

Consumer Dialogue

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E-newsletter

Organic Consumption and Sale: *A Growing Trend Amid the Pandemic*

A Random Perception Survey by CUTS International in Rajasthan

91 percent of organic sellers and 89 percent of consumers have confirmed that there has been substantial growth in both sale and the consumption of organic products during the pandemic

During the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, with the vaccine still in the testing/making stages, an intriguing development occurred at the global and national levels. There was a remarkable surge in organic products' sales in the country over the last ten months or so, encouraging several organic retailers to come up overnight. This change has occurred because of consumers changing eating habits, turning to organic foods to enhance immunity against COVID 19.

These are some of the findings that emerged out of the survey undertaken by CUTS International. The survey was conducted among consumers of organic food products in ten districts of Rajasthan to ascertain factors that drove consumers to buy organic food products. Similarly, for sellers, the objective was to determine the demand for organic food products and the source of procurement in the market and know the preference to buy them.

While surveying sellers, some other key findings are: Around 62 percent of sellers have confirmed selling organic products along with other non-organic products. 55 percent purchase directly from organic farmers, while 39 percent get from distributors and other sources. About the choice of products, 74 percent believe organic vegetables, 6 percent believe organic fruits, 13 percent for grains and only one percent assume that organic spices are in high demand.

46 percent of sellers confirmed that consumers use various online platforms for buying, whereas 52 percent confirmed that they come directly to buy. In one of the most relevant questions, 91 percent of sellers realised growth in their sales during the last ten months of the pandemic. 69 percent confirmed a substantial increase in the overall income. 74 percent felt a shortage in their stock looking at the growing demand from consumers.

89 percent of the total surveyed consumers have confirmed to switching over to organic consumption mode. In comparison, 54 percent out of 89 percent received motivation through NGOs working on organic awareness programmes. Rest were motivated through other sources, such as family, friends, media, etc.

90 percent of consumers have felt a change in their overall health status, which includes a better immunity. Amid the pandemic, 60 percent of consumers found difficulty searching or locating shops/outlets of organic products, which was more troublesome during the lockdown time.

In another question, 72 percent of consumers stated that organic products' cost is higher than the non-organic, which was more gruesome during the lockdown period. Despite all this, there has been an extraordinary growth in both sales and consumption. In the last question to consumers, 86 percent feels that the changing pattern of organic consumption must carry on in the future.

The majority of surveyed consumers feel that it is difficult to purchase organic food products and the shopkeepers also face a shortage in supply of such organic food products. This shortage illustrates a vacuum present between farmers, intermediaries and consumers of organic food products that should be investigated and rectified.

The trend towards organic consumption should continue as it has realised growth even during the pandemic.



