70% of tainted veggies had banned pesticides

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You rinse your veggies before cooking — rather than soaking them in lukewarm water — to quickly rid them of pesticides. You may have to sacrifice speed to protect your health. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) tested 1,739 vegetable samples from Gujarat and found that 251 had pesticide residues.

Of the tainted samples, 176 — almost 70% — had residues of ‘non-approved’ or banned toxic pesticides. In 51 samples, the FSSAI found pesticides exceeding permissible limits. The report, ‘Monitoring of Pesticide Residues at National level’, was released on October 19.

Three national-level laboratories in Gujarat participated in the study. They were the labs of Anand Agricultural University; National Dairy Development Board, Anand; and Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Occupational Health, Ahmedabad. Vegetable samples were collected from towns and cities including Ahmedabad, Dabhoi, Rajkot, Khambhat, Padra, Ankleshwar, Anand, Vadodara, and Kadi. Vegetables collected for sampling were brinjal, okra, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, green chilli, capsicum, cucumber, green peas, and bitter gourd.

The samples were collected from farms, organic farms, and APMC wholesale markets. The samples were collected between April, 2017, and March, 2018. Interestingly, Anand Agricultural University detected pesticide in a vegetable sample taken from an organic farm in Anand. Seventeen ‘non-approved’ pesticide residues were found in the vegetables.

Across the country, the FSSAI collected 23,660 samples for analysis. Pesticide residues were detected in 4,510 (19.1%). Residues in 523 (2.2 %) samples exceeded FSSAI limits.