

Bangladesh holds just 0.01% of global potato market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The thriving global potato industry is currently valued at approximately \$120 billion, but an agriculture-based country like Bangladesh holds less than 0.01 percent share in the international market, experts said yesterday.

The South Asian nation shipped only \$14 million worth of the tuber in the 2024-25 fiscal year, which highlights the country's minimal global footprint and untapped potential for growth, they added.

The experts made the comments at an event organised by the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association at the International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital.

At the event, M Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange of Bangladesh, said during a presentation that diversifying Bangladesh's economy through agro-processed products such as potatoes is vital to reduce reliance on a single export product and strengthen long-term economic resilience.

"Achieving this goal will require strong policy support, incentives, regulatory reforms, and increased investment in infrastructure," he said.

Given the country's climate, soil fertility, and production systems, agricultural goods offer Bangladesh a stronger advantage than any other sector, he added.

Globally, potatoes account for about 4 percent of total crop production. Asia produces 54 percent of the world's potatoes, and Bangladesh ranks among the top 10 producers in Asia, following China and India.

Reaz said Bangladesh's exports remain heavily reliant on a single product—readymade garments—posing significant macroeconomic risks.

He also said that potatoes offer several advantages, as they are high-yielding (producing 10-28 tonnes per acre), adapt well to local conditions, and have a short production cycle of three to four months.

As climate change increasingly affects Bangladesh—one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries—potatoes stand out as a climate-resilient crop, he added.

Jahangir Alam Khan, a renowned agricultural economist, said that if the agriculture ministry alone promotes potato consumption, people may perceive it as a directive to reduce pressure on rice due to shortages.

However, if stakeholders in the potato sector—cold storage operators and businesses—inform people about the diverse uses of potatoes at both urban and rural levels, consumption will increase organically, he said.

Currently, potato production

is high, but consumption is low, resulting in falling prices, Khan said. "Increased usage is therefore essential."

Md Mahmudur Rahman, additional secretary of the agriculture ministry, said that in many European countries, potatoes are a central component of meals, while in Bangladesh, rice-based dishes dominate.

Cultural acceptance must develop organically over time, he said.

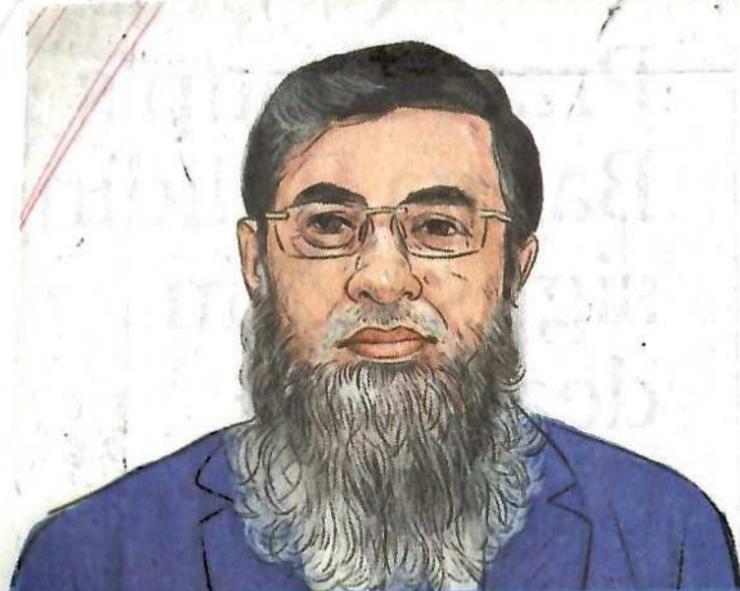
The government is now considering direct price support or cash assistance for farmers who have incurred losses, Rahman said.

This support will depend on cultivated acreage and available fiscal resources, he added.

Mohammad Masum, chairman of Supreme Seed Company Limited, a renowned local seed company, emphasised that if food security is a key Sustainable Development Goal for Bangladesh, potatoes should be more fully integrated into the national diet.

He suggested that declaring potatoes the country's second staple food would enable coordinated policy measures.