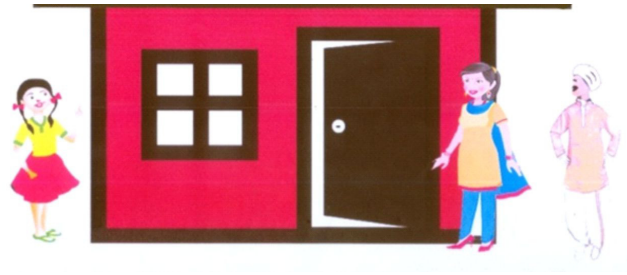
INSIDE

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CUTS[®]
International



CUTS CART



Grahak Sahayta Kendra, Jaipur

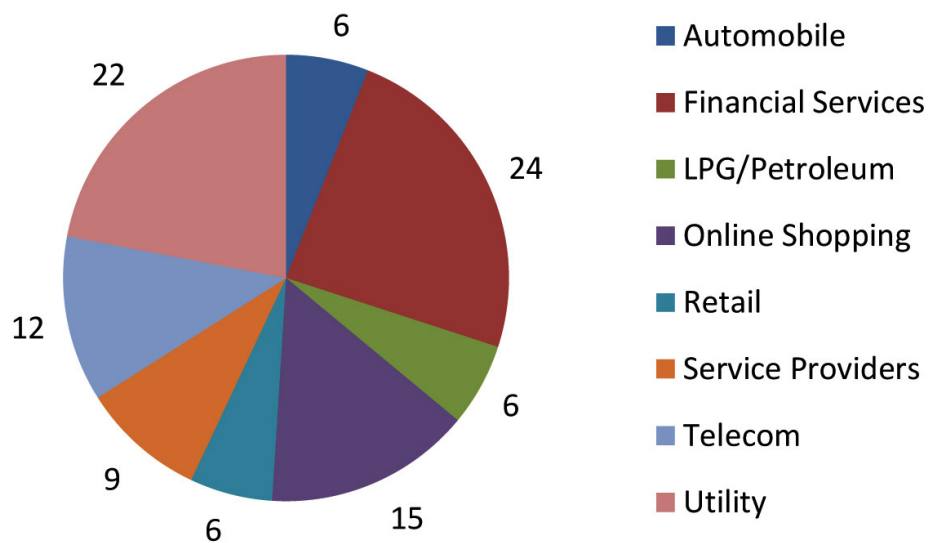
Grahak Sahayta Kendra (GSK) provides services, such as advice on consumer protection related issues, addresses complaints, and publishes books, pamphlets, magazines, and other relevant materials in consumer-related matters. Besides, the GSK centre also handles consumer complaints through counselling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

GSK details can be accessed at:

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

During May-August, 2020, the status of complaints and advisories received at GSK are shown in the below graph:

Sectorwise Complaints in Percentage



Online Shopping: E-Commerce

Utility: Electricity, Water, and Education

Service Providers & Other Services: Local Bodies, Hospitality, and other Miscellaneous Service Providers

Automobile: Vehicle Manufacturing Companies, Dealers and Service Centres, etc.

Transport: Roadways and Railways.



Kahlil Gibran and Data Regulation

“Half of what I say is meaningless, but I say it so that the other half may reach you”, quips Kahlil Gibran, the mystic poet, in his celebrated work Sand and Foam. It appears that the Committee of experts on non-personal data governance framework headed by Kris Gopalakrishnan took this age-old adage to heart while writing its report.

(The Times of India, August 28, 2020)

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



Pandemic Severely Impacts SDG 12 Targets

‘Ensure sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns’ – is Sustainable Development Goal 12. It is about promoting resource and energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and providing access to essential services, green and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all. Its implementation helps to achieve overall development plans, reduce future economic, environmental and social costs, strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce poverty.

(South Asia Monitor, September 06, 2020)

<https://snip.ly/89ench>



PPP Model Needed for Intelligent Traffic System to Reduce Road Accidents

On average, India witnesses about 5 lakh road accidents per annum, in which about 1.5 lakh people die and about 3 lakh are disabled. The Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said there is a need for a public-private partnership (PPP) policy for an intelligent traffic system to reduce road accidents.

(The Hindu, September 08, 2020)

<https://snip.ly/n0w1f4>

Reduce Regulatory Complexity to Ensure Inclusive Recovery

“The likelihood of K-shaped economic recovery from COVID-19 with rich becoming richer and poor becoming poorer is real and will impact the poor most adversely,” said Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International. He was launching a webinar on Reducing the Unease of Living.

<https://snip.ly/o60io4>

Competition in Telecom is Key to Realising India’s Digital Ambitions



With reports of network quality deteriorating by almost 20 percent, the hour’s need is to augment network capacity immediately and be future-ready when 5G comes along.

There was a time in the Indian vaunted telecom sector when the number of unique service providers in lucrative geographical locations such as Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka was more than a dozen.

(Indian Express, September 16, 2020)

<https://snip.ly/yxxm7e>



Consumers Unaware of Harmful Effects of Trans Fats

In rural Rajasthan, Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs) are on the rise during the pandemic. However, 61 percent of rural and 46 percent of urban consumers surveyed are unaware of the health harms of trans fats, which mainly contribute to the increase in CVDs. These key findings emerged from a sample survey carried out by CUTS International in rural and urban areas of selected 12 districts of Rajasthan to check ordinary consumers' awareness level.

