

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:79

ANSWERED ON:22.02.2013

USE OF CHEMICALS FOR RIPENING OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

M.Thambidurai Dr.

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

- (a) whether hazardous chemicals/ vaccines are reportedly being used for early ripening/growth of fruits, vegetables and production of milk in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof including the number of such cases detected and the action taken against the guilty during each of 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 and the outcome thereof;and
- (e) the corrective measures taken/proposed by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD)

(a) & (b) There have been reports in the Media that some hazardous chemicals are being used for early ripening and to increase the size of fruits and vegetables and milk production. However, no scientific validated information is available for the same. Clause 2.3.5 of The Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011, prohibits sale of fruits which have 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 the use of ethylene gas in low concentration exogenously to trigger ripening of fruits. The details of cases, persons booked/ convicted are not maintained centrally. As per information provided by some of the States, details of cases detected and action taken during 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 are annexed.

(c) & (d) Following the reports of use of the artificial coloring/ 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 Agricultural Research (ICAR) to address the various issues relating to the 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 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 Standard 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 to 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 Print and electronic media against consumption of such artificially ripened fruits and vegetables. State Governments have taken measures in this regard, such as ordering the Food Safety Officers (FSOs)/ Designated Officers (DOs) to keep watch on fruit markets, inspection of fruit market, fruit stalls/ godowns, taking samples of fruits, vegetables & milk, educating fruit vendors to refrain from using these chemicals, etc.