

Consumer Dialogue

Volume IV, Issue 4, October-December 2013

E-newsletter

Organic Consumption as Consumer Right under Healthy Environment

Today's modern agriculture system and techniques have been continuously harming and adversely affecting human health and now the time has come to move backward to adopt organic farming culture in the country, said Jiji Mammen, Chief General Manager, Rajasthan Regional Office, National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD). He was launching the Project entitled 'Promote Organic Consumption in the State of Rajasthan' (ProOrganic) to commemorate National Consumer Day.

He further stated that modern farming is done with the usage of all types of harmful pesticides and chemicals that have serious implications leading to health hazards and environmental degradation. He emphasised on the need to move towards sustainable agriculture and use natural resources by adopting organic farming.



'ProOrganic' is a two year Pilot Project to promote organic consumption in Rajasthan, implemented by CUTS in partnership with Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC).

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS said that sustainable consumption as part of the right to healthy environment is recognised by the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP). Consumers have right to safe food and for that there is a need for sustainable agriculture to ensure food security.

Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS presented the brief of the ProOrganic, which is being implemented in six districts: Kota, Jaipur, Udaipur, Pratapgarh, Chittorgarh and Dausa covering 102 *gram panchayats*. In a span of two years, research, advocacy and awareness related activities would be implemented involving all the stakeholders. This project is supported by SSNC. The overall objective of the project is to promote organic consumption and for this research, capacity building, awareness campaign and advocacy related activities would be conducted during 2 years of the Project period.

Sheetal Sharma, Additional Director, Agriculture Department of Government of Rajasthan presented an overview of organic farming covering all aspects, while Vardhman Bapna, General Manager, Morarka Foundation, A. K. Gupta, Scientists and B. D. Yadav from Durgapura Krishi Farm delivered technical presentation stating the importance of organic farming and ill effects of modern farming. On the occasion, Shyam Singh Rajpurohit, Director, Food and Consumer Affairs Department of Government of Rajasthan were also present.



CUTS CART

ACTIVITIES



Post Proposal Workshop for NEAC Partners

The post proposal workshop, under National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) 2013-14 was held on December 27, 2013. About 170 participants attended the workshop.

Surendra Singh Choudhary, Chairman, Rajasthan State Biodiversity Board was the Chief Guest who delivered lecture on bio-diversity conservation. George Cheriyan made the opening remarks touching up on the relevance of NEAC and the theme of biodiversity conservation. Payments up to 60 percent were delivered to NGOs during the meeting who were sanctioned this year's proposals and had attended the workshop prior to organising the activities in their respective areas.



ProOrganic Partners Orientation

The orientation for District Project Partners, under the 'ProOrganic' Project was held on December 23, 2013. Eight representatives from the partner organisations and the ProOrganic Project team attended the orientation. Detailed discussions were held about various activities, under the Project. Prior to that Project details were briefed to all the partners. Ram Sharma (Professor, SKN University, Jobner) and Hari Mohan Gupta (CEO, Society for Organic Agriculture Movement, Jaipur) attended as external resource persons and presented various aspects of organic farming. The Memorandum of Understanding with each of the district partners was also signed during the occasion.



Gram Gadar Award 2012

Publishing since 1983, 'Gram Gadar', a walled newspaper has proved to be quite effective and popular in rural areas. Main objective of this walled newspaper is to sensitise the rural people, especially poor and deprived sections by making them aware of their rights and developing a questioning society.

Since 2002, *Gram Gadar* award is given to media persons, especially the rural based, who raises the issue of public interest through their journalism in an effective manner. This year, '*mahilaon ke prati hinsa evam unki suraksha*' (violence against women and their safety) was selected as the subject and the journalists/media persons who have raised the issue through their write ups/articles and news in rural/urban based newspapers, were asked to submit their applications. Chandra Mouli Pachrangia, a news reporter of *Dainik Amber* from Jhunjhunu district was awarded the '*Gram Gadar*' journalism award for the year 2012.



