

“We plan to expand our product portfolio with healthier oil options”

In conversation with Zafor Uddin Siddiqui, Executive Director (Marketing and Sales), City Group

The Daily Star (TDS): What is the current state of the edible oil market in Bangladesh? What are the key challenges in ensuring a steady supply? What measures can stakeholders, including your company, take to stabilise prices and improve affordability for consumers?

Zafor Uddin Siddiqui (ZUS): The edible oil market in Bangladesh is highly reliant on imports, with soyabean oil being the most consumed, followed by mustard oil, refined palm olein, and canola oils. Brands of City Group, such as TEER and SUN, play a significant role in meeting demand. However, the market faces challenges due to global price volatility, geopolitical tensions, and fluctuations in currency exchange rates. Additionally, local production of oilseeds is insufficient to reduce dependency on imports, and supply chain disruptions often worsen price instability.

Ensuring a steady supply is



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challenged by rising global raw material costs. Inflationary pressures and increased production costs also impact consumer affordability, especially for low-income households. Maintaining steady and uninterrupted production is a significant challenge nowadays, due to the improper supply of utility facilities.

To address these issues, stakeholders can take several measures. Companies should focus on diversifying their

sourcing strategies by partnering with multiple suppliers globally to reduce dependency on specific regions. Investing in domestic oilseed cultivation and refining capacity can also enhance local production and reduce import reliance.

Collaboration with the government to control unethical market practices is crucial. Product pricing should be left to market dynamics. Introducing efficient distribution channels can further ensure consistent availability across urban and rural areas. Subsidies or tax relief on imported raw materials could lower production costs, allowing companies to offer more affordable prices. Government support is required in the supply of utility facilities to run production smoothly. Gas, electricity, and other utility-related support must be provided uninterruptedly.

These combined efforts can contribute to stabilising prices,

improving affordability, and ensuring a resilient edible oil market in Bangladesh.

TDS: Despite the growing availability of bottled oils, many consumers in Bangladesh still purchase unpackaged oil. What are the potential health and safety risks associated with consuming such oils? What strategies can be implemented to raise awareness and encourage a shift towards packaged and quality-assured edible oils?

ZUS: Despite the growing availability of bottled oils, people still prefer to buy loose oil over packaged oil due to the price factor. However, there remains a risk of purchasing mixed oil under the guise of a particular type of edible oil. This mixing may occur at the trade level. The government should stop allowing the sale of oil in loose form, giving refiners adequate time to prepare for this change. This will help ensure quality oil for all. Regular

consumption of contaminated loose oils can increase the risk of serious health issues, including heart diseases, liver damage, and digestive disorders.

TDS: How is your company working to promote healthier edible oil options? What innovations have you introduced to cater to consumer demands for healthier alternatives?

ZUS: Our company is committed to promoting healthier edible oil options by prioritising innovation and consumer well-being. As a pioneer in the industry, TEER Advanced Soybean Oil was the first brand in Bangladesh to be fortified with essential nutrients such as Vitamin A, D, and E, addressing widespread nutritional deficiencies. This fortification ensures that our oils not only meet cooking needs but also contribute to improved public health.

To enhance convenience and user experience, we introduced the agronomic bottle for our edible oil brands. This specially designed packaging features a controlled oil

flow mechanism, reducing waste and spillage. Additionally, the bottle's unique single-twist opening system simplifies usage, making it both practical and user-friendly.

Our refining process leverages the world's leading NRT (Nutrients Retained Technology) to preserve the oil's natural nutrients, ensuring that consumers receive the healthiest possible product. This advanced technology highlights our commitment to quality and innovation in every bottle.

Furthermore, TEER stands out as the only edible oil brand in Bangladesh to offer Canola Oil, a heart-healthy alternative known for its low saturated fat content and high levels of omega-3 fatty acids. This reflects our dedication to catering to evolving consumer demands for healthier options.

By combining technological advancements, nutritional fortification, and product innovation, we aim to empower consumers to make healthier choices while maintaining the highest standards of quality and safety in edible oils.

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TDS: What are your future plans?

ZUS: City Group aims to strengthen its position as a leader in Bangladesh's edible oil market by continuing to prioritise innovation and quality. We plan to expand our product portfolio with healthier oil options, enhance production capabilities using cutting-edge technologies, and invest in sustainable practices to reduce environmental impact. Additionally, we will focus on raising consumer awareness about nutritional benefits and food safety while exploring new export opportunities to establish a global presence. By staying responsive to market trends and consumer needs, we aim to foster long-term growth and contribute to the nation's health and economic development.

