

Does Everyone at an Indian Trade Fair Make What They Sell?

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Not always. At export council fairs such as IHGF and IIJS every exhibitor must be a council member, which guarantees a registered exporter but not a factory, because merchant exporters can be members too. Some other big Indian fairs are mostly domestic or open to the public.

Key takeaways

- Council membership comes as a manufacturer exporter or a merchant exporter registration, and both can take a stand.
- IHGF asks exhibitors for EPCH membership and a three-year export performance certificate.
- IIJS is exclusively for GJEPC members, with no counter sales.
- IITF and AAHAR are largely domestic. Food importers usually do better at Indusfood.
- Ask at the stand whether the product is made in their own unit, and note the GST number.

No. At India's export council fairs, such as the IHGF Delhi Fair or IIJS, every exhibitor has to be a member of the council, and IHGF also asks for a record of exports. That guarantees you're meeting a registered exporter, not a factory, because council membership includes merchant exporters who buy from makers. Some other big Indian fairs are mostly domestic or even open to the public.



That's still a good deal, by the way. A fair is one of the best ways to meet Indian makers who barely exist online. You just need to know what the badge on the stand promises. This post goes fair type by fair type. The caveat - entry rules change edition to edition, and what I quote here was read on the organisers' own pages in September 2026.

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- 01 **IHGF exhibitors must be paid-up EPCH members and attach a three-year export performance certificate.** "If export Performance of applicant(s) is Nil, such requests may not be entertained." (*62nd IHGF exhibitor application form, EPCH, read 23 Sep 2026*)
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02 IIJS offers business "exclusively for GJEPC members". (*GJEPC circular, 11 Apr 2026*)

03 The same IHGF form asks exhibitors whether they will serve "Domestic Volume Buyers engaged in Retail Sales" and take "Small Orders" or "Ready Stock". Expect some stands set up for domestic trade. (*Same form*)

What we don't know yet

- What share of exhibitors at any Indian fair are manufacturers. No organiser publishes it, and we haven't counted.

1. What The Entry Rule Actually Guarantees

India's Export Promotion Councils run the fairs most foreign buyers fly in for. To exhibit, a firm usually has to be a member. And membership means it holds a registration certificate with that council (*Handbook of Procedures 2023, para 2.79*).

Here's the catch. That same registration comes in two flavours – manufacturer exporter and merchant exporter. India's trade policy defines a manufacturer exporter as one that "exports goods manufactured by him", and a merchant exporter as one "engaged in trading activity and exporting" (*Foreign Trade Policy 2023, chapter 11, paras 11.32 and 11.33*). Both can be members, and both can take a stand.



So at an export council fair, you are meeting a real, registered exporter with a track record. That's genuinely worth something. Whether the person at the stand runs the machines is the one thing the badge doesn't tell you.

2. IHGF Delhi Fair: Exporters, With A Domestic Corner

IHGF, India's big home, lifestyle and gifts fair, has the stiffest exhibitor rule I've read. Applicants must be paid-up EPCH members and must attach a three-year export performance certificate, and a nil export record "may not be entertained" (62nd IHGF application form, EPCH). The fair itself talks of "3000+ manufactures & exporters" (ihgfdelhifair.in).

The same form asks exhibitors whether they'll take domestic volume buyers, small orders and ready stock. That's useful news for a small importer, because it says plenty of stands will happily do a modest first order. It also

means you'll share aisles with Indian retailers, so some stands will be pitched at them.

A tip – the fair publishes an open pre-fair exhibitor directory by product. Shortlist there, then ask each one before you fly whether they make the product and where.

3. IIJS: Members Only, No Counter Sales

The jewellery shows run by GJEPC are business "exclusively for GJEPC members" (GJEPC circular, 11 Apr 2026), and "No counter sale will be permitted" (IIJS visitor terms). It's a serious B2B show. The member list still mixes manufacturers with traders and wholesalers, which in jewellery is how the trade works anyway.

Fair	Who can exhibit	Main audience
IHGF Delhi Fair	Paid-up EPCH members with a three-year export record	Overseas buyers, plus some domestic volume buyers
IIJS	GJEPC members only, no counter sales	B2B jewellery trade
IITF	State pavilions, ministries, public companies	Largely the public, with a few B2B days
AAHAR	Mostly domestic hospitality and food-service equipment firms	Domestic trade

4. The Fairs That Are Mostly Domestic

Not every big fair at Delhi's Bharat Mandapam is an export show. A few examples, from the organisers' own pages –

- **India International Trade Fair (IITF)** is largely a public fair. Only 14 to 18 November 2026 were "exclusively for B2B", and the halls are mostly state pavilions, ministries and public companies (itpo.gov.in).
- **AAHAR** is largely a domestic hospitality and food-service equipment show. Its 2025 edition had "Over 1700 exhibitors, Over 140 overseas exhibitors", and roughly half the halls were kitchen and hotel equipment (itpo.gov.in). Food importers usually do better at Indusfood, a closed-door show for pre-approved buyers.
- **Private trade shows** at the same venue, run by private organisers or industry associations, often serve a mainly domestic audience, and some associations' members include traders.

None of these are bad events. They're just built for someone else. If you're an Australian importer looking for export-ready makers, your days are better spent at a council fair or a hosted buyer meet.

5. How To Find The Makers On The Floor

Fair stands are the easiest place in India to ask awkward questions, because everyone expects them. A few that work -

1. **"Is this made in your own unit?"** Most people answer honestly face to face. "We work with partner units" is a normal answer too, and job work is how Indian clusters run.
2. **"Can I visit the unit this week?"** Many fairs sit near clusters. The India Carpet Expo is held in Bhadohi itself, in the carpet belt.
3. **"What's your GST number?"** Write it on the card. Back at the hotel, the first two digits tell you the state, and the public search tells you more. See [what an Indian GST number tells you](#).
4. **"Manufacturer or merchant registration with the council?"** It's a fair question, and the answer is on their registration certificate.

Then sort your cards into makers, traders and "not sure". Traders aren't a lower class. A good merchant exporter who answers for quality can be the right partner for a mixed range, and we lay that out in [manufacturer vs trading company](#).

6. Which Fair Should You Go To?

That's a bigger question, and it has its own page. Our [guide to India's trade fairs](#) lists the fairs with verified dates, which ones host overseas buyers, and how to get a seat. If you'd like someone to come with you, or to visit the shortlisted units after the fair, [SourcingSync](#) does that.

So, does everyone at an Indian fair make what they sell? No. But almost everyone at a council fair really exports, and that's a better starting crowd than most directories will give you.

Related reading: [Will India pay for your trip to a trade fair?](#) · [Is a city address a trader sign?](#) · [Job work and subcontracting in India](#)

Questions Buyers Ask

Does a council membership badge mean the exhibitor is a manufacturer? ^

No. It means a registered exporter. Members can hold a manufacturer or a merchant registration.

Are there Indian fairs only for manufacturers? v

Is IITF worth it for sourcing? v

Can I place a small order at IHGF? v

