

Tomato Troubles: Fast-Food Resilience in India

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Unfavorable (adjective): Not giving approval or support; disadvantageous.
Example: The unfavorable weather conditions led to a poor harvest for the farmers.
2. Import (verb): Bring goods or services into a country from abroad for sale.
Example: The company decided to import high-quality materials to improve the product's quality.
3. Fluctuate (verb): Rise and fall irregularly in number or amount.
Example: The stock prices tend to fluctuate based on market trends and economic factors.
4. Stabilize (verb): Make or become unlikely to change, fail, or decline.
Example: The government implemented measures to stabilize the economy during times of crisis.
5. Complexity (noun): The state of having many interconnected and intricate parts.
Example: The complexity of the problem required a collaborative approach to find a solution.
6. Resilience (noun): The ability to recover quickly from difficulties or challenges.
Example: The community's resilience was evident in how they rebuilt after the natural disaster.



In India, Burger King has decided to take tomatoes off its burgers due to a significant increase in their price. This move follows a similar decision by McDonald's and Subway India, which stopped using tomatoes in many of their dishes earlier in the year. The rising cost of tomatoes is linked to food inflation in India, reaching its highest level since 2020. **Unfavorable** weather conditions, including heavy rains and extreme heat, have led to crop failures, impacting the prices of tomatoes and other food items.

According to Reuters, the cost of tomatoes reached its peak in July at around \$3 per kilogram, a substantial increase from January when it was only \$0.33 per kilogram, as reported by CNN.

Although prices began to decrease in August, India took the step of **importing** tomatoes from neighboring Nepal to address the ongoing issue. This sudden increase in tomato prices has prompted several fast-food chains to temporarily remove tomatoes from their offerings.

The decision to exclude tomatoes from their menus is a response to the challenges posed by the **fluctuating** prices of this essential ingredient. Burger King joins the ranks of companies adapting to the economic impact on the food industry caused by unpredictable weather patterns. In July, McDonald's and Subway India also altered their menus due to the tomato shortage and increased costs.

Food lovers in India will currently experience their favorite fast-food items, including burgers, without the usual tomato topping. The removal of tomatoes is a temporary measure until the situation **stabilizes**. Burger King assured its customers that tomatoes will return to their burgers and menu items soon, expressing hope for a resolution to the tomato supply chain challenges.

As India navigates the **complexities** of food inflation and supply chain disruptions, the **resilience** of the food industry becomes evident. Fast-food chains are adapting to the changing circumstances by making temporary adjustments to their menus. While tomatoes may be absent for a brief period, the promise of their return reflects the dynamic nature of the food market and the efforts to overcome challenges posed by external factors such as weather-related crop failures.

DISCUSSION

1. If you were in India and your favorite fast-food restaurant removed tomatoes from their burgers, how would you feel and what alternative topping might you choose?
2. Imagine you are a chef in a fast-food restaurant facing a shortage of tomatoes. What creative ideas can you come up with to make delicious burgers without using tomatoes?
3. Discuss the impact of unpredictable weather on the prices of food items. Can you think of other foods that might be affected by changes in weather conditions?
4. As a manager of a fast-food chain, how would you communicate the temporary removal of tomatoes to your customers? What other adjustments might you make to keep your customers satisfied?
5. If you were a farmer dealing with unpredictable weather, what strategies would you use to protect your crops and ensure a stable supply of tomatoes?
6. Consider a world without tomatoes. How would this affect not only fast-food menus but also home-cooked meals and traditional dishes in different cultures?