

Consumer Dialogue

Volume VI, Issue 2, April-June 2015

E-newsletter

Farmers and Consumers Moving to Organic Farming

About 96 percent farmers are ready to practice organic farming if assistance is provided to them. However, 93 percent consumers are willing to purchase organic products provided the prices are affordable, easily available and they could be assured of the quality. This emerged in the research done by CUTS International to know the ground realities of organic consumption and production in the state of Rajasthan. These findings were presented during the District-level Consultation organised on May 29, 2015 at Jaipur. The study was conducted, under the project, 'Promote Organic Consumption in the State of Rajasthan' (ProOrganic) supported by Swedish Society for Nature



INSIDE

- ACTIVITIES
- IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS/ DECISIONS
- REPRESENTATION
- INFORMATIVE
- UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Conservation (SSNC). For this study, over 3000 respondents (1536 Consumers and 1529 farmers) were interviewed from the selected 102 *panchayats* of the six project districts: Chittorgarh, Dausa, Jaipur, Kota, Pratapgarh and Udaipur.

Despite all positive efforts, less than 3 percent of farmers are engaged in organic farming in Rajasthan. There is lack of awareness among farmers and consumers as well about organic certification. Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator, CUTS made a presentation on the 'Key Research Findings' while Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS informed about the project and the objectives of the consultation. Mix farming, on farm trials, intercropping, simplification of certification process, availability of better quality of local seeds, adoption of integrated pest management techniques, training on organic inputs preparations, food processing, awareness creation of government's on-going schemes to promote organic farming, creation of better market linkages emerged as key suggestions to promote organic consumption and production in the State.

The Consultation was attended by around 55 participants including farmers, consumers, experts, researchers, representatives of Civil Society Organisations from all the 13 blocks of Jaipur. Apart from CUTS team, the key speakers were B D Yadav, Senior Scientist, Vegetable Department (RARI), S Mukherjee, Professor of Horticulture (RARI), S S Yadav, Professor, Sri Karan Narendra Agriculture University Jobner and Nathu Lal Meena, (retired Agriculture Professor) representing *Kisan Sangh*.



CUTS CART



Renewable Transformation: Role of the Consumers

“Tomorrow renewable energy has to replace the conventional power for betterment of society... Consumer education and awareness would be crucial for this transformation”, stated Vishvanath Hiremath, Chairman of Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission in a seminar organised jointly by CUTS and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), India on June 19, 2015. This was the first in the series of seminars to be organised on ‘Green Growth and Energy Security in India: Political Economy of Transformation and Challenges’, jointly organised by both the institutes.

Hiremath explaining the challenges in different segments of electricity supply industry pointed that the challenges are big but not insurmountable. While technical fixes can address the infrastructure



challenges, there is a greater need for consumer education, awareness and engagement as the sector becomes more and more complex. Moving in a positive direction, Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC) has, in its recent tariff order, has earmarked a budget of 50 lakh per discom for consumer education and awareness.

In the introductory session of the seminar, Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International argued that India is faced with this unique challenge of bridging the demand-supply gaps by providing an appropriate power generation backbone and revolutionising the power generation base with a major share of renewables, simultaneously. He claimed that with two-thirds of current power coming from fossil fuel source, the country is placed between a rock and a hard place in its energy decision-making.

Marc Saxer, Resident Representative of FES, India, speaking in the seminar claimed, “International debate on energy transformations is over, and the renewables have won”. He further added, “the debate about ‘if’ is over, now we are entering into a discussion of *how* to achieve energy transformations”. Besides, Marc also pointed out three recent developments at global-level that support the optimism. First, is drop in price of clean energy. In recent years, in many countries, the renewable generation cost has come at parity, or even lower in some cases, compared with the conventional power. Second, is development of household and industrial storage facility that provides a solution for intermittent nature of renewable generation. Finally, the political will seem to come up for energy transformations. The recent pledge from G7 countries to move out of carbon economy by end of the century is a positive development in the global political economy.



Grahak Suvidha Kendra MoU Signed

Grahak Suvidha Kendra (GSK) MoU was signed at a ceremony held at DoCA, Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs on June 30, 2015. It was attended by representatives of five GSKs namely *Bhavishya*, Kolkata; *Savera*, Patna; CERC, Ahmedabad and Karshan Technologies, Bangalore and CUTS Jaipur. Girish Chandra, Deputy Secretary and Jayalaxmi Kannan, Under Secretary were present on behalf of DoCA. Deepak Saxena, Sr. Programme Coordinator represented CUTS for signing the MoU.



ग्राहक सुविधा केन्द्र Consumer Care Centre

उपभोक्ता मामले विभाग, भारत सरकार की परियोजना
Project of Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India



Consumer Unity & Trust Society

D-218A, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302016, India

Email: gsk@cuts.org, Ph: +91 141 4015395



Gram Gadar Award Announced

Gram Gadar award was announced on April 13th, 2015. Surendra Chirana, reporter of Danik Bhaskar, Sikar has been selected for the award for the best write ups in rural journalism for the year 2014.

