DIGEST THIS: Survey Shows Fruit, Veggies Are High On Chemical Content

Plates loaded with pesticides

Garima Prasher | TNN

Bangalore: Probably it's time to take a closer look at what's on your platter. Cypermethrin, heptachlor, quinalphos, aldrin, chlorodane, dichloryas, cypermethrin — these banned pesticides could well be a part of your regular diet. Okras, leafy green cabbages and other vegetables, bananas or oranges and apples that you so relish may be overloaded with some of these harmful pesticides.

A study by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India under the Union agriculture ministry threw up

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

some unpalatable facts. Common food items contain banned pesticides in quantities a thousand times more than the permissible limits. The findings are based on random samples collected from across the country.

From the vegetable basket, brinial tops the chart with the level of banned pesticide at 860% above legal limits, followed by cauliflower and cabbage. Wheat and rice too had these dangerous chemicals. While the level of aldrin in wheat is 21,890 times more than the permissible level, that of chlorfenvinfos in rice was measured at 1,324% above the allowed limit.

Word of caution: According to health experts, if consumed for a prolonged period, these pes-

ticides can prove fatal, "Pesticides are neurotoxins and can affect vital organs like the kidnev and liver as well as the endocrine system. Some can cause food poisoning or allergic reactions. They're even more dangerous for pregnant women, passing through the placenta and causing genetic alterations," warns Hema Aravind, chief dietician, MS Ramajah Memorial Hospital.

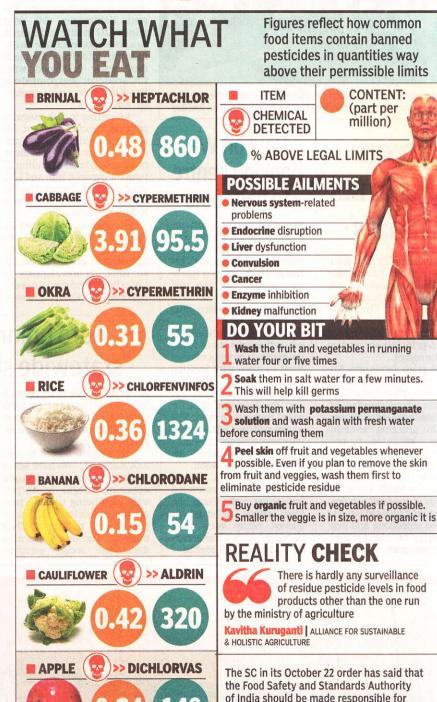
An apple a day needn't always keep the doctor away. According to the survey, both apples and oranges were found to have banned pesticide level of 140% above permissible limits. "The fruit are waxed with chemicals and pesticides to give them a longer life. Vegetables like cabbage and cauliflower, which are supposed to be very important for women's health, are dipped in two to three levels of pesticides to keep them fresh. Farming techniques like crop rotation have become a thing of the past," said Hema Sarat, nutrition and wellness adviser.

The solution lies in cleaning them thoroughly and buying from small vendors rather than supermarkets. "Small vendors grow vegetables and fruit on a small scale and not well-versed with the use of chemicals. Smaller the vegetable is in size. more organic it is," said Farhana Afroz, chief nutritionist, HCG Hospital.

"Kitchen gardening is the best solution to keep pesticides at bay. Vegetables can be grown easily in pots, even if you live in an apartment," she added.

TIMES VIEW

hough the survey findings ring alarm bells, it's practically impossible to do away with fruit and vegetables. Therefore, the next best option would be to exercise as much caution as possible. Simple things like washing them adequately before cooking could remove a lot of the chemical coating, if not all. Kitchen gardening is another option to explore. Also, customers must be wary of getting carried away by glossy packaging. Those spotless apples and oranges may not be as healthy as they appear. For all you know, the rough and rugged ones on the roadside could be a better bet. Regulating authorities should have checks in place to track such gross violation of permissible limits and take necessary action.



Source: Union agriculture ministry

CONTENT:

(part per

million)

monitoring and exercising control on soft

drinks. The problem is not only with vegetables

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