

Equitable distribution of agricultural produce needs more urgent action than hasty implementation of new genetically modified organisms (GMO) and unproven methods of production. According to John Fagan, Founder and Chief Scientific officer of Genetic ID NA an organisation that licences GMO testing methods and certification, food grown on three times the area of Iowa could be enough to feed the world's hungry. The limitation is not productivity but distribution. What really is using up resources at this point is that most agricultural acres on the planet are producing feed for livestock for the meat industry. For example, seventeen pounds of as much soy is needed to produce one pound of meat as is required to feed one human being.

To say that biotech is the only solution to the hunger problem is perhaps an overstatement. First, production is not the fundamental problem. Second, it cannot be expected that

Equitable Distribution of Agricultural Produce is Needed

biotech would result in the same kind of increase in productivity as witnessed in the green revolution through irrigation, seeds and fertilisers. Third, the socio-economic and political aspects need to be addressed taking into account the poor infrastructure in developing countries. Only then one could expect to solve the world's food problem.

In the past, few cases of toxin genetically modified potatoes and allergen genetically modified soya have been found. These cases cannot be dismissed as stray cases as they are pointers showing that GMOs could have public health risks attached to it. Each GMO has to be individually assessed for health risks and effects on the environment. However, no one can make a blanket statement that GMOs are 'safe' or 'not safe'.

Recently, a whole batch of Tacobell's Tacoshells, a corn, had to be withdrawn from the US supermarkets as they were suspected to be allergenic. Although there is no specific proof, research has shown that a particular corn variety is indeed allergenic. Hence, everything that is discovered in the laboratory should not be put into the marketplace, as safety assessment procedures in this area are not strong.

The US Federal Drug Administration has never stated that any GMO is safe. This is because the FDA issues a certificate to a biotech company on the basis of the research cited by the company's confidential internal review. This research is not subject to peer review.

Some Biotechnologists claim that GM crops like 'golden rice' help developing countries deal with problems like Vitamin A deficiency. But nearly two kilograms of rice would have

EcoConsumer

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for the Promotion

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to be consumed daily by an individual to meet the Vitamin A requirement.

Such claims take away our attention from better solutions.

Central Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of Lucknow in India has identified around three plant varieties that actually contain very high levels of betacarotene, a compound rich in vitamin A. This means that just three or four leaves of these plants mixed in food would give an individual all the Vitamin A needed.

In Europe, it is mandatory for any product that contains more than one percent of genetically modified material to be labelled as genetically engineered. Australia, New Zealand and China too have mandatory labelling regulations. However,

there is no mandatory requirement either in the US or Canada. US, Canada and Argentina are the only countries that produce large amounts of GMOs. As public awareness is depressing the domestic market for GMOs in these countries they are tending to export more to other countries leading to undesirable promotion of GMOs. As biotechnology is advancing at a faster

rate than the legal system in most countries and laws are reactive rather than proactive, there is a need to excise caution in promotion of GMOs.

In genetic engineering, changes that are made in a week or two months would not happen as a natural process even over a period of 1000 years. However, this hi-tech approach to agriculture is not sustainable as more energy per acre is consumed. Therefore, there is a strong need to look at alternative approaches like environment benign organic agriculture which is free from chemicals with its integrated pest management system using bio-pesticides and bio-control agents.

Although green revolution did make available more food but the infrastructure required to get that food to everyone is still lacking. Hence, equitable distribution of agricultural produce is the key to address the issue of hunger rather than trying new untested technology.

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(Oct-Dec)



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2001, Second Hottest Year

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) reports that the Earth's temperature in 2001 is projected to be the second highest in the 140 years that meteorologists have been keeping records. Record floods and droughts around the globe accompanied this year's high temperatures.

Michel Jarraud, Deputy Secretary General of the WMO said that temperatures are getting hotter, and they are getting hotter faster now than at any time in the past. The warmest year since records began in 1860 occurred in 1998, according to records maintained by countries that are members of the WMO.

(*NYT, 19.12.01 & ENS, 18.12.01*)

**Japan to Cut Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

The Japan's Environment Ministry proposed establishing a mechanism to encourage companies to publicise their greenhouse gas emissions and a system of neutral third parties to evaluate and check reported emissions. The Japanese Environment Minister has also announced that the Government will be setting up an office shortly aimed at encouraging the public to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Japan government is aiming on achieving nearly two-thirds of the greenhouse gas cuts it has pledged under a U.N. climate accord by using the carbon dioxide absorbing properties of the nation's forests.

(*JT, 06.12.01 & Edie, 23.11.01*)

Antarctic Glaciers are Experiencing Long-Term Melt

In a study published at the fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco, researchers have reported that Antarctica appears to be melting and contributing to the slow rise in the oceans, with around 36 cubic miles of ice from glaciers in West Antarctica over the past decade.

The study used two sets of radar data from the European remote sensing satellite, and revealed that the total melt water is enough to raise sea levels worldwide by around one-sixth of an inch.

(*Edie, 13.12.01*)

**Did Planetary "Belch" Cause Prehistoric Warming?**

Around 55 million years ago the Earth belched a massive bubble of methane gas from beneath the sea floor, causing a 100,000-year period of global warming, report NASA scientists. The study suggests that the expulsion of methane trapped in the seafloor bed all those years ago caused the planet's temperature to rise by up to 13 degrees Fahrenheit (7 degrees Celsius). The resulting thousand-century period of global warming is called the Late Paleocene Thermal Maximum.

