

Consumer Dialogue

Volume XIV, Issue 2, May-August, 2023

E-newsletter

Experts Disapprove Proposed Regulations for FoPL Nutrition Rating

Given the fast-paced nature of modern society, where convenience often takes precedence over nutrition, it becomes vital to increase awareness about the health impact of ultra-processed foods and the crucial role that Front of Pack Labelling (FoPL) could play in addressing this concern. This need for awareness is significant in light of the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in both urban and rural areas of India, as recently indicated by a study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research-India Diabetes (ICMR-INDIAB).

To promote healthier choices and address the role of certain ingredients in contributing to NCDs, incorporating simplified nutrition information on the front of food packages proves to be a cost-effective strategy. By providing clear and easily understandable information about the content of salt, sugar, and fat, consumers can be guided towards making informed choices and avoiding unhealthy options.



Moreover, implementing such easy-to-understand warning labels would compel food industries, which have shown little commitment to safeguarding consumer health, to reformulate their products by reducing harmful ingredients and enhancing their nutritional content. Such a move would lead to an overall enhancement in the healthiness of the available food options.

These were the opinions expressed by experts in the state-level consultation organised by CUTS in Bangalore on July 28, 2023, in partnership with Public Affairs Foundation (PAF), to generate awareness on FoPL and the role it could play in curbing NCDs among wider stakeholders.

Deepak Saxena, Associate Director, CUTS International; Uma, Joint Director, Department of Health & Family Welfare (NCD Cell), Government of Karnataka; Sanjay Pandey, National Consultant, Global Health Advocacy; Sarika, Founder, Principal Consultant, Food Safety and Simi TB, CUTS International presented the status of NCDs in India.

Similarly, another consultation was organised at Bhopal with National Centre for Human Settlements & Environment (NCHSE) on August 17, 2023, where Dr Prabhakar Tiwari, CMHO; Dr Varuna Pathak, HoD, Obstetrics Gynaecology, R K Medical College, Bhopal; Devendra Dubey, Senior Food Safety Officer, Food & Drugs Administration, MP and Dr Pradip Nandi, Director General, NCHSE presented their views.