District-level Consultations

During the start of the ProOrganic project, a survey was conducted in six districts under the action research component of the project with an objective to gauge the level of awareness among consumers and farmers on organic consumption and awareness. The objective of conducting these consultations in all six districts was to discuss the preliminary findings of this action research and to receive the inputs to be used in finalising and preparing the research report and the advocacy document as proposed in the project. The District-level Consultations were held on March 27, 2015 at Dausa; on April 08, 2015 at Pratapgarh; on April 15, 2015 at Udaipur; on 06 May, 2015 at Chittorgarh; on May 14, 2015 at Kota and May 29, 2015 at Jaipur.





14th Meeting of Central Advisory Committee

The Central Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India was chaired by Y S Malik, Chief Executive Officer, FSSAI. After adoption of 13th CAC Meeting Minutes, I.N.Moorthy, General Manager, National Institute for Smart Government, Hyderabad made a detailed presentation on Food Licensing and Registration System. George Cheriyan, Director CUTS actively participated in discussions and raised several questions. On the sidelines, he also met with food safety commissioners of several states and had discussions.



- On April 15 2015, Amrat Singh, Assistant Director and Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator of CUTS CART made a one day visit to Delhi to the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. The visit was made to make presentation on our shortlisted proposal for the 'Study on Structural Factors behind Food Inflation'.
- Subsequent to the application for registration, an appraisal visit was made by representative from Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The designated Officer, Dharmendra Azad, Assistant General Manager, Banking Supervision made visits to CUTS Office on June 20-21, 2015 and assessed the organisation on various parameters. George Cheriyan (Director), Amrat Singh and Arjun Kant Jha from CUTS facilitated the visit and provided all the relevant information and documents required for appraisal process.
- Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator of CUTS attended the National Seminar on 'E-Commerce and Consumers: Issues and Challenges' on May 08, 2015 at New Delhi. The Seminar was organised by Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in collaboration with the Department of Consumer Affairs. It was attended by around 60 participants.
- Deepak Saxena along with Arjun Kant Jha, Project Officer participated in a two-day National Conference on the first day i.e. May 06, 2015. This conference 'Save Kids Lives: Child Safety on Roads' was organised by Centre for Road Safety (CRS), under Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, Jodhpur at Rajasthan Police Academy, Nehru Nagar, Jaipur.
- Deepak Saxena along with Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Project Officer participated in an open house organised by Tata Tele Services on May 26, 2015. Dharmendra participated in BSNL open house session, Telecom District Jaipur on 16 May, 2015 he also attended the Customer Outreach Programme organised by Mobile Telecom Service brand (MTS) at Jaipur on May 21, 2015.
- Arjun Kant Jha participated in the National Seminar on 'Financial Services and Consumer Protection' organised by Centre for Consumer Studies (IIPA) at New Delhi on May 15, 2015.
- On May 19, 2015 Arjun Kant, Dharmendra, Vipin Chawla, Project Officer and Varidhi Singh, Project Officer participated in *Dainik Bhaskar*-CUTS Campaign against gas cylinder hawkers at old Jaipur city.
- George Cheriyan actively participated in the discussions and raised several questions in the 14th meeting of Central Advisory Committee of Food and Standards Authority of India chaired by Y S Malik, Chief Executive Officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.
- Deepak Saxena was part of Bureau of Indian Standards team for 'Fact-finding and Evaluation' for Rajiv Gandhi National Quality Awards for the year 2013 at M/S Manu Yantralaya, Sitapura Jaipur on June 18, 2015.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi participated in a consultation on promoting rights of children focussing on natural Stone sector organised by ARAWALI, an NGO on June 18, 2015 in Jaipur.
- Varidhi Singh attended the Conference on 'Clean Water for All' organised by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry on June 18, 2015 at PHD House, Jaipur.
- Dharmendra and Varidhi attended a half-day roundtable meet to discuss on the existing situation of lead in paints in the state of Rajasthan organised by Toxics Link, New Delhi in association with Health, Environment and Development Consortium (HEDCON), Jaipur on June 30, 2015 at Jaipur.

Setting up New Body to Check Ponzi Schemes

Recent financial scams like Saradha, Rose Valley or the Pearl Group schemes have one thing in common, all have collected money from the poor and vulnerable sections of the public by flouting norms. In a serious bid to act against such money deposit and collection frauds, it was decided in a recent meeting chaired by Union Minister of State for Finance Jayant Sinha that a Permanent Central Coordination Mechanism would be set up.

The high-level Institute of Management in Government (IMG) was formed on December 30, 2014, to identify gaps in the existing regulatory framework for illegal deposit taking and money collection activities and to suggest measures including formulation of a new law.