REPRESENTATION



- On October 25, 2013 Deepak Saxena attended a workshop, as a panellist in a session on the 'Problems of Consumers and in Consumer Protection with Emphasis in Rajasthan' organised by R. K. Patni Govt. P. G. College, Kishangarh (Ajmer) in association with Indian Institute of Personal Administration, New Delhi.
- George Cheriyan met with the Chief Secretary of Madhya Pradesh, Anthony J.C. *de Sa* on November 8, 2013, in Bhopal and discussed about possible collaboration with Department of Consumer Affairs.
- George Cheriyan attended the first National Conference of the Non-judicial Members of the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission organised at National Judicial Academy, Bhopal on November 9, 2013 and made a presentation on 'Recent Trends in Consumer Rights and Unfair Trade Practices'.
- George Cheriyan, Deepak Saxena and Amarjeet Singh attended a workshop on 'Low Carbon Policies: Formulation and Implementation Issues' organised by CUTS-CCIER at Hotel Country Inn, Jaipur on November 29, 2013.
- Amarjeet Singh facilitated sessions on Consumer Protection & Banking Ombudsman in trainings organised by RICEM Jaipur for Co-operative Bank Managers on November 19 and 28 respectively. Amarjeet also facilitated a session on 'Essential Commodities Act' in a training organised by National Institute of Agricultural Marketing (NIAM), Jaipur for Warehouse Managers on November 22, 2013.
- Deepak Saxena facilitated a session on Consumer Protection Scenario and, Act in a training organised by National Institute of Agricultural Marketing for Warehouse Managers from UP, Gujarat and Rajasthan on November 25, 2013.
- George Cheriyan and Amarjeet Singh from CART participated in the seminar on 'Quality of service and access to broadband services in India' organised by CUTS in partnership with Ford Foundation in Delhi, on December 9, 2013.



Draft Regulatory Reform Bill Gets Government Nod

The Government has given its go ahead to the proposed Draft Regulatory Reform Bill, 2013, which aims to make regulators across key infrastructure sectors accountable to the Parliament besides giving them the power of licensing. The Prime Minister's Office gave its go-ahead to the Bill. The Bill is now up for consultation with various stakeholders and once it is finalised it may be taken up in Parliament during the budget session.



The Bill aims to fill a lacuna, since India does not have a law to monitor the functioning of a large number of regulatory authorities existing in the country. The draft Bill will apply to key sectors, such as electricity, oil and gas, coal, telecommunications and internet, broadcasting and cable television, posts, airports, ports, waterways, railways, mass rapid transit system, highways and water supply.

The Bill aims to make regulators accountable to the Parliament. The overall functioning of the regulator will be subject to scrutiny by the Parliament, on a yearly basis.

(Economic Times Bureau, 13.12.13)

Doctors Punished for Medical Negligence

As per the information furnished by Medical Council of India (MCI), as many as 97 doctors have been punished by MCI for medical negligence and misconduct in the last three years starting from the period of May 2010 to November 30, 2013.

Of the 97 doctors punished by MCI, seven were registered with Andhra Pradesh State Medical Council. The professional conduct of doctors in the country is regulated by MCI and the respective state medical councils.

The Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations 2002 empowers the MCI and State Medical Councils to award punishment to a doctor against any act of violation of code of ethics and illegal practices.

(Press Trust of India, 10.12.13)



Insurance Repository System of IRDA Launched

Hon. Union Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, formally launched the Insurance Repository (IR) System. For individual policy holders, it is a pioneering initiative of India's Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), the first of its kind in the world, as part of its efforts to improve services to policy holders and insurance penetration. Insurance Repository system will enable policy holders to buy and keep insurance policies in dematerialised or electronic form (e-Policies). E-Policies will eliminate paper and associated risks of storage and loss and provide convenience and safety to the customers.

(Times of India, 09.10.13)



Increasing Cases of Medical Negligence and Disputes with Builders

Cases of medical negligence and disputes with builders constitute the highest number of cases out of 3.5 lakh that are pending before consumer dispute forums across the country, indicating an increasing trend of unethical practices and harassment of consumers due to lack of regulators in the two sectors.