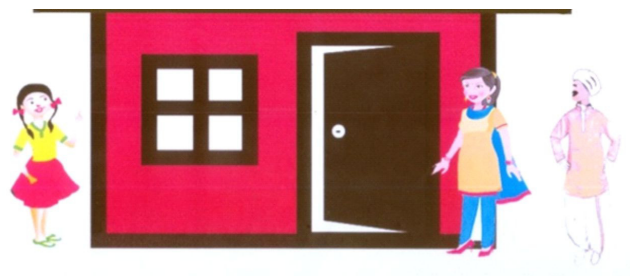


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CUTS CART



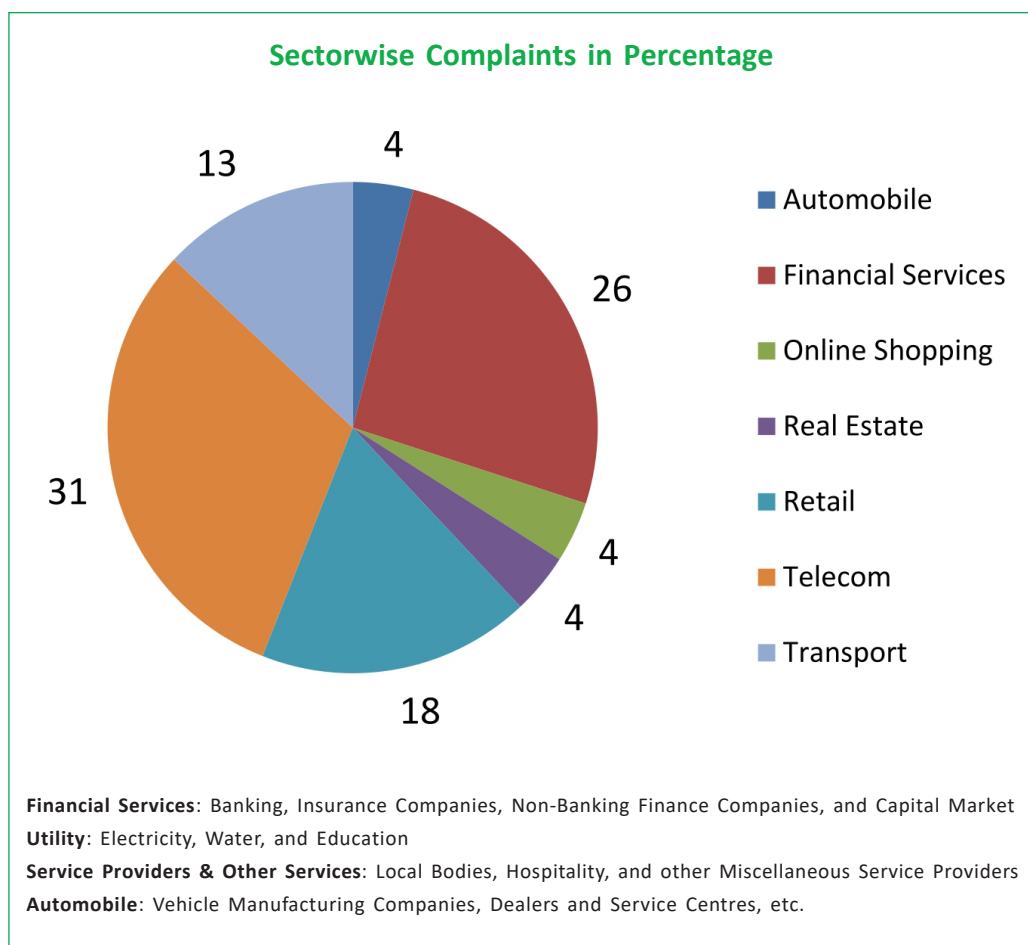
Grahak Sahayta Kendra, Jaipur

Grahak Sahayta Kendra (GSK) provides services, such as advice on consumer protection-related issues, addresses complaints, and publishes books, pamphlets, magazines, and other relevant materials on consumer-related matters. Besides, the GSK centre also handles consumer complaints through counselling and conciliation for quick and easy redress.

GSK details can be accessed at:

<https://cuts-cart.org/consumer-support-centre-grahak-sahayta-kendra/>

During May-August, 2023, the status of complaints and advisories received at GSK are shown in the below graph below:



Rethinking Road Safety: Integrating Safety Measures at Road Level

Policy Circle, May 19, 2023 • By Madhu Sudan Sharma and Arnab Ganguly



India's road safety strategy must unlock the potential of value engineering and innovative approaches to safe travel. The world is celebrating the seventh UN Global Road Safety Week from May 15-21, 2023. This year's theme is Rethink Mobility. The issue of road safety in today's context is complex because numerous road-owning agencies and stakeholder departments are responsible for reducing the number of road crashes, injuries, and deaths.

<https://bit.ly/42RyzwH>

IMPORTANT NEWS/ ARTICLES



World Environment Day: Enhance Sustainability Efforts

Moneycontrol, June 05, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Simi TB

Trade and environment debate in the World Trade Organisation is slowly coming up, an example of which is a contentious step by the European Union to apply border carbon measures on its imports. On the other hand, there is rapidly growing interest in the issue of plastic pollution, which presents a unique opportunity for action. Recent advancements made by the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade align with this global momentum.



<https://rb.gy/69bqn>

Food Standards: Ensuring Safety and Sustainability

The Economic Times, June 07, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Simi TB,

Today, June 07, with the global population surpassing eight billion and projected to continue rising in the coming years, the world observes World Food Safety Day under the theme 'Food Standards Save Lives.' This significant day emphasises the crucial role of established food safety practices and standards in guaranteeing the safety and quality of food.