Could it happen again today? Computer models at least raise the possibility that if the oceans warm substantially a similar scenario could arise in the future. "The study makes you take a broader view of climate change, looking at greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide, like methane, ozone, black soot particles, chlorofluorocarbons, and so on as an explanation for global warming," said Gavin Schmidt, the lead author of the study. Schmidt is a researcher at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York and Columbia University's Centre for Climate Systems Research.

(*NGN, 27.12.01*)

Global Warming Threatens Yields

According to a report released at the UN climate change talks in Marrakech by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) global warming could reduce harvests of staple crops like rice, maize and wheat in the tropics by one-third over the next five years. The report shows that rising temperature damages the ability of crops to flower and produce seed. It warns that crop yields would probably decline by 10 percent for every one degree centigrade increase.

The UN's international climate change panel forecasts that average temperatures in the tropics could climb by three degrees centigrade by 2100. The report is based on work by the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines, led by Dr. John Sheehy, who said that one possible research solution is to find genes which will make flowering occur during the cool of the early morning.

Klaus Toepfer, director of UNEP, spoke about the similar threat to cash crops that is emerging in East Africa. In Uganda the area for growing coffee would be dramatically reduced, with only the highest mountains cool enough for the crop. The overall area suitable for tea in Kenya would not be reduced by two degree centigrade rise in temperature, but the tea belt would move upwards, threatening sensitive forests and wildlife and the quality and quantity of water supplies.

(*FT, 08.11.01*)

Climate Change to Hit Poor Nations Hard

India has said that the impact of climate change leading to global warming will affect the developing countries more adversely than the developed countries. At the Seventh Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Marrakech in Morocco, Mr. T.R. Balu, Minister for Environment and Forests expressed his fear that the impact of climate change will affect the developing countries more adversely than the developed countries, thereby aggravating the inequalities between them.

Since the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, disparity has increased between developed countries and

others and little has happened by way of resource and technology transfer from the developed to the developing countries, he said. He also added that food security and water availability would be a cause of concern because of climate change and global warming.

(BL, 08.11.01)

Debate on Kyoto Heats Up

According to a report of the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, Kyoto Protocol on global warming is unlikely to benefit the environment while it could badly damage New Zealand's industry and agriculture. The report estimates that the cost of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol would be at least \$200mn a year.

The New Zealand government is going to ratify Kyoto in 2002. This move will commit New Zealand to gradually reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels. The report, commissioned by the Greenhouse Policy Commission and the Petroleum Exploration Association of New Zealand (PEANZ), suggests the cost of doing that will be high.

Even the Canterbury farmers want the Government to put the brakes on a climate-change policy saying that it could wreck New Zealand's agriculture. South Canterbury cropping farmer and Federated Farmers Grains Council Chairman Neil Barton said farmers were angry about the Government's plans to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change next year. Agriculture was potentially a big loser if climate-change policies led to higher fuel costs or a tax on methane emissions from ruminant animals.

(TCP, 03.12.01 & 04.12.01)

New Business GHG Protocol to Cut Emissions

A new user-friendly international greenhouse gas emissions standard for businesses, the first of its kind it will aid the development of effective strategies for companies to cut emissions.

The new Greenhouse Gas Protocol Initiative (GHG Protocol) has been launched by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and was developed over three years with the aid of over 350 individuals from companies such as IBM, Ford and DuPont, non-profit organisations and governments.



(Edie, 26.10.01)

EU Approve UK Pollution Trading

In April 2002, Britain aims to launch its greenhouse gas emissions trading system. It is a part of a government policy to reduce the pollution blamed for causing global warming. Britain and the European Commission are keen to facilitate a process designed to ensure that industry finds cheap ways of cutting pollution. The voluntary British scheme invites firms to bid for a share of £30mn (\$42.50mn). As this money could be considered as state aid, Britain asked the Commission to say whether it conformed to EU rules.

The EU scheme, which is still waiting for EU member state approval, would impose a cap on carbon dioxide emissions for most polluting

industries. Unlike the British scheme, it would not be voluntary and firms would face financial penalties if they failed to reach the targets or buy extra emissions rights to make up the shortfall. European industry has reacted coolly to the Commission's plan, which it fears could harm Europe's competitiveness.

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(PA, 29.11.01)

Minister Confident Germany will Reach Kyoto Target

German Environment Minister Juergen Trittin (Greens) expects Germany to certainly reach the climate protection targets set down in the Kyoto Protocol. Germany has already reached 18.7 percentage points of the target to reduce by 2012 the emission of the six most important greenhouse gases by 21 percent compared with 1990, Trittin said in Berlin on Wednesday [5 December].

Trittin assumes, that the EU countries will have turned the Kyoto Protocol into national law by summer and then deposit their documents of commitment. The Protocol becomes internationally valid as soon it has been implemented into national law by at least 55 signatory states and if these states at the same time are responsible for 55 percent of the international emission of carbon dioxide [CO₂]. The first condition has already been fulfilled. The second condition will be fulfilled, because the EU, Japan, Russia and the east European countries intend to implement the Protocol, Trittin noted with confidence.

The environment minister stressed that climate protection and the simultaneous opting out of nuclear energy also have economic advantages. Thus, according to a study, 200,00 new jobs could be created in the energy sector by 2020 despite the phasing out of nuclear energy.

(BBC MS, 05.12.01)

BRIEFS

Warmer Climate could Disrupt Water Supplies

Just one or two degrees of global warming could have dramatic impacts on water resources across western North America, a new study suggests. Teams who have modeled the climate in the area are warning of reduced snowpacks and more intense flooding as temperatures rise.

(ENS, 20.12.01)

Global Warming Altering Genes:

Global warming is leading to changes in the genetic make-up of animals, say scientists. They have found that mosquitoes have altered their genes in response to climate change. According to biologist at University of Oregon, US, many plants and animals are adapting to a warming environment by taking advantage of the longer seasons.

