

Amritsar papad industry loses its lustre

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The *papad* and *warrian* cottage industry of Amritsar is losing its lustre as a result of problems like imitation, labour shortage and high raw material cost. Manufacturers worry that if the trend continues, this traditional cluster will lose its identity as a *papad* and *warrian* industry hub.

The city has 50-60 units which manufacture traditional hand-made *papad* and *warrian*, and thousands of traders who retail the product. The industry is labour-intensive and provides direct employment to about 10,000 workers. The market is dominated by the unorganised sector.

Manufacturers claim that that *papad* made in Amritsar is unrivalled in quality. Harbhajan Singh, a manufacturer, said, "It's the wonderful water of Amritsar that makes all the difference. And, of course, skill and workmanship are important. The important thing at every step is to use the best material and ingredients. We ensure that no poor quality-material is ever used."

But the industry has been declining



Amritsar has 50-60 units which manufacture hand-made *papad* and *warrian*, and thousands of traders who retail the product. PHOTO REUTERS

Amritsar only. Later, entrepreneurs in other parts of Punjab established mechanised units. Moreover, units situated in other parts of the state sell *papad* under the 'Amritsari Papad' brand, because of which we are losing money," said Amarjeet Singh of Gurbax Singh Gurdeep Singh, an Amritsar-based manufacturer.

Sabby of Harbjan Singh and Company said that of the 50-60 manufacturers of *papad* and *warrian*, about half a dozen are big units having a capacity of producing four quintals of *papad* per day. "Urad dal, which is the raw material for *papad*, is very costly and manufacturers in other parts of Punjab normally use rice flour or *maida*, which makes their products cheaper than ours. This is adding to our losses," he added.

Faced with fierce competition in the domestic market, a few manufacturers have started exploring overseas markets through the services of middlemen. Some have introduced PET packaging for overseas markets and pouch packaging and cardboard packaging in the domestic market to attract new buyers.

However, many lamented that it required a large amount of capital to install pouch packing machines and, being a cot-