

>

Title: Need to address the problem of pesticide residues in soft drinks.

SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR (CALICUT): Media reports are suggesting that farmers are using soft drinks – Coke, Pepsi and other such drinks – as an insecticide in their fields. Farmers, in many districts of Chattisgarh, MP and AP, say that these drinks are very effective in killing pests in their farms and have begun replacing conventional pesticides for these products. Scientists, quoted in these news reports, have been amazed by this discovery of farmers but cannot explain how these drinks, made and consumed by people, are being effective in killing pesticides.

It will also be noted that in February, 2004, the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on pesticide residues in and safety standards for soft drinks, fruit juices and other beverages had concluded that the report, which analysed and found pesticides in the drinks was correct. Rajasthan High Court has directed that the soft drink company to inform consumers about the quantum of pesticides in their bottles by printing the details on their label. The Supreme Court has also endorsed this ruling, which now means that people will at least know and have the choice about consuming pesticides.

But this is clearly not adequate. The fact is that children in our country consume these drinks and it is of great concern that farmers use these same drinks as pesticides. The JPC recommendations have not been implemented so that standards for the final product are mandated for these drinks to ensure consumer safety. The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has only mandated the quality of water that will be used in the manufacture of these drinks, which will not protect public health as it will not assure consumers of the total quantum of pesticides has been regulated.