(KB, 10.11.01)

Climate Seesaw:

The American National Academy of Sciences in a recently released report on global warming and climate change says that global climate change is both gradual and abrupt. Although the study's focus is on abrupt climate changes that are marked by periods of severe floods and droughts, the scientists say that the norm, however, is for gradual changes. Hence there is no cause for alarm.

(TOI, 29.12.01)

New Fuel Cell Technology

Palcan is developing and manufacturing unique proton exchange membrane (PEM) fuel cells and rare earth metal hydride hydrogen storage products. A three-way fusion of these proprietary and patent pending products with electronics will produce a unique integrated power system series of products branded under the name PalPac Power Products.

Palcan believes that PalPac can replace and significantly improve on the performance of batteries and small internal combustion engines in consumer products such as electric bikes, low speed scooters, personal vehicles and portable power products.

(SW BC, 18.12.01)

Battery Driven Motorboats

Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, chief minister of West Bengal, inaugurated India's first battery driven motorboat in December 2001. The boat manufactured by Exide Company, using indigenous technology, currently has space for 36 passengers and would cost around INR 300,000. The company claims that on requirement they can also make boats using this technology with the capacity of carrying 200 passengers.

Once the battery is recharged, the boat can sail for two and half hours at the cruise speed of four nautical miles. Thoughts are being given to add sails to this boat to use wind energy along with energy generated from batteries to increase cruise speed.

(ABP, 06.12.01)

Renewable Energy Targets to Double

In UK, ministers are planning to deliver a blow to the nuclear industry's hopes of a major revival by setting a costly target doubling the proportion of electricity to be generated by renewable sources.

The government already has a target of increasing generation from renewable energy sources to 10 percent by 2010. It is planning that a fifth of all electricity be generated by renewable energy sources by 2020. The proposed new target of 20 percent renewable energy generation would make Britain one of the most environmentally friendly producers of energy in Europe.

(TG, 04.12.01)

SNAPSHOT

Will Hydrogen be the Future Energy Source?

After a decade-long study of photolytic bacteria, the Murugapa Chettiar Research Centre (MCRC) of Chennai has developed the process for production of hydrogen sustainably from spent distillery wash, sago waste and whey in the laboratory. The hydrogen produced was also used in an exploratory trial to operate a fuel cell.

(BL, 29.12.01)

Ethanol Fuels Cane Growers' Hopes:

Ethanol, the environmentally friendly but expensive fuel setting energy trends in Latin America, Europe and the United States, is making inroads in Asia as countries search for ways to use surplus farm output and cut fuel bills.

(IHT, 18.12.01)

Kribhco Bags Energy Conservation Award

Kribhco has been awarded the National Energy Conservation Award (second prize) to recognise the consistent energy conservation at Kribhco's plant at Hazira (Surat). The award was handed over by Power Minister Suresh Prabhu to Kribhco MD, V N Rai.

(TP, 20.12.01)

Energy Consumption Target for Summer is Relaxed

Brazil's Energy Crisis Commission has announced an alternative formula for calculating the energy consumption reduction target for business and domestic customers in the South-East, Centre-West and North-East regions during the summer. Under the new rules, customers will be able to cut their consumption by 20 percent as compared with their consumption between December 2000 and February 2001.

Customers can continue to follow the old formula. This involves a seven percent reduction target for consumers in tourist cities and a 12 percent for other cities in the South-East and Centre-West, based on



consumption between May and July 2000. In the case of the North-East, the target is 12 percent for tourist cities and 17 percent for others. Electricity distributors will inform customers by post of the best option.

(OG, 05.12.01)

Brussels Puts Forward Biofuel Plans

Alternative fuels made from agricultural products would be made a compulsory of motor fuels in the European Union (EU) under new proposal unveiled in November 2001. The proposal would ensure that from 2005, at least two percent of fuel used in transport came from biofuels, made from plants oils, sugar beet, cereals and even domestic waste. The mandatory minimum would rise to 5.75 percent by 2010.

However, the success of package rests largely on a parallel proposal giving EU governments the option of reducing excise on pure or blended biofuels. This part of the package would require unanimous support from the 15 EU governments.

While biofuels have the advantage of being domestically made and less environmentally damaging, they remain, expensive to produce. The European Commission calculates the additional cost of biodiesel over conventional oil-based diesel at about Euro300 (\$270) per 1000 litres, with an oil price of \$25 a barrel.

The Commission believes a shift towards biofuels would reduce the EU's growing dependence on oil imports, while generating less of the gases which contribute to the green house effect. It would also offer new options to the EU's struggling farmers.

(FT, 08.11.01)

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No Smoking in Public Places

Recently India's apex court has extended the ban on smoking in public places throughout the country. But this ruling may not reduce consumption due to enforcement difficulties. A two-judge bench directed all states and federally administered territories to immediately issue orders to ban smoking in public places and on public transport.

The Supreme Court order came in response to a public interest petition against smoking filed by Murli Deora, a senior leader of Congress party. The court said that public places include hospitals, public offices, public transport services including railways, court buildings, educational institutions, libraries and auditoriums.



Tobacco firms are currently not allowed to advertise their products on television and some states have also banned smoking in public places. The federal law also plans to stop tobacco from sponsoring sporting and cultural events.

(GN, 03.11.01)

Europe Sets Binding Limits on Dioxin in Foods

European Union Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne welcomed the adoption by the European Council of a rule setting legally binding limits on the presence of dioxin and other contaminants in food. Any food exceeding these strict limits will be excluded from the food chain after the regulation enters into force on July 1, 2002. The food safety measures are a key element of the comprehensive strategy put forward to improve the safety of feed and food by the European Commission, the executive branch of the 15 nation European Union.

