

Editorial

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When vegetables slowly poison us?

Imphal Times news report carried yesterday questioning the safety of cucumber fruit; base on the conversation by two friends is not an attempt to panic the people. The objective of the news report is to alert the concern government department; particularly the Food Safety Authority as rampant use of pesticides and fertilizers by farmers become a common phenomenon. Imphal Times report under the heading "Cucumbers today are not safe for human" did not mention the site of village where massive use of medicine on cucumber plant are being used as the similar activities are also being carried out by farmers all across the state. It is not only to the cucumber fruits but also to almost all the vegetable. The kind of vegetable medicine available in the market is increasing day after another and farmers do not hesitate in buying the vegetable medicine - including pesticide, chlorpyrifos, fenvelerate, dimethoate, spinosad, thiamethoxam and dithiocarbomates etc.

We are not sure about the safety of the vegetable available in the market. The day today vegetable that we are consuming for our survival may have been the reason for the various diseases that human kind are suffering. Saying so, we can't blame the farmers. They need money and more money as they have to send their children to costly private schools as government schools are total flop. They want to live like government employees who owned multi lakhs rupees worth vehicle, built multi storey buildings in just 2 to 3 years with just some thousand rupees as salary per month. For living like them they need money and without proper production they some don't care on using medicine of any kind, no matter whether it harms human health or not.

Sikkim is the first state in India to ban pesticide and other hazardous fertilizers. The state had announced ban on 27 non-organic. It was the state government authority initiative that ban the use of pesticide and other health hazard fertilizers or any kind of vegetable medicine. People in Dimapur also followed the Sikkim style but as Dimapur being a commercial hubs the state government seems to have trouble in imposing such ban. However, newspaper report reflected the concern for safety of vegetable selling in the Dimapur market.

Now the question is - what initiative has been seen being taken up by the food safety authority to check the vegetables, fruits and any other edible item. Well, there were some instances that the Food Safety authority conducted drive in Hotels or during food festival. But there are no report of any kind of checking to the vegetable selling in Imphal or other places of Imphal.

On the other hand the rise in the production of pesticide like vegetable medicine is a matter that is needed to be focused by the authority. Everyday new advertisement about new product to increase the food production to cultivators are notice either at print or electronic media.

Like a teenage wanted to wear new clothes the farmers too like to test new invention if it will increase their crop.

Having said so, not every farmer only think about increasing their crop production. There are some who practice inorganic farming. But name shake support from the government discourage these farmers and then they too are left with no choice but to use the pesticide or fertilizers to make good production of their crop. After all they are also human being.

If nothing is taken up to ensure farmers to produce only healthy crops then the government should immediately taken up some sort of measures either by framing policy or by ensuring all facilities to the inorganic farming.

Or else, today's youths life span may not even last for 50 years.

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Are we eating fruits and vegetables or pesticides?

(Courtesy-My India)
By Ramandeep Kaur

The skyrocketing price of fruits and vegetables is not the only issue; so is the amount of pesticide residues these contain. It is surprising to know that most of the vegetables and fruits have an alarming percentage of harmful chemicals, which is far above the permissible limit prescribed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. Even some of the banned pesticides are now part of our diet, such as Cypermethrin, Heptachlor, Quinalphos, Aldrin, Chlorodane, Dichlorvos, Cypermethrin. Some vegetables have been categorized as extremely harmful in terms of levels of pesticide.

In a study conducted by the Kerala Agricultural University, "dangerous levels" of pesticide residues have been found in many main vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, small red onions, curry leaves, green chillies, etc. About three years ago, Profenofos, which is a second-level pesticide, was banned in India, except for tea and cotton. But its residues have been found in vegetables like gooseberries, green chilli, okra, curry leaves, mint leaves and coriander leaves.

The Delhi High Court had earlier in May this year asked the government to conduct surprise inspection of vegetable and fruit markets at random. It had been found that 90% of the mangoes in the city contained harmful chemicals. Most of these were used to ripen the green mangoes yellow overnight. Some of these chemicals were carcinogenic.

What are we consuming?

We are literally consuming poisons. Let's have a brief look:
Brinjal: Chemical found is Heptachlor, 860% above the legal limit
Cabbage: Chemical found is Cypermethrin, 95.5% above the legal limit
Okra: Chemical found is Heptachlor, 55% above the legal limit
Rice: Chemical found is Chlorfenvinfos, 1324% above the legal limit
Banana: Chemical found is Chlorodane, 54% above the legal limit
Cauliflower: Chemical found is Aldrin, 320% above the legal limit
Apple: Chemical found is Dichlorvos, 140% above the legal limit

Health concern

Consuming pesticide-laden fruits and vegetables for a long period of time can prove fatal. Health experts say that pesticides are neurotoxins, affecting the nervous



system and other important organs such as liver and kidney. Food poisoning and different sorts of allergies are common from these pesticides. Some pesticides even lead to cancer. Certain pesticides cause skin problems, loss of weight, sleeplessness and irritability.

How can you reduce the percentage of pesticide intake?

We cannot live without eating these but we must be cautious and follow certain guidelines, which are as follow:

Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly, about five to six times under running water. Blanch fruits and vegetables after washing these. To blanch, cut the vegetables and put these either in hot water or steam these.

Always peel the fruits and vegetables (if possible) before eating and cooking.

Do not go for those shiny and extra clean fruits, vegetables, cereals and pulses. These are generally not healthy.

Buy small vegetables rather than large ones, as chances of pesticides in small vegetables are less.

If possible, buy organic fruits and vegetables. You can also grow vegetables in pots at home.

