

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **CSE demolishes claims made by cola companies**

**Cola companies claim that they are safe: but their bottles cannot be tested because they are a complex product. They claim purity of products but resist any regulation on purity.**

**We say:**

**This is the crux of the cola-pesticide issue that is now out in the open. We have always said that regulations, not bans, are the answer. But for this, the soft drink industry must stop its game of hiding behind weak laws. This is a matter of public health. It cannot be compromised.**

**New Delhi, August 11, 2006:** A week after CSE released its report on pesticide residues in soft drinks, the cola companies have finally come out in the open, again claiming their products meet standards and are safe. CSE asserts that the products tested by its lab do not meet the norms, both Indian and European Union, as claimed, and are unsafe.

In its recent press release, Coca-Cola resorts to another round of obfuscation by claiming that there are "no detectable levels of pesticides" in the soft drinks manufactured by it in India. It claims that its soft drinks have been regularly tested and evaluated by a world-renowned UK-based lab. Ironically, the same companies have repeatedly told the government ministries and committees that their products are a complex matrix and therefore cannot be tested.

Also, the company has failed to disclose any test results to prove the safety of its products. Three years ago, in response to CSE's findings, soft drink companies had issued similar statements claiming they were meeting "strict European Union standards". But tests by several other labs had found that they did contain high levels of pesticide residues and were not meeting the norms as they claimed.

The cola companies are using the bogey of "good science" and "global practice" in their opposition to be regulated. But these are issues that have been discussed for the past three years, since the release of the first CSE report on pesticides in soft drinks in 2003 and the subsequent report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). It will be recalled that the JPC had endorsed the CSE findings and had asked government to set final

product standards for carbonated beverages, even if this was not done in other countries. The companies have since resisted (and colluded with government) to ensure that this final standard is not notified (see the chronology of events at [www.cseindia.org/cola.asp](http://www.cseindia.org/cola.asp)).

This is clearly unacceptable as it means that soft drinks will remain outside the ambit of regulations, says CSE. "Our demand to government is: notify the finalised standards of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for carbonated beverages and make the regulation for this product mandatory," says Sunita Narain, director, CSE.

#### **On setting final product standards**

Companies say that a standard for final product (the bottle of soft drink) cannot be set. Instead, they want government to regulate their input – agricultural raw commodities and water. In other words, they only want standards for the water and sugar they use, not the product that they sell on the shelves. They say this is not done anywhere in the world. But the fact is that governments do set pesticide residue standards for even more complex food like baby food and ice cream.

#### **On working with government**

Coca-Cola has claimed that it is working with the government bodies to finalise criteria on pesticide residues. Yes, the soft drink companies have been working, but only to oppose final product standards. The cola companies have used one pretext or the other to avoid setting final product standard. In fact, they have written to the government departments protesting against finalisation of standards.

CSE asserts that there is no need for any further studies or reviews or committees. The BIS committee has for the last three years addressed each and every issue raised by the cola companies and, based on sound science, has finalised the standards. Such tactics of the government are meant to prevaricate and derail the entire process. The only thing now left for the government is to notify the standards finalised by BIS.

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