

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**

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Use of Banned Chemicals for Ripening Fruits

Clause 2.3.5 of the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011, prohibits sale of fruits which have been artificially ripened by use of acetylene gas commonly known as carbide gas produced from Calcium Carbide. There is no provision of use of ripening hormones under the Food Safety and Standards Act/ Rules/ Regulations. However, the Ministry of Agriculture has recommended the use of ethylene gas in low concentration exogenously to trigger ripening of fruits.

There are certain reports suggesting the use of the chemicals like calcium carbide, ethylene and ethion for the use of early ripening of fruits. However, no scientific validated published information is available on the same.

Following the reports of use of the artificial coloring/ ripening agents in vegetables/ fruits, a Joint Committee for Research on Food Safety, was formulated in August, 2010 under Co-Chairmanship of the Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Director General, Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) to address the various issues relating to the safety of using ripening and coloring agents, and any other relevant issues in nutrition & food safety which emerge from time to time. The Committee has recommended further research studies to generate information/ data regarding the extent of use and effect of artificial ripening agents and other chemicals in fruits and vegetables.

Implementation of the Food Safety and Standards Act/ Rules/ Regulations rests with State/U.T. Governments. The Commissioners Food Safety/ Food (Health) Authority of States/ UTs who are responsible for implementation of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and its Rules/ Regulations in their States/ UTs, have been requested from time to time to keep a strict vigil on use of carbide gas and other hazardous chemicals for ripening of fruits and to take legal action for violation of the above provision of the Act/ Regulations. The State Governments have also been advised to educate the public through print and electronic media against consumption of such artificially ripened fruits and vegetables. State Governments have taken measures in this regard, such as ordering the Food Safety Officer (FSOs)/ Designated Officers (DOs) to keep watch on fruit markets, inspection of fruit market, fruit stalls/ godowns, taking samples of fruits, vegetables & milk, educating fruit vendors to refrain from using these chemicals, etc.

This information was given by Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare Shri Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury in written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha today.

BN/HB/AS