The strategy aims to deal with a complicated cycle of contamination necessitating simultaneous measures to reduce the presence of dioxins, furans and PCBs in environment, feeding stuffs and food stuffs.

The strategy is a response to the dioxin contamination problems of the past that toppled Belgium's governing coalition in June 1999 following Europe's worst food contamination crisis since mad cow disease. Byrne added that only very few countries in the world have yet set legally binding levels for dioxins in food.

(ENS, 29.11.01)

Animal Clones as Food Source

While world attention is focussing on the report of the first cloned human embryo, regulators are already at work looking at whether animal clones are safe for the US food supply. Animal cloning has progressed since 1997 when Dolly the sheep, the first cloned adult mammal was introduced. Biotechnology companies have produced duplicates of prized animals and are marketing the technology to animal owners.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is weighing whether to regulate cloned farm animals that people might consume. FDA is evaluating whether meat or milk from clones is safe for human consumption. Various consumer groups have stressed for federal oversight until more is known. Legal director for the Washington-based Centre for Food Safety

opined that FDA should not rush to allow the commercialisation of animals.

Officials are planning to use the forthcoming National Research Council Report to form a policy on whether companies will need FDA approval before they market cloned animals. The National Research Council will also review the effects of other bio-engineered animals on human health, environment and animal welfare. Researchers will discuss the possibility of genetically altered insects, such as malaria-free mosquitoes.

(PA, 28.11.01)

Millions of Afghan Refugees Face Winter without Food

While United Nations talks on the creation of an Interim Authority to govern Afghanistan continue around the clock in Bonn, Germany, officials and aid agencies at Afghanistan are worried about the situation of millions of internally displaced Afghan people stranded in winter weather without food or shelter.

Deliveries by the World Food Programme have declined in the last two weeks as lawlessness and disorder have spread in the northern part of the country. Lindsey Davis, spokesperson for the United Nations World Food Programme, said the agency will start the largest ever house to house survey and issuance of food coupons to people living in the city of Kabul as a first step in an emergency food distribution for 180,000 families, about 1.1mn people.

(ENS, 03.12.01)

UN Report Says Tropical Forests Still Shrinking

The world's tropical forests are shrinking fast despite international conservation efforts, the UN agriculture agency said. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said over the past decade an average of 37.6mn acres (15.2 mn hectares) of virgin tropical forest equal to 0.8 percent of the total area had been cleared every year.

In a news conference, FAO Assistant Director General said that worldwide loss has continued at the same rate over the past 20 years. The FAO report said that worldwide the loss of forest area had slowed with net growth registered in non-tropical areas, particularly Europe and Russia.

Despite an international commitment to the sustainable development of forests made in 1992 at a United Nations summit on the environment in Rio de Janeiro, some 93 percent of the area cleared of tropical forest was being converted to other land uses, mainly agriculture. It said the situation was most serious in Africa and South America with Brazil still clearing the largest amount of tropical forest. The report also added that illegal and corrupt activities threaten the world's forests in many countries particularly but not exclusively in forest-rich developing countries.

The world has an estimated 3,870mn hectares of forests of which almost 95 percent is natural, non-pallated woodland.

(PA, 04.10.01)



Pollution

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Asbestos-Silent Killer?

The environmentalists and asbestos makers are fighting on two different aspects like health hazards and its cost benefit. On one hand the lack of fund is driving the West Bengal government and some other state governments to opt for asbestos cement pipes in water supply projects while environmentalist demand a ban on usage of the material as the same poses health hazards.

It is already recommended by World Health Organisation (WHO) that the material is unhealthy even as a roofing item. Incidentally World Bank has stopped providing loans for the projects in which asbestos cement material is used. The US Environmental Protection Agency and WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer stresses that all forms of asbestos cause asbestosis, a progressive disease of lungs.



Following this, the Union environment ministry formed a committee to find out whether asbestos should be banned. Earlier another committee in 1995 permitted asbestos usage without chrysolite elements contents because asbestos ban would have resulted in unemployment of more than 1,00,000.

(FE, 05.11.01)

CAB Asked to Investigate Illegal Dumps of Waste

The Department of Environment, Ireland has asked the Criminal Assets Bureau to investigate the operators of illegal waste dumps. This follows the revelation that hazardous hospital wastes had been dumped at two unauthorised landfill sites in the county, at Whitestown and Coolnamadra, both north of Baltinglass.

The Department is concerned about the proliferation of illegal dumping of hazardous and other wastes by unscrupulous operators seeking to evade charges of up to 90 pounds per tonne at licensed landfills. It is also pressing Wicklow County Council to proceed against those involved in dumping waste at disused quarries in Whitestown and Coolnamadra by indictment in the Circuit Court.

The Irish Minister for the Environment expressed his horror at the scale and nature of the illegal dumping discovered in Co Wicklow. He also assured people that they would be alerted promptly if there were any dangers to public health from the illegal dumping and mentioned about illegal and irresponsible dumping of clinical wastes.

(IT, 04.12.01)

State Urged to Scrap Map Ta Phut Project

The residents of Map Ta Phut industrial estate urged the government to scrap a coal-fired power plant project. Local people feared that the plant, which is a part of the Map Ta Phut port expansion, would add to water and air pollution. Part of the sea was reclaimed unlawfully for the site, which could bring legal problems.

However, Industrial Works Department said environmental impact assessment studies approved by the Environmental Policy and Planning Office suggested the project was unlikely to affect

the environment badly. The firm running the plant had promised to use low-sulfur coal in line with environmental standards.