<https://bit.ly/43O9jHt>

Rajasthan Govt Approves Road Safety Task Force

The Economic Times: June 13, 2023

A dedicated task force for road safety will be set up at the district level to curb road accidents, the Rajasthan government said, adding that it aims to reduce accidents and deaths linked to it by 50 per cent by 2030. According to a statement issued here on Tuesday, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has approved the formation of 'Road Safety Task Force' at the district level involving officers of various departments.

<https://bit.ly/3PbCab3>



NHAI Adopts Guidelines for Improved Road Safety on Highways

Infra.com from Economic Times, June 19, 2023



The short-term measures include the installation of pedestrian facilities like zebra crossings with warning signs, crash barriers & railings, junction improvements, solar lights/ blinkers, road signages and implementation of traffic calming measures, etc. NHAI project directors are empowered to undertake rectification measures at accident-prone spots recommended by state police chiefs or the District Road Safety Committee.

bit.ly/3qTdWCh



Global Leaders: Equate Road Safety to Climate Change, Pandemic

TNN, June 28, 2023 • By Dipak K Dash

Concerned over the high number of road deaths — over 1.35 million each year or almost 3,700 per day across the globe — even years after nations committed to halving them, top global road safety leaders gave a clarion call to treat road safety as seriously as [global warming](#) and a pandemic. They said every country needs safe roads, safe vehicles and good behaviour on the road.

<https://rb.gy/68lsw>



Essential Healthcare Infrastructure Vital for Right-Based Healthcare

Livemint • By Amar Patnaik



With COVID-19 having exposed India's public health system, particularly at the primary healthcare level, there is unanimity that the country's health sector needs extensive infrastructure support. At the same time, legislative bodies across India have debated extensively the need for a 'Right to Health' bill to expressly prioritise health concerns, be it private member bills introduced by my fellow Members of Parliament or the bill with a similar intention passed in the state of Rajasthan.

<https://rb.gy/rskOp>

Government to Act Against Misleading Claims in Organic Food

LiveMint • By Priyanka Sharma

The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed all its food testing laboratories to upgrade and optimise their facilities and procedures to handle accurate organic food testing.

<https://rb.gy/m5flw>



Global Summit Targets NCDs via Food Regulations

Policy Circle, July 19, 2023 • By Simi TB,



Delhi is getting ready to host the [Global Food Regulators Summit](#) 2023, a G-20 event organised by the FSSAI on July 20-21. Bringing together representatives from over 40 countries, international organisations, and research institutes, this summit provides an unparalleled platform to tackle critical global issues surrounding NCDs, mandatory FoPL, and the regulation of ultra-processed foods.

<https://rb.gy/cifwz>

Holistic Approach to Transportation Safety Needed

Livemint, August 10, 2023 • By Pradeep S. Mehta

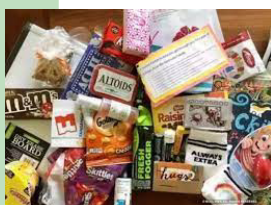
Right now we have different authorities for the safety of our rail, air, and waterways. Let's take a whole-of-government approach that would not get bogged down by turf overlaps. The need of the hour is to integrate the country's entire transport safety system under a unified national body.

<https://rb.gy/8ucwu>



Urgent Need for FoPL in Indian Processed Food

Money Control, August 23, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Simi TB



The introduction of warning labels is crucial to consumers, particularly those in rural areas, who face challenges such as limited access to nutritional and health information, language and literacy barriers, and health disparities. These warning labels enable them to quickly make informed and healthy choices

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/opinion/india-needs-to-urgently-implement-front-of-pack-labelling-system-for-processed-food-11241791.html>

Delivering Democracy *Retrospect and Prospect*

Democratic decentralisation is the power, responsivity, and authority of decision-making in different layers of government, which are Central, State and Local Self Governments. More powerful decentralisation is when more and more citizenries participate and contribute to the governance system, especially the local governance system. It is a fact that several issues can be efficiently solved at the local level only through empowered, innovative, resourceful, transparent, and accountable local governments.