(Press NetWork of India, September 28, 2020)

<https://snip.ly/bpuc4d>



Wear Helmets to Save Lives on Roads



India had taken lots of initiatives to enhance road safety in the last year. On September 01, 2019, the new Motor Vehicle Amendment Act 2019 came into force, followed by immediate notification of the same in some states and later in most states.

(Voice of Jaipur, October 09, 2020)

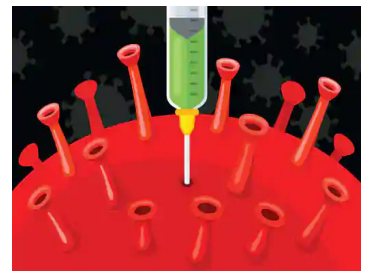
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COVID-19 Vaccines are Coming: Are We Adequately Prepared?

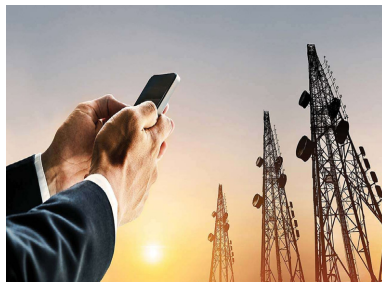
Many vaccine challenges lie ahead for an all-India vaccination plan to be rolled out smoothly. As COVID continues unabated, much hope is placed on vaccines as key game-changers. Things have indeed moved fast in this area. Instead of the ten years that it usually takes to develop a vaccine, three (Astra Zeneca/Oxford, Moderna, and Pfizer) are already in the last stage of human trials, with several others at earlier stages. Although no vaccine has received a nod, experts predict that we will have more than one vaccine approved in 2021.

(Livemint.com, October 15, 2020)

<https://snip.ly/ebskq2>



Indian Telecom Sector: Past and Future



India is the second-largest market globally, a critical economic multiplier that cuts across all sections of the society, and amongst the most competitive and challenging businesses in the economy. It entails massive infrastructure comprising of towers across the wide landscape and brutal competition to acquire millions of subscribers to the companies. These factors are further aggravated by low average revenue per user, the government's indifference to policy certainty and the judiciary's flawed approach in dealing with related matters in a hyper way.

(Communications Today, October 2020)

<https://bit.ly/3jBrf0M>

Poor Roads, Faulty Helmet

As two-wheelers become more popular in the absence of public transport, the number of road accidents involving these is also growing. More than a third (37 percent) of those killed in road accidents in 2019 were two-wheeler riders, noted a Ministry of Road Transport and Highways report published in October 2020.

(Business Standard, December 22, 2020)

<https://snip.ly/d34nqr>



The Culmination of GAW, India Campaign

The GAW, India activities got over with a partners meeting held at Jaipur on December 22, 2020. Out of 11 partners, 10 participated in the meeting. All the participating partners were briefed about their activities during the campaign and highlighted their importance in the discussion.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, welcomed all the participants and said that COVID-19 had thrown travel plans worldwide into disarray. He appreciated the courage that participants have shown. He explained about Green Action Week, which is a global campaign to promote sustainable consumption.

Green Action Week is an initiative by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), starting in Sweden in 1990 and grown up to become an international partnership from 2010. It is conducted in coordination with Consumers International. He stressed upon few challenges while observing the GAW 2020 in India. These challenges are an unprecedented pandemic and recently amended Foreign Currency Regulation Act (FCRA).



Glimpses of some more ACTIVITIES



Commemoration of World Day of Remembrance

Road Peace started the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in 1993. Since then, it has been observed and promoted worldwide by several NGOs and its associated organisations. On October 26, 2005, the United Nations endorsed it as a global day to be celebrated every third Sunday in November each year, making it a significant advocacy day for road traffic injury prevention. WHO and the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration encourage governments and NGOs worldwide to commemorate this day.

