

The Himalayan Foods

Two Years of Saving Fruits from Loss to Nourish Pakistan



Introduction



The Himalayan Foods is a private venture founded by young agriculture graduates from the heart of the Himalayan mountain region. They are driven by a vision to showcase the natural richness of Northern Pakistan through premium, nutritious food products. Rooted in Skardu's unique agricultural landscape, the company combines traditional knowledge with modern food processing practices to create high-quality, healthy products for an increasingly nutrition-conscious consumer market.

Committed to meeting the growing demand for nutritious snacks, The Himalayan Foods produces a range of value-added products including nut-based snack bars under the Himalayan Nut Bar line and organic granola blends marketed as Himalayan Delight. These products are developed using natural and organic ingredients, emphasizing health, wellness, and minimal processing while maintaining international food safety and quality standards.

Through its integrated approach linking farmers, sustainable production, and nutrition-focused innovation; The Himalayan Foods represents a new generation of Pakistani SMEs demonstrating how local enterprises can drive economic growth, environmental stewardship, and improved nutrition outcomes simultaneously.

The Company's Philosophy



The company's supply chain begins with the careful sourcing of raw materials from local farmers and mountain communities across Skardu and surrounding regions. Key ingredients such as apricots, walnuts, almonds, and other dry fruits are harvested locally and supplied directly to the company's processing facility. As the only ISO 9001:2015-certified enterprise of its kind in the region, The Himalayan Foods also provides free training to farmers on improved agricultural practices, harvesting methodologies, and post-harvest handling techniques to enhance the quality of produce used in fruit bar production. This approach strengthens local livelihoods while ensuring consistent raw material quality.

At the processing facility, ingredients undergo rigorous cleaning, drying, and preparation processes before being transformed into nutrient-rich fruit and nut bars. Finished products are distributed locally and supplied to major urban markets, including Karachi and other cities across Pakistan, through business-to-business distribution networks and online sales channels. Sustainability remains central to the company's operating philosophy. The Himalayan Foods adheres to Social, Environmental, and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP), integrating responsible practices across its operations. These include inclusive employment opportunities for women and youth, promotion of chemical-free agricultural production, adoption of environmentally responsible waste management systems, and advocacy for clean energy practices to reduce deforestation pressures in fragile mountain ecosystems.

The Business Opportunity: Turning Loss into Nutrition



Pakistan loses nearly one-third of its harvested fruits due to weak storage infrastructure, limited processing capacity, and fragmented value chains. In mountainous regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan, highly perishable fruits like apricots frequently spoil during peak harvest seasons, significantly reducing farmer incomes while contributing to broader food system inefficiencies. These losses not only represent missed economic opportunities but also undermine efforts to build resilient and sustainable agricultural markets.

At the same time, Pakistan's rapidly urbanizing population is creating rising demand for affordable, nutritious, and convenient snack options. Despite this shift in consumer preferences, locally produced nutrient-dense foods remain limited, particularly products that successfully combine affordability, halal compliance, and enhanced nutritional value. This disconnect highlights a critical opportunity to bridge agricultural surplus with evolving nutrition needs through innovative value-added processing.

The Partnership Changing the Game



Recognizing this dual challenge, food loss on one end and nutrition gaps on the other a consortium of partners came together to develop a market-driven solution. The Nutritious Fruit Bars Project is implemented by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), utilizing the platform of the SUN Business Network Pakistan (SBN), and funded by DANIDA under the Danida Market Development Partnerships (DMDP). The initiative brings together The Himalayan Foods as the private sector implementation partner and Arla Food Ingredients (AFI) as the technical partner, in consultation with the Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives and the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement Pakistan. Through this collaboration, technical expertise, private sector entrepreneurship, and policy alignment were integrated to address systemic inefficiencies within Pakistan’s fruit value chain.

Within this framework, the Nutritious Fruit Bars Project “Empowering Health and Sustainability through Nutrient-Enriched Fruit Bars” was designed as a practical demonstration of how nutrition, sustainability, and enterprise development can intersect. The initiative focuses on transforming surplus local fruits, particularly apricots, into nutrient-enriched, halal-certified, and shelf-stable snack products through innovation led by local small and medium-sized enterprises and supported by international technical expertise. Anchored in the “Three Wins” principal Nutrition, Environment, and Revenue the project demonstrates how private sector innovation can reduce post-harvest losses, strengthen SME competitiveness, and expand access to affordable, nutritious foods.