Cooking Gets Cutting-Edge

MIFTAHUL JANNAT

As people strive for healthier living, the role of edible oils in daily diets has come under scrutiny. Our everyday kitchen staple - edible oil - has undergone a remarkable transformation to meet the demands of health-conscious and modern consumers. With the growing emphasis on nutrition and sustainability, the edible oil industry has embraced innovation in formulation, processing, and packaging. In recent trends, edible oils with heart-healthy properties, high omega-3 content, and ability to withstand high cooking temperatures without releasing harmful chemicals are highly valued by consumers.

Essential nutrients like omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, along with vitamins A, D, and E, are critical for maintaining heart health, boosting immunity, and supporting overall well-being. However, traditional oils often lack these essential nutrients and may even contain unhealthy trans fats. This gap has driven the need for innovation, pushing manufacturers to rethink and enhance edible oils. Innovation in edible oils addresses not just health concerns but also caters to the demand



for functionality, convenience, and sustainability to keep in pace with the rapidly evolving market demand.

INNOVATIONS SHAPING THE EDIBLE OIL INDUSTRY

Nutrient Fortification

Modern oils are now fortified with essential nutrients such as omega fatty acids for cardiovascular health and antioxidants to combat free radicals. Adding vitamins like A, D, and E transforms everyday cooking oils into functional health products that support immunity and vitality.

“TEER is the first brand to fortify soybean oil with vitamin A, D and E. Our production process involves world's top notch NRT (Nutrients Retained Technology) to keep all the natural nutrients intact. We are the only edible oil brand in Bangladesh that refines and bottles canola oil,” said Md. Abdulla Al Mamun Fahim, Deputy Brand Manager, City Group.

Due to advancements in processing and refining technology and growing consumer demand, the availability of edible oil options in the Bangladeshi market has increased significantly compared to a decade ago. Modern hi-tech and healthy refining process allows all the necessary nutritional values to be intact. Edible oil brands including TEER, Sun, Fresh, ACI, Rupchanda, Fortune, Bashundhara, Pusti are offering fortified soybean, sunflower and rice bran oil for local consumers. Apart from mustard oil, vegetable oils, such as, canola and peanut oil are also being increasingly used due to their health benefits, light flavor and high-smoking point, making them ideal for stir-fry or deep-frying.

Blended Oils

Blended cooking oil is a combination of

various oils, mixed to deliver a desired flavor, nutritional balance, or cooking efficiency. By combining the best properties of multiple oils, such as rice bran and sunflower oil, manufacturers create balanced products that cater to both taste and health. These blends often improve the smoke point, making them versatile for a variety of cooking methods.

Targeted Health Benefits

Modern manufacturers are producing oils with specific health goals in mind, such as reducing cholesterol levels, improving digestion, or boosting energy. These functional oils align with the rising trend of personalized nutrition.

Advanced Extraction Techniques

Techniques like cold-pressing preserve the natural nutrients and flavors of the oil, offering a healthier alternative to traditional heat-based methods. Solvent-free extraction minimizes chemical residues, making the oil safer for consumption.

Refinement Improvements

Modern refining processes focus on reducing trans-fats while enhancing clarity and taste. Innovations in degumming and deodorizing not only improve the oil's quality but also ensure



it retains its nutritional value.

Sustainability in Processing

To reduce environmental impact, manufacturers are adopting greener practices, such as using renewable energy during production and sourcing oils from sustainable crops like soybeans and sunflower seeds. These efforts address growing consumer concerns about environmental responsibility.

Smart Packaging

Opaque containers protect oils from light exposure, preventing nutrient degradation and extending shelf life. Reusable or biodegradable packaging meets the demands of eco-conscious buyers.

“The new agronomic bottle of TEER

Soybean Oil is designed in a way that controls the oil flow while pouring. The special design enables the user to open the bottle with just a single twisting,” mentioned Md. Abdulla Al Mamun Fahim from City Group.

Marketing with Packaging: Clear labeling that highlights health benefits, certifications (like organic or non-GMO), and sustainability credentials helps consumers make informed choices. Packaging has become a vital tool for building trust and brand loyalty.

FUTURE TRENDS

Plant-based oils designed for vegans or oils infused with flavors specific to global cuisines are gaining popularity. Cold-pressed and organic oils have become increasingly prominent in the edible oil market, emerging as highly sought-after segments within the oils and fats industry. Cold-pressed oils, such as extra virgin olive oil, are defined by their extraction method, while organic oils are characterized by the absence of pesticides or chemicals during processing. Although the two processes differ, the distinction lies in the techniques and equipment used. As consumer preferences shift, it is crucial for more oil manufacturing companies to recognize this trend and adapt to meet the evolving market demand.