

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:325
ANSWERED ON:13.08.2003
FOOD ADULTERATION
V. VETRISELVAN

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

- (a) whether the Government are aware that use of pesticides has been threatening food safety;
- (b) whether the Government are also aware that the food contamination by toxic heavy metal like arsenic, cadmium and lead found in various food products is more than permissible quantities;
- (c) if so, whether there is any well planned and effective system for regular monitoring of contamination in food and food products;
- (d) whether the Government propose to review the prevention of Food Adulteration Act for incorporating necessary amendments keeping in view the suggestion received by various Ministries i.e. Consumer Affairs, Environment and Forest, Agriculture; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a)to(e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 325 FOR 13.8.2003

The use of pesticides in crops is regulated under the Insecticides Act, 1968, implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Registration Committee constituted under Section 5 of this Act, registers pesticides for use upon food crops in the country only after satisfying itself regarding efficacy of the pesticides and their safety to human health, animals and the environment.

While registering the pesticides, the Registration Committee also prescribe the crops, pests and diseases for which the pesticides are to be used, their doses, the method of their application and the safety precautions or instructions to be followed for their use.

If pesticides are used in the prescribed manner, then their use should not threaten safety of food. However, excessive use, misuse or abuse may result in excessive residues in foods, which may affect safety of food and/or human health.

In order that the contaminants in food products do not exceed the safe limits, the Ministry of Health has prescribed Maximum tolerance limits for pesticides and different meta contaminants like lead, arsenic, cadmium, zinc and tin, etc. in food products under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955.

The States/UTs are responsible for monitoring and implementation of the provisions of PFA Act, 1954, and PFA Rules, 1955, in the country. The Ministry of Agriculture has been requested to introduce a comprehensive system of monitoring of pesticide residues in primary food products.

A survey for presence of heavy metals in foods carried out by Directorate General of Health Services in Collaboration with few Laboratories in 1996-97 indicated that a majority of samples of food contains metallic contaminants but within the prescribed tolerance limits. However, there are reports of such contamination in some leafy vegetables around Delhi. The matter is being examined by the Ministry of Environment. The Ministry of Health will also be undertaking a fresh survey in this regard.

The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, is being reviewed, keeping in view the suggestions received from various quarters and the Ministry's own analysis. It is proposed to bring about necessary amendments to the Act including rationalization of the penalty structure; speeding up the investigation and judicial process, strengthening the central machinery; and upgrading the food laboratories.