

## INDIAN SILK: GEO- ECONOMY

**NEWS:** India's raw silk production rises steadily, exports surge in last 6 years

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India, the world's second-largest silk producer, has steadily increased raw silk output due to supportive schemes and rising exports. With 92% of production from mulberry silk and growing focus on Vanya silk, sericulture is vital for rural livelihoods and textile value chains.

#### Context

- India's raw silk production has shown steady growth, rising from **31,906 metric tonnes (MT) in 2017–18** to **38,913 MT in 2023–24**.
- This increase reflects the combined impact of **government schemes, market expansion, and strengthening of the silk value chain**.

#### What is Sericulture?

- Sericulture is the **cultivation of silkworms** for producing silk, involving **silkworm rearing, cocoon harvesting, and thread extraction**.
- Silkworms feed on specific leaves such as **mulberry, oak, castor, and arjun**, depending on the silk variety.
- After about **25–30 days**, silkworms spin **cocoons** using silk proteins, which are later collected and boiled to **soften the sericin (gum)**.
- Once softened, **continuous silk filaments** are drawn from the cocoon, twisted into yarn, and woven into **textile fabric**.
- The **life cycle of the silkworm moth** includes stages of **egg, larva (silkworm), pupa (inside cocoon), and adult moth**, making it a short but intensive farming cycle.

#### India's Position in Global Silk Production

- India is the **second-largest producer and consumer** of silk in the world after China.
- Despite being a niche product, silk forms only **0.2% of total global textile output**, but is considered a **high-value luxury fabric**.
- India's strength lies in the **diversity of silk types, vast sericulture workforce, and government-backed infrastructure**.



### Types of Natural Silk in India

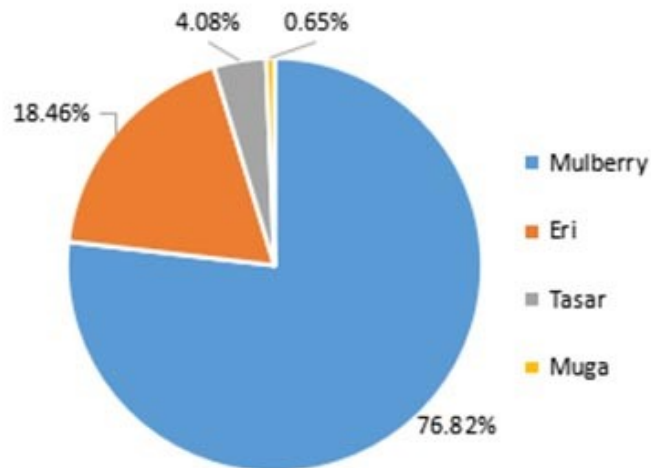
- India is the only country that produces **all four commercially known varieties** of natural silk:
  - Mulberry Silk:** Most widely produced; accounts for **92% of India's total silk output**.
  - Eri Silk:** Grown largely in the North-East; also known as "Ahimsa silk" as it does not require killing the silkworm.
  - Tasar Silk:** Coarse and textured, produced mostly in tribal forest regions.
  - Muga Silk:** Exclusive to Assam, known for its **golden natural sheen** and durability.

### Mulberry vs. Non-Mulberry Silk (Vanya Silk)

- Mulberry Silk:**
  - Comes from domesticated silkworms feeding solely on **mulberry leaves**.
  - Has a **bright luster, smooth texture**, and is commonly used in **luxury sarees and fine apparel**.
  - Dominates the Indian silk sector, comprising over **90% of total raw silk production**.
- Non-Mulberry Silk (Vanya Silk):**
  - Produced by **wild silkworms** that feed on **oak, castor, and arjun** tree leaves.
  - Includes **Eri, Tasar, and Muga silks**.

- It is **coarser, more eco-friendly**, and carries a **natural aesthetic** used in ethnic and traditional garments.

**Share of silk type in India's total silk production (2023-24)**



Source: Central Silk Board of India, Ministry of Textiles

### Major Silk Producing States in India

- **Karnataka:** The leading producer of silk in India, contributing the largest share of **mulberry silk**.
- **Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh** also have significant silk industries.
- The **North-Eastern region** is a hub for **Eri and Muga silk**, particularly Assam, Manipur, and Meghalaya.

### Exports and Silk Waste Trade

- **Silk and silk goods exports** grew from ₹1,649.48 crores in 2017–18 to ₹2,027.56 crores in 2023–24.
- As per **DGCIS data**, India exported **3,348 MT of silk waste** in 2023–24.
- **Silk waste** includes leftover cocoon parts, short fibers, or damaged silk used in the production of spun silk or blended fabrics.

### Key Government Initiatives in Sericulture Development

- **Silk Samagra Scheme:**

- Launched by the Ministry of Textiles to provide **holistic support** to the silk sector.
- Focuses on **research, seed production, quality improvement, and skill training**.
- Includes four components:
  - R&D, training, and IT infrastructure
  - Strengthening seed organizations
  - Coordination and market development
  - Quality certification and export promotion
- **North Eastern Region Textile Promotion Scheme (NERTPS):**
  - Aims to **revive and diversify** sericulture in the North-East.
  - Focuses on boosting **Eri and Muga silk** through training, cluster development, and technology upgrades.

#### **Institutional Support – Indian Silk Export Promotion Council (ISEPC)**

- Sponsored by the **Ministry of Textiles**, the **ISEPC** is an apex body representing exporters, manufacturers, and traders.
- Works to **promote Indian silk globally** through:
  - Organizing **buyer-seller meets**, silk fairs, and international exhibitions
  - **Resolving trade disputes** and negotiating better market access
  - Supporting **branding and quality enhancement** initiatives for Indian silk

#### **Conclusion**

- India's increasing raw silk production reflects a positive trend in **agro-based employment, export growth, and regional development**.
- Continued focus on **technology transfer, market development, and sustainability** is crucial to boost India's global standing in silk.
- Silk also plays a strategic role in **uplifting rural and tribal economies**, especially through **women-led sericulture units** in the North-East and southern states.

Source: <https://manufacturing.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/indias-raw-silk-production-rises-steadily-exports-surge-in-last-6->

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