Mohammad Hatem

RMG industry under strain amid factory closures, job losses

BKMEA chief says, decries rising production costs

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The country's readymade garments (RMG) sector is facing one of its toughest periods in recent years, with falling exports, rising production costs, factory closures, and financial instability putting immense pressure on manufacturers, Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), said.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Hatem described the situation as "extremely alarming," blaming ineffective policies and a lack of banking support for worsening the crisis.

"Not only the RMG sector, but the entire economy, business environment, and flow of money are not functioning smoothly," he said. "We have raised these issues for a long time, but effective solutions are still missing."

Hatem acknowledged some government measures, including action against large-scale bank irregularities, partial control of inflation, and easing the dollar crisis, but said they do not address the deep structural problems of the export-driven RMG sector.

"The government has failed to

to survive. How can an industry survive under such intense financial pressure? We are fighting just to stay afloat," he said.

The removal of export incentives, part of Bangladesh's plan to phase them out ahead of its graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, has added further pressure.

creating 30,000 to 40,000 jobs, but overall job loss remains very high," he added.

In Narayanganj, a major knitwear hub, individual factory closures have left thousands unemployed. "These are not just statistics. They represent families, livelihoods, and entire communities," he said.

a result, we are receiving fewer orders," Hatem said.

Some US quarters have tried to impose parts of the general tariff structure -- about 20 percent -- on Bangladeshi goods, which could further undermine competitiveness.

Meanwhile, exporters from China and India, facing barriers in the US, have shifted focus to Europe, creating "unhealthy competition" and reducing Bangladesh's flow of orders.

As a result, many factories are running well below capacity. "Most are running 20-30 percent below capacity, and some are 40-50 percent lower than normal. This is not sustainable," Hatem said.

Hatem criticised the banking sector for failing to support industries in their time of need. "Banks are completely uncooperative, especially with small and medium-sized enterprises. In some cases, it's worse than neglect -- it's active obstruction," he said.

Bank credit limits have not been adjusted with changing exchange rates. "For example, a Tk 50 crore credit limit when the dollar was Tk 83 allowed LCs worth \$6 million. Now that the dollar is Tk 122, I can only open LCs worth around \$4 million with the same limit.

TAKEAWAYS FROM INTERVIEW



FACTORY CLOSURE & JOB LOSSES

Around 250-260 RMG factories closed in 18 months, resulting in a net loss of over 2.2 lakh jobs



FINANCIAL SUPPORT GAP

Key financial lifelines withdrawn, including

BANKING SECTOR FAILURES

Banks accused of "active obstruction", especially toward SMEs, instead of supporting industries during crisis

Credit limits not adjusted for dollar depreciation, sharply reducing exporters' ability to open import LCs



GLOBAL MARKET PRESSURES

US demand weakening due to inflation and tariff uncertainty, while tougher competition in the EU from China and India squeezes orders



URGENT WARNING



CRISIS & ALARM

RMG sector in "extremely alarming" state, with exports falling and costs rising

The crisis goes beyond garments -- business confidence

In an interview with The Daily Star, Hatem described the situation as "extremely alarming," blaming ineffective policies and a lack of banking support for worsening the crisis.

"Not only the RMG sector, but the entire economy, business environment, and flow of money are not functioning smoothly," he said. "We have raised these issues for a long time, but effective solutions are still missing."

Hatem acknowledged some government measures, including action against large-scale bank irregularities, partial control of inflation, and easing the dollar crisis, but said they do not address the deep structural problems of the export-driven RMG sector.

"The government has failed to introduce business-friendly policies in a timely and coordinated way. We are not against the government; we have praised several initiatives. But on key economic issues -- trade, banking, and industrial policies -- there has been little consultation with stakeholders like us," he added.

Over the past few years, major financial support for the sector has been withdrawn. Hatem cited the reduction of the Export Development Fund (EDF) allocation and the closure of the Tk 5,000 crore Pre-shipment Credit Fund in April 2024, which offered loans at just 5 percent interest.

