill pulses (split and retail). We have over thirty years of experience in this field, and our registered office and factory are based in Madurai.

“Anjali” is our major brand name, and Sesame oil is our bread and butter.

Source of Raw Material and Balancing Quality

We procure sesame raw materials throughout India. We don't restrict according to the sesame seed's colour. We give special attention to FFA, and the main focus is on the colour and aroma of sesame oil.

We maintain colour, but the aroma is far more important; however, we don't prefer darker colours. We desire some to be at around nine to ten (measured colour size). We have an in-house lab, and analysis will be performed in batches. We have a system to track, starting from raw materials to our finished product, so for every batch we make and distribute, we have a track record of the batch that we process.

Difference between Cold-pressed Oil and Traditionally Grounded Oil

One of the oldest oils known by mankind is sesame oil. We found that there is traceability in sesame to most civilisations, but it is employed for its medicinal properties. From my childhood, I witnessed the initial process of grinding sesame seeds, known as “Kani” in Hindi (bullock carts spins that are produced made of wood and also stone). This process has been stopped as working with wood is challenging. In this, productivity is also less than two bags per day, and one Kani requires a minimum of eight bulls.

We didn't feel at ease handling wood. We found that wood consumes oil and that when it does, the contamination of the oil is significantly increased due to the addition of moisture to the wood. We also noticed the termite problem

and, during the winter, poisonous mushrooms growing on wood. Expanding the industry on a volume basis is challenging as it is not a hygienic procedure, and there are also problems with the stone. We transitioned from Kani into small Kanis, generally called rotaries in the domestic market, which can produce superior quality. However, we could not scale up from this machine for a long way, so expellers were being used for milling. This is the process of the traditional method done in India.

Pre-cleaning and its Influence on Oil Quality

Before crushing, we must go through the entire cleaning process first. Avoiding the Kani process is that water is added during crushing; the quality criteria are not justified by adding water. In contrast, even though it is labelled as a “cold press,” pressing generates heat (50 degrees Celsius) through friction. Unless it reaches the smoking point, there are no worries of damage to nutrition.

About their Exports

We ship our products internationally to various nations, but our major export destination is the USA. We hold an FDA license over there and supply frequently.

Commodities other than Sesame

We produce groundnut and coconut oils and import crude and sunflower oil from Argentina, Russia, and Ukraine. We refine it in Chennai and then pack and distribute it. We do it frequently; however, due to geopolitical unrest, we cut back on our sunflower purchases, as Ukraine accounts for most of our imports.

On their Dealing with Russia and Ukraine

It is not a problem. We didn't directly deal with Russians even before the conflict. Europeans carry out the majority of the transactions.

About their Pulses and Spices Milling

We have pulses milling also. We are doing toor dal, moong dal, and we will do black gram. Not interested in spices much, mostly dealing in pulses.

India's Consumption of Sesame Oil

India is dependent mainly on edible oil; 70% of India's consumption depends on overseas, and the significant oil imported into the country is soyabean oil, sunflower oil and palm oil. In my opinion, sesame oil, on the other hand, is not acknowledged by these oilseed markets. Initially, major consumption comes from South India though it is consumed in almost all parts of India. The quantum is significantly less compared to South India. On the other hand, we claim that sesame oil is consumed in almost all countries worldwide.

Cold pressed sesame oil is the type of oil we manufacture in India. Sesame oil is consumed worldwide, from China to Japan, but it is known as roasted sesame oil (raw material after pre-cleaning, roasted, and then converted into oil). The oil we produce is of golden yellow colour. Not just sesame oil, but all edible oils require special exclusivity. In my opinion, the government needs to have a distinct long-term vision.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that we need a federation solely dedicated to sesame, or at the very least, that we should call the organisation the Sesame Board or Sesame Federation. We also need to emphasise improving the quality of sesame seeds and promoting the consumption of sesame oil. Compared to other edible oil seeds, the per capita yield of sesame seeds per ha is relatively low. Therefore, we must concentrate on this and increase the quality and volume, and we need to engage in some R&D. Without a scientific method, we cannot do more in agricultural sesame seeds. As an organisation, producers, millers, and exporters, we should initiate and ask the government for its policies.