Under C20, the working group on 'Delivering Democracy: Retrospect and Prospect' is one such group, which is organising multiple in-person knowledge assimilation events and roundtables, incorporating its various sub-themes at the national and regional levels. One of the regional roundtables for the north region was organised by CUTS International in Jaipur on June 07, 2023.



The roundtable featured a diverse group of participants from various sectors and states. The Chief Guest was Member of Parliament Ram Charan Bohra, and the keynote speaker was Kamal Chandra Yogi, a Professor from Central Sanskrit University. Rajib Dasgupta, Head of Research at Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement also attended the roundtable.

The event saw the presence of PRI members, including Pradhans (Panchayat Sarpanch or Zila Parishad members) who were honoured by the Prime Minister of India for their innovative development initiatives aimed at promoting people's participation in a transparent and accountable manner. These PRI members hailed from Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

In addition to them, Mayors, Deputy Mayors (both current and former), representatives from urban local bodies (ULBs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and media representatives actively participated in the discussions.

The roundtable also had the presence of retired bureaucrats, development researchers, social activists on women, gender, Dalit rights and youth empowerment, Domain experts of Indian heritage, philosophy and culture, and youth and tribal movement activists. CUTS team members facilitated the roundtable and actively participated in the discussions. Hence, a total of 50 participants participated.

Glimpses of
some more
ACTIVITIES





Enhancing City Governance *Capacity Building for Municipal Officials*

To enhance the knowledge of municipal officials on urban issues, CUTS organised a Capacity Building Workshop at Jaipur, Rajasthan for ULB officials on May 25, 2023, under the project 'Improving City Governance' supported by the Australian High Commission.

D Sudhakar, Expert in Solid Waste Management delivered sessions on solid waste management, sustainable transportation and community participation. Kamaldeep Sharma, State Nodal Person, 15th Finance Commission spoke about the financial status of Rajasthan-based ULBs and presented ways to improve resources. Himani Tiwari, State Nodal Person for Capacity Building at the Department of Local Self Governance, Government of Rajasthan, emphasised the importance of empowering city managers through capacity building to effectively implement government schemes.



Amar Deep Singh, CUTS made a presentation on CUTS urban interventions and the need for capacity building of ULB officials. More than 30 participants, including officials from Jaipur Municipal Corporation Heritage and Greater along with CSOs working on urban governance participated. Participants appreciated the training workshop emphasising its value in enhancing service delivery by city governments.

7th UN Global Road Safety Week (May 15-21, 2023)

CUTS actively participated in the 7th UN Global Road Safety Week from May 15-21, 2023. They organised various online and social media activities and joined events by GRSP partners in India and international organisations like the Global Alliance of NGOs on Road Safety. A webinar titled 'Rethinking Speeding and Helmet Issues in India: Challenges and Solutions' was organised on May 19, 2023, with prominent speakers, including officials from MoRTH, AIIMS, and experts from different states. The webinar had a total of 11 speakers and over 60 participants. from Kerala Road Safety Authority were the main speakers.



Stakeholder's Sensitisation Workshop: Sustainable Consumption Production

CUTS is working towards developing a culture of sustainable consumption and production by engaging consumers in selected seven cities of Rajasthan under the ProScop project. Recently stakeholders' sensitisation programmes were organised in these cities to sensitise relevant stakeholders including government officials, public representatives, policymakers, consumer groups, organisations working on environmental issues and media. Thoughts about sustainable consumption and best practices for sustainable lifestyles were shared by the speakers and participants during these programmes.

