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South India's Next Dairy Growth Story Is a Protein Story

CHENNAI – 17 Nov, 2026 For years, the dairy industry has measured success in litres procured, market share and distribution reach. Now a new question is gaining ground. What do milk, curd and paneer do for the health of the person consuming them?

South India is well placed for this shift. Curd with rice and buttermilk after a meal were never trends here. They are daily habits. In states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, three out of four adults consume milk or curd daily, while nationally fewer than half of Indians do. Packaged curd consumption in the southern states is 4.2 kg per person a year, against a national average of 2.8 kg.

Protein awareness has not kept pace with this habit. Six in ten urban Indians do not eat protein-rich foods daily, and nearly three in four cannot say how much protein their body needs. The Indian Council of Medical Research recommends 0.66 to 0.83 grams per kg of body weight for a healthy adult. Meanwhile, the southern states show the fastest value growth in dairy and are the largest market in the country for protein-focused foods.

Gaurav Pande, CEO, Godrej Jersey, says: "South India does not need to be convinced about dairy, because the habit already exists in every kitchen. The task for the industry is to help consumers recognise the protein in the curd they eat every day, and to build the same understanding for paneer."

A young professional in Bengaluru may track protein on an app and still not count the morning bowl of curd. The dairy business that helps consumers see this first will shape how the rest of India thinks about protein.