(For details, visit: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/govt-to-set-up-new-body-to-check-ponzi-schemes/article1-1332618.aspx>)

Cabinet Gives Nod to Real Estate Bill

The Union Cabinet has approved the Real Estate (Regulation and Development Bill), which will address a long-standing demand to bring in a regulator for the real estate sector. The Bill seeks to protect the interests of the consumers and establish regulatory bodies at the Centre and States for ethical and transparent business practices in the real estate sector. The Bill also provides for mandatory registration of all projects and real estate agents, who intend to sell any plot, apartment or building with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority.

(For details, visit: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/union-cabinet-clears-real-estate-bill/article7078340.ece>)

Insurance Firm to Pay ₹3 Lakh for Denying Mediclaim

A district Consumer Forum has pulled up an insurance firm for denying a man his mediclaim amount. It has directed the company to pay over Rs3 lakh as compensation to his widow for unfair trade practices and causing mental harassment.

The complainant, Sangeeta Saadh, approached the forum after Reliance General Insurance Company Limited failed to reimburse the medical costs of her husband, who died of multiple organ failure during his treatment at a city hospital. She approached the firm claiming ₹2.82 lakh in June 2009 but the company did not reimburse the amount in the past six years.

Private insurance companies, in order to augment their business, are indulging in malpractices. They issue insurance covers and collect premium from people and thereafter repudiate their claim, if it is the same is filed shortly made by the insured within a short span of time after taking the policy by taking refuge of the exclusion clauses forming part of the terms and conditions of the policy", the East District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum said.

The bench rejected the insurance firm's claim that Sangeeta was rightfully not given the cost of medical treatment of her husband on account of 'Exclusion Clause 10' of their policy, which stated that the treatment for alcoholism and related disorders are not payable, under its policy.

(For details, visit: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Insurance-firm-told-to-pay-3L-for-denying-mediclaim/articleshow/47240640.cms>)

Wrong Prescription: E-Retailers to be More Responsible

When the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration ordered First Information Report(FIR) against Snapdeal's CEO and other Directors for selling prescription drugs online without a licence, Snapdeal said in its defence: "Upon being notified of any such products, we delist the products and take appropriate action against such seller. In this case, upon receiving the notice, we have delisted the products and provided all information to the FDA team".

But does that wash? When the law of the land clearly states that selling certain medicines – online or offline – without a prescription from a registered medical practitioner is not allowed, everybody needs to follow it. Online retailers cannot hide behind the argument that they are only a platform where medicines are being traded and are not responsible for what gets sold.

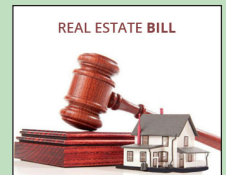
(For details, visit: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/wrong-prescription/article7202128.ece?homepage=true>)

No Unwanted Investigations

Several doctors from all over India and across disciplines are joining hands to fight against the menace of unnecessary investigations. The Society for Less Investigative Medicine (SLIM), which was initiated in year 2014 by a few cardiologists in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi, is presently becoming a national society.

(For detail, visit: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Doctors-across-India-join-hands-to-stop-practice-of-unwanted-tests/articleshow/47313607.cms>)

IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS/ DECISIONS



Surgeries to Meet Corporate Targets

The numbers speak of Chennai's rise as a medical capital: More than two lakh cataract surgeries in a year, a two-fold jump in caesarean section, a sharp spiral in hysterectomies. They also believe in a strange truth: Doctors are increasingly becoming quite happy.

If your doctor asks you to undergo a cataract surgery, hysterectomy, gall bladder or tonsils' removal, or suggest a lower-back operation then please do take a second opinion. Wide-ranging interviews



with surgeons who testified before an Non-government Organisation (NGO) on corrupt practices in hospitals told *Times of India* that often patients are forced to undergo unnecessary surgeries.

A senior Orthopaedic surgeon in a corporate hospital explained the reason behind this unsettling trend: "We have a quota to meet every month. Many of us see patients as a potential candidate on our operating table. Only two out of five, however, agree. Many go for a second opinion – and do not return". The surgeon is among the 78 medical practitioners who provided testimony to Pune-based NGO Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives (SATHI) that compiled a report on unethical practices and corruption in healthcare.

(For detail, visit: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/Doctors-do-avoidable-surgeries-to-meet-corporate-targets/articleshow/46764036.cms>)

Upcoming Activities

- End line Survey under 'ProOrganic' supported by Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC).
- Inauguration of 'Grahak Suvidha Kendra' supported by Department of Consumer Affairs of Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs, Government of India in Jaipur in September, 2015 and
- National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) 2013-14 post sanction activities in Rajasthan.



CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CART)

D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, India, Ph: 91.141.5133259, 2282821, Fx: 91.141.4015395
Email: cart@cuts.org, Web: www.cuts-international.org/cart