

## About CART

Established in 1983 as a small voluntary group of concerned citizens, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) expanded its activities and CUTS CART was set up in 1996 as a programme centre to pursue the cause of common consumers, initially being undertaken by CUTS as the mandate.

The programmes of the Centre are primarily aimed at generating awareness, creating a more responsible society and encouraging changes at the policy level by advocating with the government machinery and sensitising it to the issues of concern of the common man. The Centre has spearheaded several campaigns and pioneered consumer empowerment.

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## Urgent Need to Establish Road Safety Authority

Road safety experts of Rajasthan demanded the formation of a Road Safety Authority in Rajasthan for effective coordination between various departments and enforcement of road safety act, rules, plans and programmes. Pratap Singh Khachariyawas, Transport Minister, Government of Rajasthan while delivering the inaugural address as a chief guest, endorsed the demand. He said that the State Government would do whatever is required to ensure road safety in Rajasthan, including the formation of Road Safety Authority, Child Road Safety Policy and Trauma Care Policy.

The Minister inaugurated the State level Consultation organised by CUTS at Jaipur in collaboration with the Transport Department, Government of Rajasthan, on September 07, 2021. George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS, delivered the opening address. In the inaugural session, other speakers were Sushmit Biswas, Additional Director General of Police (Traffic) and Mahendra Soni, Transport Commissioner.



In the technical session, the key road safety provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act (MVA), 2019, were discussed to seek experts' suggestions to devise a detailed action plan. Madhu Sudan Sharma, Senior Programme Officer, CUTS, moderated the technical session and made the introductory presentation on MVA, 2019. Nidhi Singh, Joint Transport Commissioner; Girdhar Goyal, Trauma Care Expert, SMS Hospital; and Prerana Arora, Road Safety Expert, were speakers in the technical session.

The second consultation 'Enforcement Challenges of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019', was organised at Bengaluru, Karnataka, on September 23, 2021. The main objective of the consultation meeting was to provide a platform for stakeholders from various and related fields to share their opinions and identify the enforcement challenges of the MVA, 2019 in the State of Karnataka and the way forward. Recommendations emerged from the meeting that there is a need to improve the road infrastructure, conduct periodic training, and build the capacity of service providers.

Sudhakar Rao, ex-IAS, Chairman, Public Affairs Foundation; N. Shivakumar, IPS, Transport Commissioner, Government of Karnataka spoke in the technical session. Ajit Singh, former DGP & Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru, was the moderator. Ravikanth Gowda, IPS, Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic); R P Kulkarni, Chief Project Officer, PWD/State Highways, Bengaluru; G Gururaj, Chairperson of the Vision Group on Health & Family Welfare; Ravi Gadepalli, Consultant with World Bank and International Association of Public Transport; and Srinivas Alavilli, Head, Civic Participation, Janaagraha, Bengaluru were key speakers.

## Health Star Rating Labels not a Solution for Indian Consumers

Experts have unanimously hailed that simple and easy-to-understand warning labels on the front of the pack in package food products would be most suitable for the Indian population, regardless of their age, literacy proficiency, or socio-economic strata.

More importantly, it would efficiently guide consumers in making healthier choices and help them reduce their intake of fat, sugar, or salt. With poor diets increasingly associated as a significant risk factor for India's burgeoning Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) crisis, a decision on the appropriate Front of Package Labelling (FoPL) should not be delayed further, emphasised food policy experts and doctors at a virtual discussion organised by CUTS International.

According to Alexandra Jones, Research Fellow, Food Policy and Law, The George Institute for Global Health, Australia, "HSR allows industry to use it selectively. Hence it is used on products that are already healthier than others. Food products with a high content of negative nutrients often do not display HSR, which is a voluntary system in our country." Jones also spoke about consumer mistrust, selective display of star rating by the industry and instances of industry asserting influence as stakeholders of the regulatory process.

The HSR system does not effectively assist the vulnerable consumers who need it the most, said Cheriyan in his opening address as the moderator. Further, he quoted Grant Schofield, Chief Health and Nutrition Advisor to Ministry of Education, New Zealand, who said *'the Health Star rating is already dead in the water. The algorithm is flawed in the combination of fat, salt and sugar. The food industry brought this to us, and we suckered in. Perversely, very high sugar foods can get 4+ health stars.'* We should learn from the experiences of Australia and New Zealand and be cautious against the adoption of HSR.



Dr Pankaj Bhardwaj, Vice Dean (Research), AIIMS Jodhpur, highlighted the need for effective warning labels from a health perspective. He cautioned that people with comorbidity and pre-existing NCDs are more vulnerable and at higher risk of getting infected by the COVID-19 virus.