(BP, 05.12.01)

US Industry to Use Coal for Less Pollution

Many U.S. power plants that use natural gas to generate electricity will slowly shift to coal, as a cheaper, more reliable fuel source which is accounting for about 50 percent of the total electricity generated each year, coal industry officials said this week at an Energy Department conference.

According to Jack Gerard, President of the National Mining Association, instead of natural gas, coal as a reliable, low-cost choice will meet the demand in the future. There are more than 600 power plants in the United States that use coal to generate electricity, and several have switched from natural gas in the last year. The EIA estimated that by 2020, the United States is expected to consume about 22 percent more coal.

Coal has long been criticised by environmentalists for spewing tons of pollutants into the air that contribute to global warming. Gerard mentioned that the coal industry could meet its goal of zero emissions by installing more pollution-reducing technologies that already dropped about 30 percent of pollutants from coal during the last 30 years. President George W. Bush's broad national energy plan in May proposed investing \$2bn in clean coal technologies over the next decade, and offering tax incentives to promote research.

(PA, 21.11.01)

Water Around Carbide Plant Still Toxic

Seventeen years after the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster, sample tests conducted by world environment watchdog, Greenpeace International, have confirmed that water in the localities adjacent to the Union Carbide factory is still contaminated. This is largely due to the hazardous waste, both above and below the ground, which continues to be strewn around the site of the tragedy.

In 1999, Greenpeace reported that the site around the factory was very much toxic in nature after subjecting samples of soil waste from seven locations along with samples of groundwater from 12 sites in and around the factory to a laboratory test.

12 volatile organic compounds were found to have seeped into the water supplies of localities in the Carbide area. Three water wells in the Atul Ayub Nagar community situated north-east of the plant were found to have been severely contaminated. Tests conducted by Greenpeace in 2001 reaffirmed the presence of chlorinated benzenes, chloroform, trichlorobenzene and carbon tetrachloride in the water wells being used by the communities near the Carbide factory vicinity.

(TOI, 05.12.01)

Green Rating Project of CSE

Delhi based Centre for Science and Environment, has taken up a project to grade the performance of industry on the environmental aspects. Paper and pulp was the first industry to be rated under the scheme.

The Indian corporate sector with the exception of auto industry did well in controlling pollution. Surprisingly the burning of used circuit board in the IT industry also causes pollution.

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The green rating project covered 500 companies. The manufacturing and service sector was awarded the top scorer "Four leaves" as against the highest rating of "Five Leaves". Auto sector performance was rated at "Three Leaves".

The evaluation process includes factors like separate environment department, managerial skills people heading the units, compliance with ISO 14001 etc. CSE even started examining the true reflection of the practice for ISO 14001 holders.

(BL, 02.11.01)

China Proposed \$4.8bn to Clean Three Gorges Water

China plans to spend nearly 40bn Yen (\$4.8bn) over the next 10 years to reduce water pollution in a reservoir above the Three Gorges Dam, the world's biggest hydroelectric project. The money would be used to erect more than 260 wastewater treatment plants and some 200 garbage facilities would also be set up to collect waste from ships on the Yangtze River.

More than six million tonnes of rubbish and nearly 10mn tonnes of solid industrial waste are dumped into the Three Gorges area and the upper reaches of the Yangtze every year, which ultimately leads to deposition of at least 30mn tonnes of solid industrial waste on the bank of the river.

The 204bn Yen Three Gorges project, which began construction in 1993 and is expected to be completed in 2009, has faced both domestic and foreign criticism, as to make way for the project, about 1.13mn villagers along the Yangtze river will be resettled by 2009 and numerous ancient relics will be submerged.

(PA, 03.12.01)

Clean Water Act

Beautiful bodies of water with a "No Fishing" sign are seen because the lake or river is too polluted to support healthy aquatic life. Fortunately, there's an effort in progress to clean up those bodies of water and keep them clean for future generations to enjoy. The Clean Water Act establishes water quality standards and the TMDL program. Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a calculation of the total amount of pollutants a body of water can contain and still remain safe for aquatic life, marine life and outdoor activities including fishing and swimming.

Premiering December 8th on national cable television, this 60-minute special programme explores the need for ongoing research into potential water pollutants and the importance of cooperation between farmers, ranchers, city leaders, state officials and government agencies.

The programme is produced by Information Television Network and is made possible by the Environmental Protection Agency, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, California State Water Resources Control Board, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. For more information one can visit the website www.itvisus.com on the Internet.

However, in order to make this effort successful, everyone from farmers to developers to government workers and community leaders must play a role.

(PRN, 04.12.01)

Campaign against Bus Fumes

Around 100,000 residents of 50 communities of Bangkok are likely to sign a petition demanding the government crack down on polluting buses. The move followed a meeting organised by the Anti-Air Pollution and Environmental Protection Foundation to mark the Thai Environment Day. Many buses, especially those operated by private concessionaires, needed improvement or replacement.

The Wat Boon Rot community in Phra Khanong district, accused private operators for failing to improve the emissions from their vehicles. Majority of residents in densely populated communities rely on buses and inevitably suffer from their emissions. The foundation also planned to set up a community radio station to enable residents to share their ideas in solving environmental and other problems.

(BP, 05.12.01)

Hungarian Suit against Romania-Based Mine

The legal successor of the Romania-based Aurul Company has been given a two-month period for legal preparations for a court case. The company is charged for causing cyanide pollution in east Hungarian River Tisza in January 2000.

The company's legal representatives announced the change of its name at a court hearing, which started in Budapest in December 2001. The judge gave 60 days to the defendant to submit the documents clarifying the legal succession, name change and authentic Hungarian translation of the company's registration documents to the court.