Separate the leaves of cauliflower and then wash these in the vinegar or salt solution (20 ml vinegar in one litre water or 20 gram salt in one litre of water). After this, wash cauliflower leaves under running water.

We also get pesticide through animal products. To lessen the chances of consumption through animal product, it is advisable to cook in a pressure cooker, bake or fry animal products.

Boil milk for some time to destroy the pesticide residues.

These are few easy but essential steps. At the same time, the Food

Safety and Standards Authority of India should be more vigilant and monitor the fruits and vegetables regularly. But there are many questions that need to be answered: why are the banned pesticides being sold in the market for use? Why the polished cereals and

pulses are sold in supermarkets when these are not healthy? If organic food is good for health then why it is so expensive and out of reach? Why everyone is running just after money? The time has come to really think or there might not be any life left to protect.

Vegetables 'safe'

BY-Mohammad Al-Masum Molla

Increased awareness and government initiatives, such as the formulation of Food Safety Act 2013, have helped reduce the use of pesticide on vegetables grown across the country in the last few years.

Though pesticide is still applied on vegetables at various levels, the amount of the chemical substance you still consume largely depends on what you eat and how you eat it.

A recent government-sponsored research says 60 percent of the vegetables in the markets are tainted with pesticides used in the fields during harvest. It adds that half of the harmful chemicals may be washed away if rinsed properly.

The study done by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), found that the level of pesticide residue that remains after washing is within the permissible limit.

The test was conducted at an internationally accredited lab in Chennai, India, to test the pesticide residue level of raw, washed and cooked vegetables.

Ninety samples of 10 types of vegetables — cauliflower, cabbage, country bean, ladies finger, long yard bean, eggplants, teale gourd, bitter ground, red amaranth and green chillies — from 10 kitchen markets in the capital and the seven other divisional headquarters were used for test.

Data shows pesticides were found in 62.5 percent of the vegetables collected directly from farms. Even after a rinse, 37.5 percent of the samples still contained pesticide residue. After cooking, 81.25 percent of the samples were safe for human consumption though they still contained some level of the contaminants.

"The presence of pesticide is found at dangerous levels when vegetables are collected from the fields. But it decreases when they are washed.

Good news is that after cooking, it is safe for human consumption," said BARC Director (nutrition) Md Monirul Islam, also the lead researcher of the study.

According to Codex, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and European Union recommendations, a person can intake 0.002-0.05 milligram pesticides every day, adjusted to their body weight. After cooking, the pesticide amount falls below the limit.

In the examined vegetables, 30 pesticides were found, including chlorpyrifos, fenvelerate, dimethoate, spinosad, thiamethoxam and

dithiocarbomates.

Chlorpyrifos and Dimethoate are used for killing insects and worms. Introduced after the 1950s by two American companies, they attack the nervous system of pests and are rated highly toxic and hazardous.

Dithiocarbamate, a fungicide, was found in cauliflower even after it was washed but not after cooking.

However, in country beans, pesticides were found even after cooking although the level was below the permissible limit.

In the case of long yard bean, washing made no difference in chlorpyrifos presence but cooking helped eliminate the contaminant.

The presence of chlorpyrifos and cypermethrin was found in cabbage at all stages — from collection, washing and even after cooking.

No pesticide was found in the case of ladies finger and eggplants.

Wais Kabir, former executive chairman of BARC, said increased awareness among consumers and growers and restriction on harvesting vegetables 72 hours after pesticide use have contributed to limiting the amount of pesticides found.

He also said the Department of Agricultural Extension has intensified monitoring of pesticide use.

Kabir added that a new generation of pesticides with no long term effect like dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane (DDT), a pesticide banned worldwide due its harmful effects, is being used in Bangladesh.

Kaoser Alam, a physician at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University said pesticide has long term implications on a person's health.

"If one instantly consumes too much pesticide there's vomiting, drowsiness and a drop in blood pressure. But prolonged consumption may result in blood, esophagus or stomach cancer."

According to the World Health Organisation estimates, there were three million global cases of acute and severe pesticide poisoning with some 220,000 deaths every year, the majority of them in developing countries.

In his recommendations after the study, Monirul Islam suggested all the stakeholders need to be more active in ensuring food safety from farm-to-fork.

He also said the vegetables should be collected from field 72 hours after spray of pesticide.

He stressed the need for creating more awareness among farmers about judicious and proper application of pesticides.

(Courtesy: The Daily Star)

AN APPLE A DAY...

is what people say. And honestly, the concept is spot on. Getting your daily dose of fruits and veggies is a surefire way to slam your body with some amazing nutrients and keep you out of the doctor's office.

We include all sources of real food in our diet, from fruits and vegetables to organic meat, raw dairy, wild-caught seafood, whole grains prepared properly, and traditional fats in all their saturated glory! Because we choose to avoid processed food and genetically modified foods, I'm often asked the question...

"Are hybrid fruits and vegetables good or bad?"

IN A WORLD WHERE ALMOST EVERY FOOD IS DEEMED BAD, OF THIS I CAN ASSURE YOU...

Hybrid fruits and vegetables are totes fine, my friend. Before you protest, let me explain what a hybridized fruit or vegetable is. Hybridization happens when two closely related plants are cross-pollinated. This happens every single minute of the day and has been happening for THOUSANDS of years. It's the way nature works, girlfriend.

Ever heard of bees? I'm not sure if you're familiar with these little guys, but they have one job and one job alone. To overdose on pollen. As bees move from plant to plant they cross-pollinate. The same thing happens with wind. Random hybridization happens again and again and can bring about new species of plants over time.