Saroja Sundaram, Executive Director, Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), Chennai, spoke about FoPL from a consumer perspective. She reminded regulators how the existing detailed nutritional summary provided at the back of the product never served the purpose due to the language barrier and consumers' ignorance.

Amit Khurana, Director, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, stated that it was disheartening to see that even after eight years, the country is still discussing FoPL.

More than 60 delegates from across the country attended the virtual webinar.

## Ensure Compliance of Good Samaritan Law

Three workshops on awareness entitled 'Good Samaritan Guidelines: Challenges and the Way Forward' under the Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways project of 2021 were organised in Ajmer on July 22, 2021; in Kota on July 28, 2021; and in Udaipur on August 26, 2021 respectively.

In Ajmer, Indrajeet Singh, Joint Director, Medical and Health Department of Rajasthan, was the chief guest. Besides, Arjun Singh Rathore, RTO, Ajmer; Virendra Singh, DTO, Bhilwara; Parth Sharma, S P Traffic, Ajmer and Shaitan Singh Rathore, a resident doctor in Trauma Care, JLN Hospital were the key speakers. 33 participants attended the workshop. George Cheriyan, Deepak Saxena and Dharmendra Chaturvedi, from CUTS, attended the event.

Similarly, in Kota, Rajendra Singh Kavia, DSP, Traffic; Dr Kulwant Gaur, Coordinator 108 Ambulance Service and Bhuvnesh Kumar, a lawyer, were speakers.

In the third workshop in Udaipur, Dr Amanendra Sharma HoD of Trauma ward of Maharana Bhopal Hospital; Bhaiya Lal, Deputy SP, Traffic; Prakash Singh Rathore, RTO and Narayan Choudhary, CEO of Aadhar Foundation were key speakers. Ranveer Mehta, Coordinator, Red Cross Society, Udaipur, also spoke during the event. All three workshops had good participation and fruitful discussions.





## Sustainable Consumption and Production (SDG-12)

*Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG12) is about “Responsible Consumption and Production” and is one of the 17 SDGs adopted by the United Nations in 2015. CUTS, in partnership with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), conducted a study on ‘Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) from a Consumer Perspective’ in India, with a particular focus in five states, namely Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The study aimed to frame an understanding of SCP beyond SDG-12 targets and expand it from current sustainable consumption and consumer perspectives.*

### First Consultation: Uttar Pradesh

The first state-level consultation on SDG12 was organised in Lucknow, UP, on July 29, 2021. Anand Mishra, Director, Department of Planning; Government of Uttar Pradesh; SK Chauhan, Director, Department of Food Processing and AK Gupta, Additional Director, Regional Centre for Urban & Environment Studies, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India were the main speakers in the inaugural session. Eight departments shared their department-specific progress and programmes related to SDG12. More than 32 participants attended the meeting.

### Second Consultation: Himachal Pradesh

The second state-level consultation was organised in collaboration with the Department of Planning, Government of Himachal Pradesh and Plan Foundation in Shimla on August 18, 2021. Akshay Sood, Secretary, Department of Finance, was the chief guest. Basu Sood, Advisor Planning, spoke as a special guest. 15 departments shared their department-specific progress and programmes related to SDG12. More than 53 participants attended the meeting.



### Third Consultation: Chhattisgarh

The third state-level consultation was organised in collaboration with State Planning Commission (SPC), Chhattisgarh and Anmol Foundation at Raipur on September 30, 2021. Ajay Singh, Vice Chairman, SPC, was the chief guest. K Subramaniam, Member; and Anup Kumar Srivastava, Member Secretary from SPC spoke. 12 departments shared their department-specific progress and programmes related to SDG12. More than 40 participants attended the meeting.

## Organic Consumption Gets Boost after Pandemic

The activities during the bridge year 2021 started with a partner's meeting at Jaipur on July 02, 2021. A total of 55 different activities were organised in all the project districts from July-September 2021.

38 block-level awareness meetings were organised to identify villages that could be converted into the model organic village. Seven district-level awareness meetings were organised to gather information about the most potential area in organic farming, cropping patterns, district plan to promote organic farming etc. Other than the Deputy Director, senior scientists and subject experts, vice-chancellors of agriculture universities were present at Kota and Jodhpur district-level awareness meetings.

Five feedback meetings were organised with a vision to strengthen the existing seed cells. Five advanced farmer training and exposure visits were held to train farmers who wanted to shift to organic farming with live demos of different techniques. These activities have broader participation, including farmers, consumers, government officials and other stakeholders.