"With borrowing costs now around 15-16 percent, businesses are struggling

even for that," he said. Hatem also accused banks of manipulating exchange rates. "They buy dollars from us at lower rates but sell them back at higher rates when we need to make payments. This dual pricing is unfair."

He urged the government and Bangladesh Bank to act quickly. "We need targeted, sector-specific

TAKEAWAYS FROM INTERVIEW



CRISIS & ALARM

RMG sector in "extremely alarming" state, with exports falling and costs rising

The crisis goes beyond garments -- business confidence, cash flow, and overall economic activity are badly disrupted



FINANCIAL SUPPORT GAP

Key financial lifelines withdrawn, including reduced EDF allocation and closure of the Tk 5,000 crore Pre-shipment Credit Fund

CLOSURE & JOB LOSSES

Around 250-260 RMG factories closed in 18 months, resulting in a net loss of over 2.2 lakh jobs



GLOBAL MARKET PRESSURES

US demand weakening due to inflation and tariff uncertainty, while tougher competition in the EU from China and India squeezes orders



URGENT WARNING

Factories running 20-50% below capacity, prompting a warning that without urgent banking and policy reform, more closures are inevitable

GLOBAL MARKET PRESSURES AND BANKING CHALLENGES

The global economic climate has also become less supportive for Bangladeshi exporters. In the United States, the country's largest export market, inflation and weaker consumer purchasing power have reduced demand. "Buyers are cautious. They are uncertain about future tariffs and are taking a wait-and-see approach. As

"From February 1, 2024, previous export incentives were discontinued. The remaining 0.3 percent is almost unusable due to heavy paperwork and red tape. For us, it is effectively cancelled," Hatem said.

He said around 250-260 RMG factories have closed over the past 18 months, leaving more than 2.2 lakh workers unemployed. "Some factories have opened during this period,

policies. Most importantly, the banking system needs urgent reform. If this trend continues, more factories will close, and the impact on the national economy will be severe," he said.

"This is not just about factories -- it's about exports, jobs, and the economic future. If we don't act now, we may not get a second chance," Hatem warned.



Bangladesh's flow of orders. As a result, many factories are running well below capacity. "Most are running 20-30 percent below capacity, and some are 40-50 percent lower than normal. This is not sustainable," Hatem said.

Hatem criticised the banking sector for failing to support industries in their time of need. "Banks are completely uncooperative, especially with small and medium-sized enterprises. In some cases, it's worse than neglect -- it's active obstruction," he said.

Bank credit limits have not been adjusted with changing exchange rates. "For example, a Tk 50 crore credit limit when the dollar was Tk 83 allowed LCs worth \$6 million. Now that the dollar is Tk 122, I can only open LCs worth around \$4 million with the same limit. Yet banks refuse to revise it," Hatem added.

He also highlighted long delays in back-to-back LC processing -- sometimes 20-30 days -- which disrupt production cycles. "Banks give all sorts of excuses -- margin issues, documentation problems, or that your limit is used up. It's the same story every time."

Exporters are struggling to access their own funds, with banks charging 15-16 percent interest on export proceeds needed for salaries. "Earlier, we could access this money interest-free for 30 days. Now, we are being charged

৩০
সালে
চরেন
তারি
লটার
১৮০
কেল
রের
স্তানি
ডের
থকে
গতে

RMG export to US beats BD's competitors

Jan-September turnover posts double-digit growth at 18.64pc

MONIRA MUNNI

Bangladesh's apparel export to the United States, its single-largest market, circumvents tariff tempests and records a double-digit growth of 18.64 per cent, the highest among major competitors, in the first nine months of 2025.

According to US official count, the exports grew both in terms of value and volume during the January-to-September period of the current calendar year.

Readymade garment exports from Bangladesh during the period singly fetched US\$6.42 billion, marking the 18.64-percent growth, according to the data released on December 11 by OTEXA, an affiliate of the US Department of Commerce.

The country had earned US\$5.41 billion in the same period of 2024. During the reporting period, the growth rate also surpassed the global

average of 1.74 per cent, placing Bangladesh ahead of main competitors, save Cambodia, though Vietnam sustained top-exporter stand pushing China behind. During the reporting period, Bangladesh outpaced almost all its major competitors in export growth to the US, its single-largest export destination.