Through targeted technical assistance from AFI and GAIN, Himalayan Foods enhanced product formulation through protein enrichment and micronutrient fortification while improving production systems and embedding responsible business practices. What began as a technical collaboration evolved into a shared vision: transforming surplus local fruit into nutritious, value-added products that simultaneously generate economic opportunities for farmers, commercial growth for businesses, and improved nutrition outcomes for consumers.

A Snapshot of the first Two years



Within two years, the partnership demonstrated how targeted technical assistance and cross-sector collaboration can rapidly translate into measurable economic, nutritional, and environmental outcomes by working with local businesses like the Himalayan Foods.

1. Increased purchase of fruits from smallholder farmers: The Himalayan Foods significantly strengthened its local supply chain by increasing apricot procurement from 10,000 kilograms to 16,000 kilograms, representing a cumulative growth of 61%. Fruit specifically allocated for bar production expanded nearly threefold, creating more income for local farmers while reducing post-harvest losses. Improvements in handling and processing practices further enhanced efficiency, lowering processing losses from 5% to 3% and maximizing the utilization of raw materials.

2. Two new products in the market: Product innovation played a central role in accelerating growth. Through technical collaboration with, Arla Food Ingredients (AFI) The Himalayan Foods successfully developed protein-enriched fruit bars containing 11 percent protein alongside vitamin and mineral fortification. The company transitioned from offering a single product to introducing two market-responsive sizes, 45-gram and 25-gram bars, enabling broader consumer access across different purchasing segments. This diversification supported rapid production scaling, with cumulative sales exceeding 20,000 snack bars in two years.

3. Financial performance: The increase in sales reflected the strength of this innovation-led approach. Revenue from the fruit bar product line increased from PKR 429,440 in 2024 to PKR 1.37 million in 2025, while profits grew by 219.7 percent within a single year. The company achieved a Return on Investment (ROI) of 90.11%, confirming that nutrition-focused product development can generate sustainable commercial returns for small and medium-sized enterprises.

4. A nutritious product accepted by the market: Approximately 96.9 kilograms of protein were delivered through fortified fruit bars, contributing to improved dietary quality among consumers. Weekly direct reach expanded from 38 individuals during initial production to 156 consumers, indirectly benefiting approximately 780 individuals through household consumption and shared access. The bars provided supplementary protein and essential micronutrients, supporting improved nutritional intake in accessible and culturally acceptable formats. This is interpreted as a strong market acceptance and commercial feasibility.

5. More jobs were created: The project also advanced inclusive economic development. Operational expansion doubled the workforce, with women and youth accounting for half of all new hires, strengthening local employment opportunities and livelihoods in the region.

6. Enhanced efficiency: Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) assessments further enhanced governance systems, worker welfare practices, and ethical sourcing standards, improving both operational resilience and market credibility.

7. Environmental protection: Environmental sustainability was integrated throughout the intervention. By converting surplus fruit into value-added products and repurposing processing by-products as animal feed, the project prevented organic waste from entering landfills and avoided approximately 235 kilograms of CO₂-equivalent emissions. This demonstrated a practical circular economy approach, aligning environmental stewardship with commercial growth.

Together, these outcomes exemplify the project's "Three Wins" model delivering improved nutrition, environmental sustainability, and revenue generation simultaneously through private sector innovation



Future Aspirations: Scale



Building on its early success, The Himalayan Foods now aims to transition from a pilot innovation into a scalable business line, capable of delivering impact at a national level. The company plans to mobilise blended finance to expand production capacity by introducing automation, allowing it to shift from its current 500 bars/day to 5000 bars/day by 2030. The expansion will enable consistent quality and higher output to meet growing market demand. With such a greater production, its distribution networks will span across Pakistan to improve accessibility and market penetration.

To reach its target market, the company will integrate fruit bars into institutional market, including school meal programs, workforce nutrition initiatives, and social protection systems. By creating partnerships, the company expects to create predictable demand while expanding access to nutritious foods among vulnerable populations.

The Himalayan Foods recognizes the role of multistakeholder collaboration. Therefore, it continues to strengthen collaboration with farmers, ingredient suppliers, research institutions, government, and technical partners to scale this product innovation by ensuring affordability, halal compliance, and nutritional relevance.

In the next 5 years, The Himalayan Foods seeks to replicate its circular processing model across other high-loss fruit value chains such as apple, mulberry and dates. By scaling this approach, the company envisions becoming a leading example of how Pakistani SMEs can drive nutrition-sensitive economic growth while supporting farmers, empowering communities, and reducing environmental waste demonstrating that sustainable business and improved nutrition outcomes can advance together.