### Green Action Week (GAW) India



A summary of partner organisations was submitted to SSNC. After receiving the revised activity plan, the consultancy contract was signed with partners. They commenced their activities from September 01, 2021 in the run-up to the Green Action Week during October 04-10, 2021. Cheriyan and Madhu Sudan Sharma attended activities organised by the Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women in Doddabanhalli village in rural Bengaluru, Karnataka, on September 24, 2021.

### Green Action Week took off in Rajasthan

Green Action Week (GAW), Rajasthan, was formally launched with a community level introductory meeting for kitchen gardens at Jaipur, on September 09, 2021. Cheriyan, Nimisha Gaur, Rajdeep Pareek and Pratibha Jain attended the meeting.

Amit Sharma, a subject expert, provided orientation to participants on techniques of kitchen gardening. Cheriyan distributed kitchen garden kits (five vegetables and medicinal seeds, HDPE pots, one gardening equipment) to all participants.

Three introductory meetings were organised at Mahesh Nagar, Nilkanth Vihar and Meenavala, respectively.

This year, CUTS also introduced a new activity, 'Wealth from Waste' training to women groups. They were trained to reuse or regenerate new items from the waste items (clothes, plastic) through live demonstration.



## REPRESENTATIONS

- Cheriyan, Deepak Saxena and Simi TB attended a CUTS Roundtable on Proposed Amendments to the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 on July 02, 2021.
- Madhu Sudan Sharma participated in the RTI Webinar organised by Ananta Centre on July 02, 2021. He made some interventions and shared his experiences.
- Simi TB attended a National Webinar on 'Addressing Cardiovascular Diseases through Front of Package Labelling', in India, organised by Government Medical College Srinagar and AIIMS, Rishikesh on July 07, 2021.
- Pratibha Jain attended a webinar on 'Food Safety and Hygiene in Food Industry- Role of Indian Standards' on July 22, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena attended an online training course on 'Traffic Impact Assessment' organised by Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi from August 01-14, 2021.
- Amit Babu attended a webinar on 'Private Capital Mobilisation in Road Safety,' organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry on August 09, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh attended a webinar of Darbari Seth Memorial Lecture series organised by The Energy & Resources Institute on August 24, 2021. Bhupender Yadav, Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change delivered the inaugural address.
- Cheriyan attended a Consultative Meeting organised by ReAct entitled 'Building Back Better' and made a presentation on '*Changing Consumer Perspectives after COVID-19 and How it can Possibly Affect the AMR Domain*' on August 25, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh and Simi TB participated in the webinar on 'Role of Strong Warning Labels on Unhealthy Food Products in Protecting People's Health' organised by Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India on August 26, 2021.
- Simi TB and Amar Deep Singh attended SCP Think tank - preparing to launch the Anthology on September 20, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh and Nimisha Gaur attended CI Member Connect call on Sustainable Consumption on September 15, 2021.
- Cheriyan was the key speaker in an Ozone Day programme organised by Ground Source Heat Pump Governing Council on September 16, 2021.



## Nutrition Literacy, Market Infrastructure Investments to Ensure Healthy, Sustainable Diets in South Asia

*South Asia Monitor, September 06, 2021 • By George Cheriyan and Simi TB*

To design sustainable food systems for healthy diets within the South Asian region, one needs to take local realities and contexts into account and develop a strong collaboration among all stakeholders at the grassroots, national, regional and global level.

<https://www.southasiamonitor.org/contributors/18797/George%20Cheriyan%20and%20Simi%20T.B.>

## e-procurement can achieve transparency, efficiency in government purchases

*Policy Circle, August 27, 2021 • By George Cheriyan and Madhu Sudan Sharma*

Online shopping has already become the preferred mode of buying all sorts of goods and services for individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused huge disruptions in supply chain management due to the imposition of lockdown measures and movement restrictions. E-procurement of goods, services and work has become more important since it is the speediest way to meet the needs of governments.

<https://cuts-cart.org/e-procurement-can-achieve-transparency-efficiency-in-government-purchases/>

## Mandatory hallmarking key to ensuring consumer protection

*Policy Circle, July 22, 2021 • By George Cheriyan and Amit Babu*

Recently, the Department of Consumer Affairs made hallmarking of gold jewellery mandatory in a phased manner. According to the BIS that operates gold and silver hallmarking scheme in India, hallmarking is defined as the accurate determination and official recording of the proportionate content of precious metal in articles.

<https://cuts-cart.org/mandatory-hallmarking-key-to-ensuring-consumer-protection-but-challenges-remain/>