However, exporters say that the OTEXA published the data of September for the shipments made two months back while reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US came into effect on August 7.

And it would take two more months to get "the real picture of US tariff impact when the country might see a downturn in the coming months due to tariff issues".

According to state-owned Export Promotion

▶ Two more months to show real picture of US tariff impact: Exporters

▶ An industry leader, however, foresees a better tomorrow with political transition

▶ EU market remains a concern for economic downturn over there, China push

Bureau (EPB) data, published two months ahead of OTEXA data, overall RMG exports have already started facing a downtrend for the past four months since August 2025.

Meantime, during the January-to-September period, Bangladesh shipped 2.07 billion square meters of garments, about 19 per cent higher than 1.73 billion square meters sent in the corresponding period of 2024.

America's overall apparel imports during the period stood at US\$60.34 billion, up from \$59.31 billion in the corresponding period of last year. Vietnam, during the first nine months of 2025, became leading apparel exporter to the US, shipping RMG items worth US\$12.74 billion, accounting for about 13.69-percent growth.

China dropped to the second position with US\$8.78 billion worth of apparel shipments with a 29.89-percent year-on-year negative growth, highlighting the effects of elevated tariff barriers and ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Asked about the industry view, Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, executive president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), says OTEXA revealed two-month previous data, meaning September data reflected the shipments made early July and onwards.

To get the picture of US tariff impact, he says, it takes two more months when data would be revealed for the shipments of August onwards. "There is still growth on the US

market and it might not fall much or continue to grow provided a stable political situation with national election in place which will also bring back the buyers' confidence," the industry owner tells The Financial Express. He looks to a better tomorrow for business. With improving local situation having a stable political government, Bangladesh would likely to get higher chunk of shifted work orders especially from China, he says.

The BKMEA leader, however, notes that Bangladesh is facing challenges in the EU where the economy is undergoing difficulties while major competitors like China have been focusing on that market due to high US tariffs on China's goods.

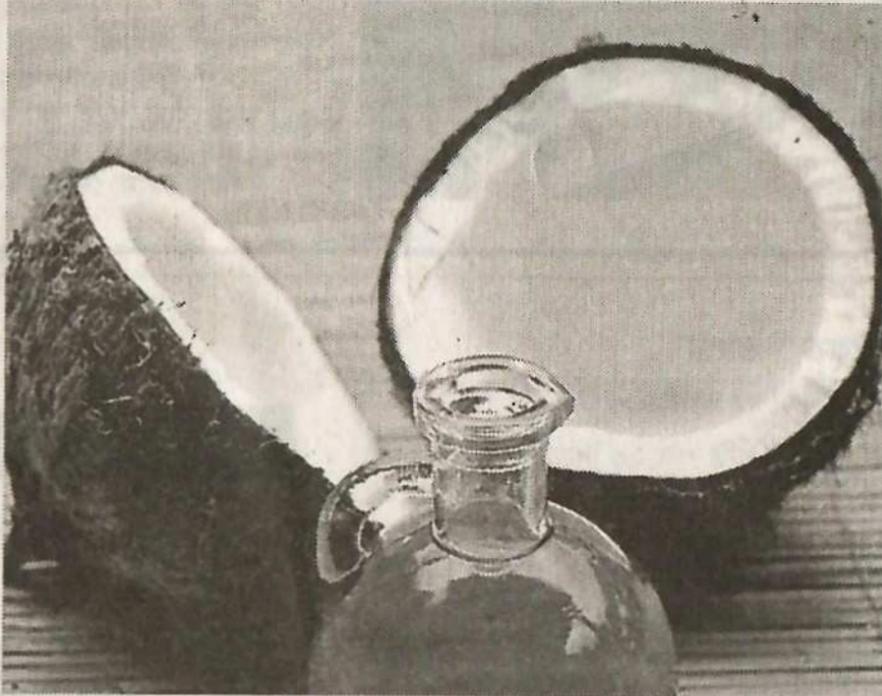
Exporters say though Chinese orders have been shifting from the US due to high tariffs, China is increasing its share in the EU market aggressively by offering 'much lower prices' to buyers to offset US market-share decline. Meantime, India's apparel exports rose by 12.81 per cent to US\$4.10 billion during the January-to-September period of 2025.