The Mayor of Bharatpur Municipal Corporation, Abhijeet Kumar attended a programme in Bharatpur city as a Chief Guest on August 11, 2023. He highlighted the importance of the collective role of the community in reducing waste and environmental protection to achieve sustainable development goals. Community awareness and participation were said to be important for waste management and maintaining cleanliness. He said that our culture encourages cleanliness and a healthy lifestyle but due to ignorance, we are misusing our natural resources. We have to make changes in our consumption and behaviour practices.

Other similar programmes were organised in Chittorgarh (July 20, 2023), Bhilwara (July 21, 2023), Kota (August 04, 2023), Jodhpur (August 10, 2023) and Churu (August 25, 2023) respectively.



Road Safety: State-Level Stakeholder Consultation

CUTS in collaboration with the Kerala Road Safety Authority and Centre of Environment and Development organised a state-level stakeholder consultation for policy advocacy on road safety in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala on August 25, 2023. In the meeting, Antony Raju, Transport Minister of Kerala, Transport Commissioner, Transport Secretary and Additional Transport Commissioner, IG Traffic, Executive Director of Kerala Road Safety Authority, and Traffic SP participated.



Glimpses of
some more
ACTIVITIES





ProScop Activities Rolls on the Ground

During the extended phase of the April-September 2023 phase, the activities started with a bang from April 2023 onwards. During May-August, 2023, activities under the ProOrganic section of the project, such as village-level awareness campaigns, inception meetings for school clubs and kitchen gardens and knowledge-sharing meetings for seed cell systems, were accomplished in 12 districts.



The G20 Championing the Consumer Movement

CUTS International organised a webinar on 'The G20 Championing the Consumer Movement' on August 23, 2023. The G20 webinar served as a resounding call to action, underscoring the pressing need to prioritise consumer protection within the G20 framework.

The speakers of the webinar were Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International; Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General of UNCTAD; Cherish Deshpande, Chairman, Mumbai Grahak Panchayat (MGP); Vijay K. Nambiar: Principal Coordinator (Sherpa), Civil20India; Fernando Blanco: Former National Director for Consumer Defence, Argentina; Teresa Moreira, Head of Competition and Consumer Policies Branch at UNCTAD; Athayde Motta: Executive Director, Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE); Thezi Mabuza: Acting Commissioner, National Consumer Commission, South Africa; Saroja Sundaram: Executive Director, Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG), India and Member, General Council of the Consumers International; Igor Rodrigues Britto: Director, International Relations, Brazilian Institute for Consumer Protection (IDEC), Brazil; Dr. Nava Subramaniam: Dean, School of Business, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore.