The legal representative of the company, now called Transgold, said at the hearing that it would be much more fortunate if an elected international court ruled in the disputed issue, or if the sides tried to reach an out-of-court agreement. The legal representative of the Hungarian state, which demands 28.5bn forint damage, has given no substantive answer to it.

(BBC MS, 04.12.01)

Cruise Companies are Charged over Smoke

According to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), cruise companies Crystal Cruises, Princess Cruises, World Explorer, Holland America, Carnival Cruise Line and Norwegian Cruise Line agreed to settlements ranging between \$27,500 and \$165,000 for excessive smokestack emissions in the port of Juneau over the past two summers.

According to the commissioner of DEC, to avoid future problems and also to avoid sending smoke plumes from their ships, the cruise lines have taken important steps by using new technologies and cleaner fuels.

The settlements were announced while state, federal agencies and the cruise companies were evaluating the industry's environmental effects in Alaska. A bill passed and promoted by government gave the state authority to regulate air-emissions, sewage discharges along with solid-waste and other water pollution from all passenger ships with overnight capacity of 50 or more passengers.

(PA, 19.11.01)



Cool Technology from Voltas

Recently the Rs. 1,250cr Tata group company Voltas Ltd. has invested Rs. 10cr in upgrading its existing range of commercial coolers with non-chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) under the umbrella brand "ColdCel". The company has also invested Rs.1cr on retraining its existing dealers on the usage of non-CFC coolers. The move was taken as CFC facility destroys the ozone layer. Thus Voltas became the first company to go for CFC-free coolers, setting a benchmark for other companies.

Voltas currently manufactures CFC commercial coolers in the capacity between 65 litres and 600 litres. According to Mr CJ Jassawala, vice-president operations, Voltas, while the developed countries have banned the usage of CFC- facilitated coolers, refrigerators and air-conditioners the selling and availability of products with CFC facility in India will be banned from 2003. As part of the upgradation, Voltas would be adding some new features as well.

(FE, 25.12.01)

Ozone-Depleting Chemical may Get Reprieve

Officials at an environmental conference in Sri Lanka said that developed countries may be allowed limited use of ozone-depleting methyl bromide beyond a 2004 deadline to phase out the chemical. Methyl bromide is used as a crop fumigant and for pest control. Although it is less damaging to the ozone layer than chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) it is released directly into the atmosphere. About 70,000 tonnes of methyl bromide are used each year mostly in developed countries.

The Montreal Protocol requires its more than 170 signatory states to phase out the use of some 95 chemicals that damage the ozone layer, a stratum of the atmosphere that protects the earth from ultra violet radiation, which can cause skin cancer.

Milton Catelin, chairman of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Montreal Protocol, said all applications would be subject to a strict review process. He also said that an exemption will be granted only if there are no viable alternatives for a particular industry in a particular country.

(PA, 18.10.01)

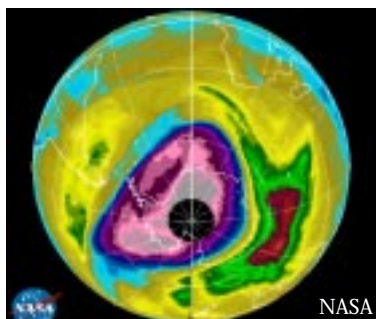
Cosmic Rays Responsible for Ozone Depletion

According to recent research, cosmic rays may be enlarging the hole in the ozone layer. Researchers analysed data from several sources, and found a strong correlation between cosmic ray intensity and ozone depletion.

Back in the lab they demonstrated a mechanism by which cosmic rays could cause a buildup of ozone-depleting chlorine inside polar clouds. Their results suggest that the damage done by cosmic rays could be millions of times larger than anyone

previously believed and may force atmospheric scientists to reexamine their models of the Antarctic ozone hole. More information on this is available at Physical Review Focus.

(PC)



Illegal Trade in Ozone Depleting Substances

UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP DTIE) has recently released 'Illegal Trade in Ozone Depleting Substances: is there a hole in the Montreal Protocol?' This new publication aims to raise awareness about the problem of illegal trade in these environmentally damaging chemicals with stimulating action to combat trafficking. According to Klaus Toepfer, UNEP's Executive Director, when any substance is banned, it immediately creates a black market and ODS are no exception to this.

Education is the best way to curtail illegal trade. Hence training programs for custom officers are needed that covers all Multilateral Environment Agreements.

To make it widely accessible to those who need it, UNEP is making it available free-of-charge in English, French and Spanish on the OzonAction Programme's website at www.uneptie.org/oan/main.html

(UNEP information release, October 2001)

Philippines Saw an Increase in ODS Importation

Philippines Environment Undersecretary Demetrio Ignacio said that Philippines have seen an increase in its import of ozone- depleting substances (ODS). Last year, the government imported about 955 metric tonnes of ODS, mostly chlorofluorocarbon substances, putting the available volume to about 3,000 metric tonnes, much higher than the 2,000 metric tonnes in 1995.

The importation was allowed by then Environmental Management Bureau director Peter Abaya, who has been investigated for allowing seven companies to increase their import of ODS substances. Mr. Ignacio added that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources legal department has started looking into the matter.

(BW, 23.11.01)

New Pollution Rating could Spur Industrial Growth

Based on recent findings by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), ozone levels have decreased to the point where companies expanding or opening new operations in south eastern Wisconsin would have to obtain fewer and less stringent air pollution control permits. They also would not have to acquire pollution-offset credits when expanding or adding new plants.

Under a new classification, businesses in south eastern Wisconsin would be obligated to use "best available pollution control technology" instead of the more costly "lowest achievable emissions rate technology" dictated by the ozone non-attainment classification.