Under Road Safety intervention, CUTS virtually marked the WDoR, 2020 on November 17, 2020. CUTS team reached out to Pratap Singh Khachariyawas, Transport Minister of Government of Rajasthan; Ravi Jain, Transport Commissioner, Rajasthan and Anand Siddhu, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Jaipur, on this occasion.

The team prepared placards of vital road safety messages and took photographs with all the mentioned dignitaries. All the dignitaries appreciated CUTS efforts for road safety victims in Rajasthan.





Celebrating World Heart Day

Every year on September 29, World Heart Day is celebrated. With increasing cardiovascular illness, the day is to bring people's attention to the increased heart illness. The day is there to promote various preventive steps. Its primary goal is to spread information about a quality lifestyle. More than 17 million people die due to heart illness every year. This number is continuously increasing.

A significant reason is a busy and bad lifestyle followed by individuals. It looks like we have given up on our health. The number is more significant than people dying due to Malaria, HIV, or cancer. The day was started by World Heart Federation in 2000, seeing the need for a day dedicated to discussion around heart illness.

Both governmental and non-governmental organisations celebrate this day. They organise marathons, public talks, fitness sessions, exhibitions and many other things.

CUTS celebrated World Heart Day and conducted an online sample survey on September 25-27, 2020. The survey was conducted among common consumers of 12 districts to gauge the general awareness about Trans Fats, its harmful effects, sources and the role of FSSAI in regulating the TFA sector and relevant law-making, etc.

Finally, the survey results came exciting findings, which national media, PTI, UNI, APN news agencies picked up very well. Additionally, several online newspaper editions covered the news, which became national news.



Spotlighting Role of Human Rights' Defenders

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in human rights history. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations.

For the first time, it sets out fundamental human rights to be universally protected and translated into over 500 languages. December 10 is earmarked as the anniversary of the Universal Human Rights Declaration.

In this context, a manifestation was organised at the CUTS conference hall to honour hundreds of environmental defenders killed every year. On occasion, Cheriyan elaborated the importance of the day.



Road Safety Activities for Road Users

CUTS organised block-level workshops on Road Safety at Chittorgarh, Pratapgargh and Bhilwara on December 24, 28 & 29, 2020, respectively. The purpose of the meetings was to activate the sub-divisional level road safety committees, effective enforcement of the Motor Vehicles Act, and common road users' education. On occasion, traffic and transport officials participated along with several students, volunteers, representatives of NGOs and CSOs in good numbers.