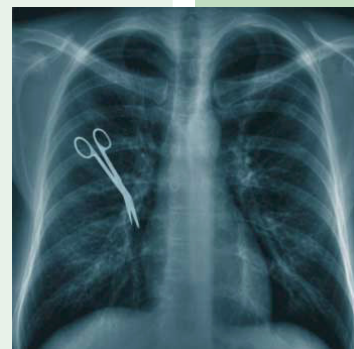
To bring relief to aggrieved parties, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) President Justice D. K. Jain has commissioned a study to analyse and bring down the pendency.

There are more than 3.5 lakh consumer cases pending before state commissions and various district forums. As of October 2013, more than 10,000 cases were pending before the NCDRC alone, many of which were those, where compensation sought was ₹1 crore and more. The pendency in district forums was 2.5 lakh and those before State Commissions around 90,000. Cases of medical negligence and disputes with builders constitute the maximum number of cases.

These cases have nothing to do with pendency in other courts, which stand at around 3.2 crore across the country in subordinate courts, high courts and the Supreme Court.

In a recent case, where the apex court had asked a Kolkata hospital to pay an NRI a compensation of ₹5.96 crore for medical negligence causing the death of his wife was earlier adjudicated by the NCDRC, which had ordered that the NRI be paid ₹2 crore.

(Times News Network, 27.11.13)





IRDA to Rope in CSCs for Selling Policies in Rural Areas

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) is roping in Common Service Centres (CSCs) as a platform for insure to sell simple policies in rural areas.

IRDA plans to bring CSCs as insurance brokers for selling simple insurance products, such as tractor insurance and vehicle insurance etc. In six months' time, it may come in full swing. Common Service Centre's cornerstone of the National e-Governance Plan, offers web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas.

IRDA Chairman, Vijayan said that the insurance penetration in India is pegged at 3.84 percent and has the potential to go up to 6 percent in the coming years.

(Press Trust of India, 28.12.13)

Road Safety and Traffic Management Body

With road accidents on the rise, the Government is planning to set up a body dedicated to ensuring better road safety and traffic management.

"Government is considering creation of National Road Safety and Traffic Management Board", Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Oscar Fernandes said while addressing a meeting of the National Road Safety Council in New Delhi. The Board will act as a dedicated agency to oversee road safety activity in the country and will have power to issue guidelines on a wide range of issues concerning road safety," he said.

In 2012, the country witnessed 490,383 total road accidents. The total number of road accident fatalities stood at 138,258 in the same year, official data shows.

(Press Trust of India, 07.10.13)

New Government Guarantees 24 hours Power Supply

Rajasthan's new BJP Government announced that it would ensure a 24 hour power supply throughout in cities in the current year and will fulfill its promises as declared in its election manifesto.

Once the State achieves self-reliance in electricity generation, power would be supplied to all for 24 hours during this year, Rajasthan Energy Minister said. To achieve this target, power generation and transmission systems would be strengthened by reducing Theft and Distribution Losses (T&DL), which is about 20 percent now.

Recalling new Chief Minister's commitment to the people, he said that electricity would be supplied not only to the urban population but also in villages right up to 'dhani' and this would be achieved in the year 2014.

(Rajasthan Patrika, 26.12.13)

Upcoming Activities under Consumer Protection

Action Research under 'ProOrganic'

Under the 'ProOrganic' Project, there is a component of action research. The purpose of the research would be to collect evidences about the ground realities of organic consumption and production in the State. The survey would capture the perceptions/experiences regarding the same from various stakeholders about awareness, capacity, challenges and suggestions etc.

Monitoring under NEAC

Intensive monitoring work would be carried out by concerned team members throughout Rajasthan by visiting and overseeing the programmes conducted by NGOs, who have been sanctioned programmes in 2013.

Celebration of World Consumer Rights Day on 15th March, 2014

A programme would be organised on the theme 'Fix Your Phone Rights' along with telecom service providers. This year's World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) is going to be commemorated worldwide with this theme by all the consumer organisations with the support of all the service providers, under the belt of apex body Consumers International with a voice to spread message of phone rights of consumers.