The DNR attributes the declining ozone concentrations to several factors like the introduction of reformulated gasoline, emission improvements in vehicular fleets, enhanced inspection programmes, vapour recovery programmes at gas pumps, and improvements in industrial control programmes.

Since there is the possibility the region could again exceed the EPA's 125 parts per billion standard, so the DNR will continue to push control technologies and monitor emissions.

(ACBJ Inc, 02.11.01)

Greenfreeze promises cold comfort

Greenfreeze is the name given to refrigeration technology that does not use ozone-depleting and potent global-warming fluorocarbon substances such as CFCs/HCFCs or HFCs in the insulation foam or in the cooling system. Instead, the technology uses hydrocarbons (HC) for the foam-blowing agent and for the refrigerant.

The environmental group, Greenpeace, developed the Greenfreeze technology in 1992, and it has been promoting it worldwide ever since. Greenfreeze technology is now the dominant refrigerating system in the Western European refrigerator market. All the major European manufacturers in Germany, Denmark, Italy, UK, France, Spain and Sweden produce Greenfreeze refrigerators. The largest manufacturers in China, as well as in India, Indonesia, Australia and Cuba, also produce Greenfreeze.

It is estimated that there are over 55mn Greenfreeze refrigerators in the world today. The recent penetration of Greenfreeze technology into the Japanese market has been a major goal for the international Greenpeace Ozone and Greenfreeze Campaign.

(JP, 29.11.01)

Is UK Prepared for EU Rules on ODS?

As part of the Montreal protocol, the new EU directive on ozone depleting substances 2037/2000 and 2039/2000 requires the removal of all chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) from refrigerators from January 1, 2002.

From November 30 no recycling centre will be allowed to accept a fridge. Hence, immediate storage space for 7,000 fridges a day for the next five years is badly needed that is short in supply. No sites have yet been approved or planning permission given to store the hazardous waste and no facilities currently exist for the safe removal of insulation materials permeated with CFCs.

Bad planning has created the problem related to stripping of CFCs from an old fridge. This is potentially creating an environmental disaster. What started off as a great idea to save the ozone layer could well lead to unemployment and major health and safety issues!

(TG, 07.11.01)

Britain Earmarks Cash for Storage of Old Fridges

The British government announced that it would give six million pounds to help local authorities safely store old refrigerators under the tough new European laws on disposal of electrical goods.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) said that from January 1 fridges would need to have insulation foam removed before they could be recycled or scrapped, to prevent the release of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that have been blamed for the so-called greenhouse gas effect.

Next year will see the implementation of the European Union's directive on electrical and electronic waste that holds manufacturers responsible for the re-use, recovery and

recycling of anything from refrigerators to mobile phones. This directive is part of a series designed to cut the amount of waste diverted to landfill, and to reduce the content of substances such as cadmium, which are potentially harmful, in electrical and electronic equipment.

DEFRA said that aside from the financial package, it would also provide draft standards for industry to deal with its end-of-life fridges and information for consumers advising them how to dispose of fridges safely.

(PA, 05.12.01)

Ecofridges in Japan

Refrigerators using ecologically friendly hydrocarbons in place of fluorocarbons, for insulation and cooling, are to be marketed by domestic manufacturers in Japan in early 2002. In January, Toshiba Corp. is scheduled to introduce a new non-AFC (alternative fluorocarbon) product. Rivals Matsushita Electric Industrial Co and Hitachi Ltd will follow them, in February and May, respectively. Other major manufacturers are also likely to develop home refrigerators using hydrocarbons. Although alternative fluorocarbons are less likely to cause a depletion of the ozone layer than fluorocarbons, experts have pointed out that they still contribute to the greenhouse effect.

In Europe, non-AFC refrigerators have become popular in recent years, after the suppression of alternative fluorocarbons was agreed to under the Kyoto Protocol by signatory countries. In contrast, Japan has faced a technological bottleneck in the development of non-AFC refrigerators. An official of a major manufacturer informed that as hydrocarbons are flammable, so they had to come up with additional technology to prevent fires.

Non-AFC refrigerator is slightly more expensive than conventional refrigerators. Japanese manufacturers seemed sceptical about the demand for such products due to high price.

(TYS, 30.11.01)

SimsMetal UK to Open Refrigerator-Recycling Plant

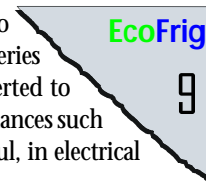
Global metals recycler SimsMetal Ltd said it hoped to open a refrigerator recycling plant in Britain soon in line with European Union regulations designed to cut emissions of harmful gases.

The company's UK division, SimsMetal UK, has decided to open the plant after talks with government, which has agreed with other EU countries to remove ozone-depleting gases from fridges and freezers before recycling them from January 1, 2002.

Unlike other European countries, Britain has no specialised facilities to remove greenhouse gases from refrigerators. Up to three million fridges are disposed of in Britain each year, according to environmental website letsrecycle.com.

The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has said two other metals recycling companies are interested in opening similar plants in Britain.

(PA, 29.11.01)



Gender ad angers women activists

The new gender advertisement says that one can now decide on whether he/she want a boy or a girl even before the baby is conceived. There are two kits, pink for girl and blue for boy. This ad about gender selection kit is sending shivers up the collective spines of women's rights activists, gynaecologists, sociologists, paediatricians, and demographers. But the state health department is ignorant about the existence of the product.

In a nation already reeling under a warped sex-ratio (933 females per 1,000 males as per the provisional population totals of Census 2001), this gender selection kit, if as effective as it claims, would be disastrous, said Yashodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, Women's Commission.