Glimpses of
some more
ACTIVITIES



REPRESENTATION



- Deepak attended a workshop on 'Initiatives Required to Improve QoS Inside the Buildings' organised by Telecom Regulatory Authority India's (TRAI), New Delhi, on September 04, 2020.
- Deepak attended a webinar and a report releasing on 'Organic and Natural Farming in India' organised by CSE, New Delhi, on September 08, 2020.
- Cheriyan, Madhu Sudan, Simi TB and Satyapal Singh participated in a Consumer International Member Connect webinar to discuss CI Global Action Plan with the Food and Agriculture Organisation on September 10, 2020.
- Deepak attended a webinar on 'Grievance Redress by Courts in Consumer Finance' organised by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), New Delhi, on September 17, 2020.
- Cheriyan attended a call with the scoping mission team of GIZ new project in India under the *Global Programme Sustainability and value addition in agricultural value chains (ProAgriChains)* of the German Ministry of Economic Development (BMZ) on September 23, 2020.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi and Aradhana attended an online awareness meeting with SHGs on Sanitation, Hallmarking & Healthcare Standards organised by the Bureau of Indian Standards, Guwahati Branch Office, on September 30, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena was one of the key speakers in a webinar 'Addressing Grievances Outside of the Court: Lessons from Grahak Sahayta Kendra', organised by the NIPFP, New Delhi, on October 01, 2020. He made a presentation on the evolution and manner of working of GSK and showcased some successful cases dealt with by GSK. The presentation revolved around Financial Consumer Protection.
- Simi TB and Amar Deep Singh attended the 2020 Virtual Asia-Pacific Think Tank Summit organised and hosted virtually on October 13, 2020, by the Think Tanks and Civil Society Programme at the University of Pennsylvania 'A World Disrupted and Transformed.
- Deepak Saxena and Aradhana Gupta attended a session on Consumer Outreach Activities of BIS, 'Role of Consumer Groups' hosted by the Bureau of Indian Standards on October 15, 2020.
- Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena attended CUTS Executive Committee on October 16, 2020. Saxena made a presentation on CART's activities and Cheriyan attended CUTS Annual General Meeting as well.
- Cheriyan and Simi T B attended FSSAI World Food Day on October 16, 2020. The theme for this year is 'Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together'. An event to celebrate 'World Food Day' presided over by Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare.
- Nimisha Sharma attended a webinar organised by Vishwa Yuva Kendra on 'FCRA Amendments 2020: Implications & Way Forward' on October 21, 2020.
- Cheriyan attended virtually Eighth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices (UNRC) at Geneva from October 19-23, 2020.
- Aradhana Gupta attended Training of Trainers for Member of NGOs/VCOs on & Consumer Protection Act 2019 & Rules organised by Indian Institute of Public Administration, Delhi on November 04-06, 2020.
- Satyapal Singh attended a webinar series on Grievance Redress Systems and Consumer Protection in Finance organised by NIPFP on November 05, 2020.
- Consumers International organised various activities during the week of November 16-20, 2020, to commemorate the 60th anniversary. Cheriyan attended the Asia-Pacific Regional Members meeting and spoke about the new challenges in the region. Aradhana Gupta participated at a special address by Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade & Development as a young representative on November 20, 2020. She made a brief intervention and participated in the briefing call on November 17, 2020.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, jointly with Vital Strategies, organised a webinar on Trans fats - Science, Regulation and Global Experience on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. Cheriyan was one of the key speakers and spoke on the Civil Society and consumer perspective – what is needed? Madhu Sudan Sharma, Simi TB and Satyapal Singh also attended the webinar.
- Amar Deep Singh attended National Consumer Rights Day organised by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, on December 24, 2020.



CART at Social Network

- CART is managing four FB pages, one each for MyCity, Insight into the Indian States (I3S), ProOb & 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 two google groups:

CUTSConsumersUp: Consumer Empowerment in India to take the issues of consumer protection forward

CUTSGovForum: Discuss news and views on Governance issues and challenges in India

Internship at CART

In 2020, only one intern from Raghav Sachdeva from Symbiosis Law College, Noida, UP, joined the internship virtually from November December 16, 2020.

CUTS CART in News

- An article co-authored by George Cheriyan and Aradhana Gupta titled 'Realising Basic Right to Internet: Challenges And Way Ahead' was published in Matters India, on August 03, 2020.
- An article jointly written by Rajdeep Pareek and Deepak Saxena on '*Jaivik Ke Liye Nitigat Sudharon Ki Jarurat*' (Organic Farming Needs Policy Level Reforms) was published in Haldhar Times of August 31-September 06, 2020.
- Pandemic Severely Impacts SDG 12 Targets; Asia-Pacific Region Unlikely to Meet Goals authored by George Cheriyan was published in South Asia Monitor, on September 06, 2020.
- On the occasion of the World Heart Day published an article on TFA elimination and its relation with Cardio vascular diseases and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), co-authored by George Cheriyan and Madhu Sudan Sharma, published in Outlook Poshan India newspaper on September 29, 2020.
- An article 'Sustainable Consumption in South Asia: Making Use of Sustainable Opportunities from the Pandemic' co-authored by George Cheriyan and Simi T.B. in South Asia Monitor, on December 19, 2020.

Upcoming Events

- ProOrganic II Activities as per the Work Plan
- GAW, Rajasthan Final Stakeholder's Consultation on January 8, 2021
- Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Training on February 1-2, 2021
- State Level Stakeholder's Consultation and World Consumer Rights Day, 2021 on March 15, 2021, under ProOrganic II Project
- SDG-12 Project National Dissemination Workshop on March 18, 2021
- MoRTH II Project Activities Launch
- ROSA Activities (Extended Phase III)



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