- CUTS observed World Hypertension Day on May 17, 2023, through posting relevant key messages on social media platforms.
- Simi TB attended an event on “A Fire Side Chat on Challenges Before G20” organised by CUTS on May 28, 2023. Amitabh Kant was the key speaker at a 40th Anniversary event of CUTS International, along with Harsh Vardhan Shringla, India’s G20 Chief Coordinator.
- Madhu Sudan Sharma participated in the Child Road Safety Workshop jointly organised by the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) and Centre for Environment Education (CEE), at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi on May 29-30, 2023.
- Amrat Singh with Nilanjana Sharma participated in a UN GCNI Multi-Stakeholders Workshop on Collective Action: Uniting Together – Addressing Healthcare Challenges through Ethical Business Practices and Collective Action at the State Institute of Health & Family Welfare (SIFHW), Jaipur on May 30, 2023.
- Amrat Singh and Yatika Agrawal participated in the HCL Grants Symposium organised by HCL Tech in association with IIMR University on June 15, 2023.
- Simi TB attended a CUTS Webinar on ‘Working Together to Promote Trade Multilateralism’ on June 20, 2023. The speakers underlined the need and importance for India and the US to come together to promote Trade Multilateralism and work towards the need to restore the dispute settlement mechanism
- GHAI organised a Partner’s Meeting in New Delhi on June 22, 2023, the purpose of which was to get the project update of the current quarter from partners. Amrat and Simi attended the programme on behalf of CUTS.
- Simi attended a webinar on Fostering Educational Processes and Community Engagement: Dialogues for a Sustainable World, organised by C20 India 2023 Working Group on Sustainable and Resilient Communities in collaboration with UNESCO Chair on Experiential Learning for Sustainable Innovation & Development on June 28, 2023.
- Simi TB attended a meeting of Consumers International Food Member Connect organised by Consumers International on July 04, 2023. She also attended a G20/T20 on ‘Challenges and Opportunities of Sustainable Energy Transition organised by Integrated Research and Action for Development’ on July 04, 2023.
- Amar Deep Singh participated in the workshop on ‘Role of NGOs under Swachh Bharat Mission’ organised by the Department of Local Self Government, Government of Rajasthan at Jaipur on July 06, 2023.
- Jayesh Mathur and Madhu Sudan Sharma attended the C20 summit in Jaipur from July 29-31, 2023.
- Simi TB attended a webinar on ‘Medical Device Regulations’ organised by AiMED and Consultants Consortium of Chennai on July 26, 2023. She spoke on ‘Consumer Viewpoint on Inclusion of Information on Medical Device Packages.’
- Deepak Saxena attended a webinar on ‘Limitations on Warranties, Indemnities & Claims in Sale Agreements’ organised by Khaitan and Company on August 08, 2023.
- Amar Deep Singh attended the launch of the book ‘Social Innovations in Urban Sanitation in India’ and a discussion on urban governance organised by Participatory Research in Asia online on August 09, 2023, through online mode.
- Simi TB attended a Webinar on ‘Towards Effective Implementation of Mission LiFE: From Consumer Duties to Consumer Rights’ organised by the Centre for Responsible Business on August 10, 2023.
- CUTS Executive Committee Meeting was organised at CUTS Conference Hall, on August 22, 2023, which was attended by Amrat Singh and Deepak Saxena. Singh spoke on ‘Governance and Consumer Protection’.
- Madhu Sudan participated in the state-level discussion organised by the Road Safety Cell, Transport Department, Government of Rajasthan at Transport Bhawan on August 28, 2023.



Meetings, Visit and Appointments

- Milind Mahaske, CEO, Praja Foundation along with her colleague Pooja visited the CUTS office on July 26, 2023, to discuss issues of possible collaboration.
- Basavaraju R Shreshta and Bhagavan Bidarakote, GRAAM visited the CUTS office on July 28, 2023, and discussed possible collaboration in different programme areas.
- Simi TB on behalf of CUTS, has been nominated to the Airport User Consultative Committee (AUCC) of Cochin International Airport Ltd.
- Madhu Sudan met with Arif Mohammed Khan, Governor, Kerala on August 26, 2023, in the Raj Bhawan.

Upcoming Events/ Project Activities

- CUTS-SSNC-ProScop Activities, 2023-24 (April-September, 2023)
- CUTS-GRSP-ROSA Activities (Phase IV)
- CUTS-GHAI-Consumer-Friendly FoPL in India (Phase II)
- CUTS-VOAC-DVARA
- CUTS TRAI CAP Programmes

CART at Social Network

- CART is managing FB pages, one each for MyCity, Insight into the Indian States (I3S), ProOb, ProOrganic & CoPSA (Community of Practice on Social Accountability), GSK and three dedicated web portals for (ProOb), COPSA and I3S.
- CART has a Twitter account with link: <https://twitter.com/CUTSCART> and Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cutsintcart>
- Besides, CART is also responsible for moderating three google e-groups:

CUTSConsumersUp:

Consumer Empowerment in India to take consumer protection issues forward.

CUTSGovForum:

Discuss news and views on Governance issues and challenges in India.

CUTSRoadSafety:

Discuss and disseminate relevant issues on road safety.



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

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