Indonesia recorded a 13.49-percent increase in apparel shipments to US\$3.59 billion, continuing its steady growth as a supplier to the US market. Cambodia bagged 28.47-percent rise in exports, reaching US\$3.57 billion, during the period under consideration. Pakistan also recorded a growth of 14 per cent to bag US \$1.80 billion from the US market.

Munni_fe@yahoo.com

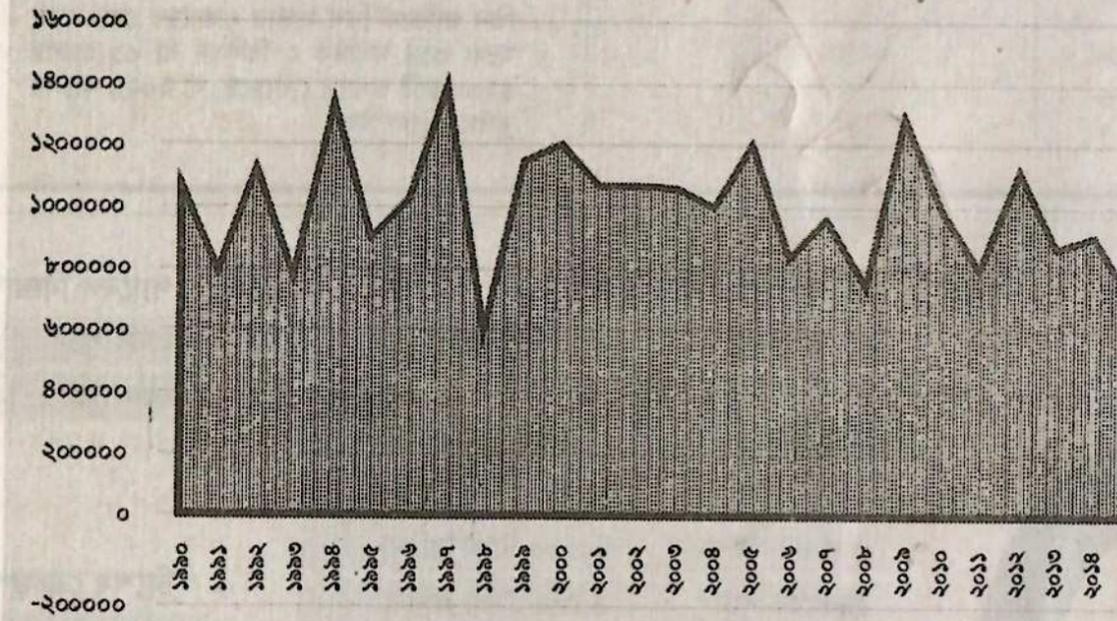


নারকেল তেল রফতানিতে ফিলিপাইন



রফতানি (টন)

ফিলিপাইনের উপকূলীয় এলাকায় প্রচুর নারকেল গাছ রয়েছে। নারকেল তেল রফতানি ও উৎপাদনে দেশটির অবস্থান অন্যতম শীর্ষে। ফিলিপাইন প্রধানত যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, চীন, ভারত ও ইউরোপের দেশগুলোয় নারকেল তেল রফতানি করে। তবে গত বছর দেশটি থেকে পণ্যটির রফতানি ১৬ দশমিক ৫৩ শতাংশ কমেছে। যদিও আন্তর্জাতিক চাহিদা ও মূল্যবৃদ্ধির কারণে রফতানি লাভজনক রয়েছে।



সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
১৯৯০	১০,৭৩,০০০	৬.৭৭%
১৯৯১	৭,৮৯,০০০	-২৬.৪৭%
১৯৯২	১১,২২,০০০	৪২.২১%
১৯৯৩	৭,৭৩,০০০	-৩১.১১%
১৯৯৪	১৩,৩১,০০০	৭২.১৯%
১৯৯৫	৮,৯৯,০০০	-৩২.৪৬%
১৯৯৬	১০,২০,০০০	১৩.৪৬%

সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
১৯৯৭	১৩,৮৬,০০০	৩৫.৮৮%
১৯৯৮	৫,৯৫,০০০	-৫৭.০৭%
১৯৯৯	১১,৪৫,০০০	৯২.৪৪%
২০০০	১২,০৪,০০০	৫.১৫%
২০০১	১০,৭০,০০০	-১১.১৩%
২০০২	১০,৭০,০০০	০.০০%
২০০৩	১০,৬৩,০০০	-০.৬৫%

সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
২০০৪	৯,৯৬,০০০	-৬.৩০%
২০০৫	১২,০০,০০০	২০.৪৮%
২০০৬	৮,৩২,০০০	-৩০.৬৭%
২০০৭	৯,৫৭,০০০	১৫.০২%
২০০৮	৯,৪১,০০০	-২২.৫৭%
২০০৯	১২,৮৫,০০০	৭৩.৪১%
২০১০	৯,৮৯,০০০	-২৩.০৪%

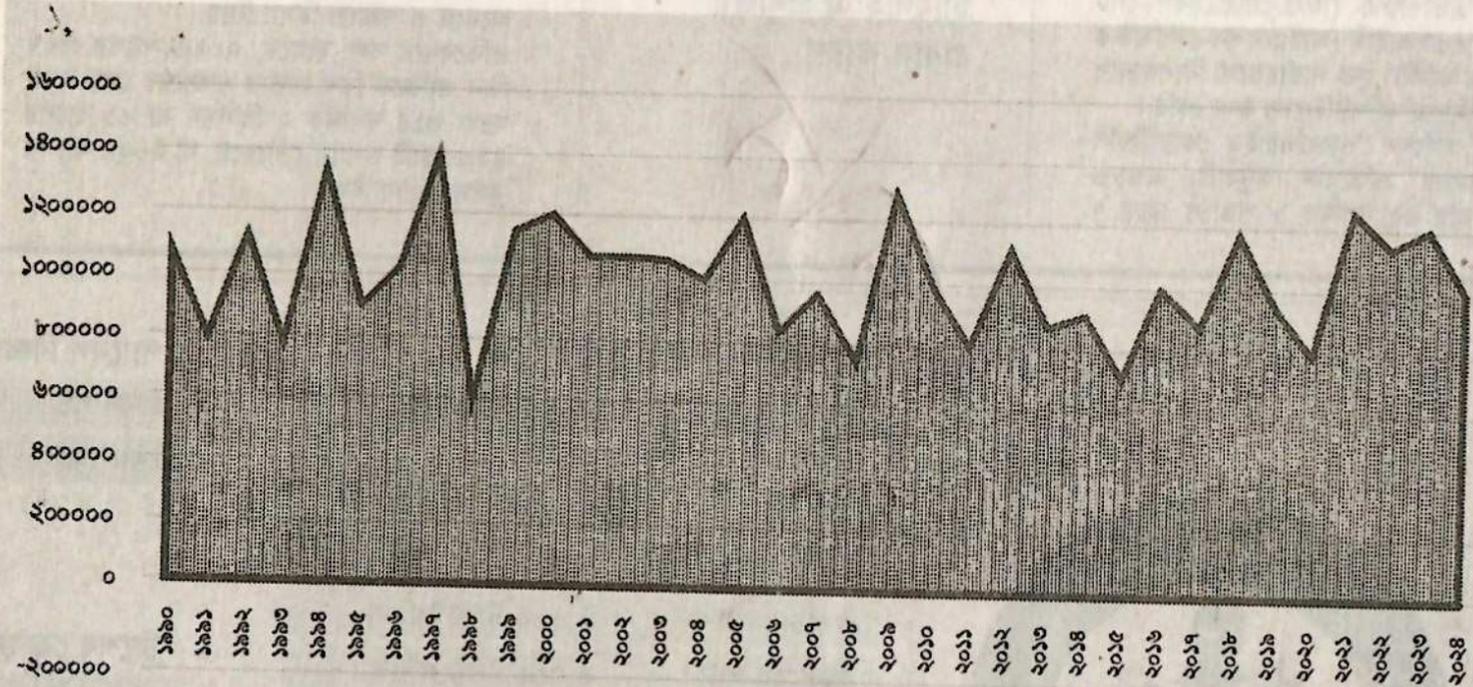
সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
২০১১	৮,০০,০০০	-১৯.১১%
২০১২	১১,১৭,০০০	৩৯.৬৩%
২০১৩	৮,৭০,০০০	-২২.১১%
২০১৪	৯,০৩,০০০	৩.৭৯%
২০১৫	৬,৯৯,০০০	-২২.৫৯%
২০১৬	১০,০০,০০০	৪৩.০৬%
২০১৭	৮,৭৩,০০০	-১২.৭০%
২০১৮	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%
২০১৯	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%
২০২০	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%
২০২১	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%
২০২২	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%
২০২৩	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%
২০২৪	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%
২০২৫	৮,৭৩,০০০	০.০০%

