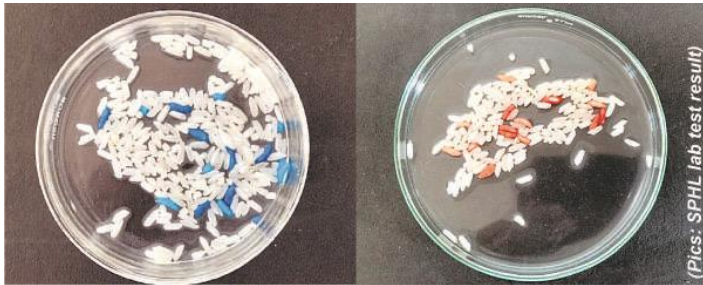


Lab test confirms fortified rice, not plastic



Fortified Rice turning blue on reaction with ferricyanide indicating presence of iron in Fortified Rice Kernel

Fortified Rice turning red on reaction with KSCN indicating presence of iron in Fortified Rice Kernel

Correspondent KOHIMA, JUN 21 (NPN) | 6/21/2021

Putting all speculations to rest, the laboratory test has confirmed that there has been no adulteration of rice with plastic granules as alleged in a video that recently went viral on social media, but contained mixture of fortified rice with regular rice.

Confirming this, principal secretary & commissioner food safety Amardeep Singh Bhatia in a statement said that, as per the report of food analyst, the rice sample tested indicated presence of fortificants, confirming the rice as fortified rice.

The rice sample was collected and sent for testing to State Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) by food safety officer, Dimapur after a viral video on social media purportedly claimed that rice was being mixed with plastic granules in a rice godown located at Naharbari, Dimapur. Bhatia claimed that further microscopic examination of rice kernels in fact showed clusters of rice starch of oryza sativa species (natural rice origin) and did not show any form of adulterant (plastic) mixture as alleged in the viral video.

He said the rice sample tested as per the standardised parameters was within the prescribed limit under Regulation No.2.4.6: (24) of Food Safety and Standards (Food Products and Food Additives) Regulations 2011.

Earlier, Commissioner of Police (CP) Dimapur Rothihu Tetseo had told Nagaland Post, that investigation was on and that until the laboratory results were out, it was not proper to jump to any conclusion. CP opined that the chances that plastic granule and rice were being mixed as alleged by an individual on social media, was highly unlikely since milling plastic would require totally different and complex machines. CP however admitted that there was more likelihood of adulteration by done by mixing low quality with high quality rice for making profits.

Meanwhile, according to Bhatia, fortification of food was standardised and operationalised under Food Safety & Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2017 and rice could be fortified using dusting, coating or extrusion technology where the milled broken rice was pulverised and mixed with vitamins and minerals resulting in fortified rice kernels (Section 4.4 of Guidebook on Food Fortification, FSSAI)

He further said that under Food Safety & Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2017, every package of fortified food should carry the words “fortified with ...” (name of the fortificant) and the logo (Plus F) as specified in Schedule II of the Regulations on the label.

Meanwhile, when contacted, Bhatia told Nagaland Post that laboratory report was already out and hence appealed to citizens not to get carried away by social media posts and to contact the authority concerned, if they had any doubt, instead of forwarding such posts blatantly so that the authority concerned could find out the fact. He said the report would be shared with all investigating agencies.

It may be recalled that similar video clips had surfaced a few years ago claiming that plastic rice was mixed with genuine rice in other parts of India. However, with regard to Nagaland, so far such allegations have not been proved.

Fortifying rice involves grinding broken rice into powder, mixing it with nutrients, and then shaping it into rice-like kernels using an extrusion process, to improve its nutritional value and provide public health benefits at minimal cost.

In a bid to ensure nutritional security, Centre had decided to scale up the distribution of fortified rice and start its supply through Integrated Child Development Services and Mid-Day Meal scheme from April 2021.

Currently, fortified rice is being distributed via ration shops, also called the public distribution system (PDS), in one district each in six states out of the 15 states identified for implementation of a central scheme on a pilot basis for three months in 2019-20.

According to Ministry of Education, Department of School Education & Literacy (Mid Day Meal Division), under the head “Allocation of foodgrains for Nagaland for the 1st quarter (for the period April 1, 2021 to June 30,2021)” number of children approved by the Project Approval Board for Nagaland under primary stage was 1,15,973 while number of working days approved by PAB was 56 and 649.46 metric tonnes of rice allocated. Under upper primary stage, 37760 number of children approved, 56 working days 317.18 MT of rice and under National Child Labour Project PAB approved 2200 number of children, 78 working days while 25.74MT rice was allocated.