

Food habits are being rapidly reshaped by the pandemic. The Mumbai-based firm InI Farms, for instance—which is among the largest exporters of premium quality fruits, especially pomegranates, grapes and bananas (exporting over 40,000 tonnes to about 35 countries annually)—has begun to target the domestic market with a renewed focus.

Their fruit brand Kimaye has existed in the business-to-business category for several years, either in the form of exports or placed in retail outlets like Star Bazaar and Foodhall. Last year, they entered the business-to-consumer segment through their online fruit store Kimaye.

A fruit brand is believed to be notoriously hard to sell. Most Indians do not buy fruits based on their brand but on what they see and feel at the fruit stand. But the pandemic has so reshaped habits, with ideas of safety and hygiene paramount in customers' minds, according to Purnima Khandelwal, the CEO of InI Farms, that the market is ready for the branded fruit concept. "When it came to fruits, the woman of the house usually went to the nearest neighbourhood store or sabzi mandi, picked up a fruit, squeezed it to check its firmness, maybe smelt it, before deciding to buy it," Khandelwal says. "But there is a change happening now. Customers are asking for certification, they want to know where it is from, how it has been handled."