সূত্র: ইনডেক্স মুন্ডি



নারকেল তেল রফতানিতে ফিলিপাইন

ফিলিপাইনের উপকূলীয় এলাকায় প্রচুর নারকেল গাছ রয়েছে। নারকেল তেল রফতানি ও উৎপাদনে দেশটির অবস্থান অন্যতম শীর্ষে। ফিলিপাইন প্রধানত যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, চীন, ভারত ও ইউরোপের দেশগুলোয় নারকেল তেল রফতানি করে। তবে গত বছর দেশটি থেকে পণ্যটির রফতানি ১৬ দশমিক ৫৩ শতাংশ কমেছে। যদিও আন্তর্জাতিক চাহিদা ও মূল্যবৃদ্ধির কারণে রফতানি লাভজনক রয়েছে।



বৃদ্ধির হার (%)	সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
১৭%	১৯৯৭	১৩,৮৬,০০০	৩৫.৮৮%
৪৭%	১৯৯৮	৫,৯৫,০০০	-৫৭.০৭%
২১%	১৯৯৯	১১,৪৫,০০০	৯২.৪৪%
১১%	২০০০	১২,০৪,০০০	৫.১৫%
১৯%	২০০১	১০,৭০,০০০	-১১.১৩%
৪৬%	২০০২	১০,৭০,০০০	০.০০%
৪৬%	২০০৩	১০,৬৩,০০০	-০.৬৫%

সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
২০০৪	৯,৯৬,০০০	-৬.৩০%
২০০৫	১২,০০,০০০	২০.৪৮%
২০০৬	৮,৩২,০০০	-৩০.৬৭%
২০০৭	৯,৫৭,০০০	১৫.০২%
২০০৮	৭,৪১,০০০	-২২.৫৭%
২০০৯	১২,৮৫,০০০	৭৩.৪১%
২০১০	৯,৮৯,০০০	-২৩.০৪%

সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
২০১১	৮,০০,০০০	-১৯.১১%
২০১২	১১,১৭,০০০	৩৯.৬৩%
২০১৩	৮,৭০,০০০	-২২.১১%
২০১৪	৯,০৩,০০০	৩.৭৯%
২০১৫	৬,৯৯,০০০	-২২.৫৯%
২০১৬	১০,০০,০০০	৪৩.০৬%
২০১৭	৮,৭৩,০০০	-১২.৭০%

সাল	রফতানি (টন)	বৃদ্ধির হার (%)
২০১৮	১১,৯৫,০০০	৩৪.৫৯%
২০১৯	৯,৪৪,০০০	-১৯.৬৬%
২০২০	৭,৮৯,০০০	-১৬.৪২%
২০২১	১২,৫৭,০০০	৫৯.৩২%
২০২২	১১,৪০,০০০	-৯.৩১%
২০২৩	১১,৯৮,০০০	৫.০৯%
২০২৪	১০,০০,০০০	-১৬.৫৩%

সূত্র: ইনডেক্স মুক্তি

