

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:898

ANSWERED ON:25.11.2011

USAGE OF CHEMICALS FOR RIPENING OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

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Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether use of health hazardous substances/chemicals/hormones such as formaldehyde, boric and benzoic acid, sulphur dioxide, calcium carbide and oxytocin for early ripening/growth of fruits, vegetables and milk production have been reported.
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken against the guilty during the last three years and the current year, State/UT-wise;
- (c) whether any study has recently been conducted to ascertain the adverse effects of such chemicals on human health;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the corrective measures taken/proposed by the Government to ensure strict vigil to check the use of such chemical agents and compliance of laws in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE(SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY)

(a)&(b) There have been reports in Media that some hazardous chemicals are being used for early ripening and to increase the size of fruits and vegetables and milk production. Clause 2.3.5 of The Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales), Regulations 2011 prohibits sale of fruits which has been artificially ripened by use of acetylene gas commonly known as carbide gas produced from Calcium Carbide. There is no provision of use of ripening hormones under the Food Safety and Standards Act/ Rules / Regulations. However, the Ministry of Agriculture has recommended use of ethylene gas in low concentration exogenously to trigger ripening of fruits. The details of cases, persons booked /convicted are not maintained centrally. However, as per information provided by some of the States, action taken during the last three years(2008-2010) is as follows:-

Name of State	Number of prosecutions launched
Delhi	1
Goa	5
Maharashtra	28
Uttar Pradesh	50

(c) & (d) : Following the reports of use of the artificial colouring / ripening agents in vegetables / fruits, a Joint Committee for Research on Food Safety, was formulated in August, 2010 under Co-Chairmanship of the Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Director General, Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) to address the various issues relating to safety of using ripening and coloring agents, and any other relevant issues in nutrition & food safety which emerge from time to time. The Committee has recommended further research studies and has identified areas of study to generate information / data regarding the extent of use and effect of artificial ripening agents and other chemicals in fruits and vegetables.

(e) :Implementation of the Food Safety and Standards Act/ Rules / Regulations rests with State /U.T. Governments. The Commissioners Food Safety /Food (Health) Authority of States / UTs, who are responsible for implementation of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and its Rules/regulations in their States / UTs, have been requested from time to time to keep a strict vigil on use of carbide gas and other hazardous chemicals for ripening of fruits and take legal action for violation of the above provision of the Act/ Regulations. The State Governments have also been advised to educate the public through mass/ electronic media against consumption of such artificially ripened fruits, vegetables and milk.