Being marketed mostly on the Internet as 'genselectkit' with a toll free helpline for India, contends to have a "96 percent success rate when used as instructed." A product developed in the United States, it requires no surgery and can be used in the 'privacy of one's home'. The website, which has little on what the product actually is and is more of a marketing promo, says the international patent is pending.

The day the ad was first noticed was described by Bagchi as the "the worst nightmare in the current Indian scenario." She advocated that the product should be stopped immediately using as many monitoring forces the nation has.

(TOI, 19.11.01)

Car Ads must be Truthful

In the US, Wisconsin law requires car advertisements to be truthful. It requires dealerships to honour their ads. Consumers have been advised to read the entire ad for all of the details, qualifications, and exclusions. Some ads include a disclaimer, usually at the bottom of the ad, which explains any limitations on the offer. A disclaimer should provide all of the details, but should not be used to make a false statement into a truthful one.

Other common advertising problems occur when a dealership refuses to honour its advertisement, or tries to change the details of the offer when one contacts the dealership. The ad compares the price of a used car to the price when the car was new in order to suggest it's a great buy, omits or "buries" the name of the dealership in an advertisement, so consumers do not know who they are buying from.

WisDOT Dealer Section licenses, regulates and educates the motor vehicle industry, and resolves disputes about dealership sales and warranty repairs. Dealer Section also investigates complaints about odometer tampering involving dealerships and private sellers.

(dealers.dmv@dot.state.wi.us)



Cable TV Channel Warned for Misleading Ad

The Fair Trade Commission (FTC) issued a correction order to CJ39 Shopping, a Korean cable television shopping channel, for its inappropriate air-conditioner advertisements. According to the antitrust agency, CJ39 Shopping aired Samsung Electronics' air conditioner advertisement on July 9, 2001 alleging that rival electronics firms' air-conditioners were 2000 models and that only Samsung's were the latest 2001 models.

The FTC explained that the shopping channel's groundless comparison advertisement could have possibly misled customers into believing that Samsung's competitors were selling last year's leftover inventory. Together with the advertisement correction order, the FTC ordered CJ39 Shopping to publish an ad apologising for their unfair advertising in daily newspapers.

(KT, 19.11.01)

Light Cigarettes no Safer

According to a report by the US National Cancer Institute, cigarettes marketed as "light" or "low tar" by tobacco companies offers only an illusion of reduced health risk while leaving unabated the death toll caused by the habit. Smoking related diseases kill an estimated 430,700 Americans annually, according to American Lung Association.

About 26 percent of men and 22 percent women smoke in the United States. Smoking is directly responsible for nine in ten cases of lung cancer, and causes most cases of emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Tar is the substance blamed for those diseases. 87 percent of cigarettes sold in America are low tar brands according to Federal Trade Commission (FTC). However, cigarettes producing less tar have not prevented a sustained increase in lung cancer among long time smokers.

The report found that tobacco companies have designed cigarettes specifically so FTC tests using machines that puff on them find that they yield less tar when smoked, but also so they deliver full doses of tar and nicotine to actual smokers.

(FE, 27.11.01)

Advertising Standards Authority

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is a self-regulatory body, governed by codes of practice written by representatives of the advertising industry. It is independent of both the advertising business and the government.

ASA deals with advertisements in newspapers or magazines, outdoor posters, direct mail leaflets and brochures, sales promotions of any kind, other electronic media, including videos, computer games and CD-ROMs, cinema advertisements, advertisements on the internet, including banner and pop-up ads, commercial emails and sales promotions.

If a non-broadcast advertisement is found to be not "legal, decent, honest or truthful" consumers can complain to The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) by filling out the complaints form on the ASA website. However, the ASA does not handle complaints about broadcast advertisements on commercial radio or television.

(TG) 4/2001

Green Living Space Improves Mental Health

The study by Nancy Wells, a Cornell University researcher concludes that a home surrounded by nature can improve a child's attention capabilities. To conduct the study, published in the journal "Environmental and Behavior," Wells assessed the extent of natural surroundings around the children's old and new homes by rating, for example, the amount of nature in views from various rooms.

Sound differences emerged in the attention capacity of 17 children after they moved from poor to better quality housing that are surrounded by more green spaces. Wells noted that simple interventions, such as preserving existing trees, planting new trees or maintaining grassy areas, have a significant impact on children's welfare.

In a related study, Wells found evidence that the mental health of adults also improves with a move from poor to better quality housing. The study warned that residents of suburban housing developments that incorporate little or no green space might suffer mental stress. It also suggested that housing officials should incorporate natural settings into urban renewal and public housing projects like one in Chicago.

(ENS, 07.12.01)

Ethanol in Asia

Asian countries may see ethanol as a potential money-spinner or environmental saviour, but doubts still hang over the economics of producing the trendy fuel in a region where old-fashioned petrol rules supreme. Agricultural powerhouses, like Thailand or Australia, blessed with crops that could be used in ethanol production, are making tentative steps towards building up capacity to capture a slice of the growing world market for ethanol.

(PA, 24.12.01)

Power from Wasted Heat

Although only a few crude samples have been built, Yan Kucherov, director of R&D at the Salt Lake City company, Eneco Inc., and Peter L. Hagelstein, technical consultant at Eneco, informed that they have built devices that improve the efficiency of conversion of wasted heat by more than half. The heat generated by car engines and power plants warm the surrounding air. Scientists have dreamt of capturing this wasted heat with so-called thermoelectric devices and converting it into electricity. Such devices could increase the electricity output of power plants or power electrical systems of cars, replacing alternators, and increasing gas mileage.

(BW, 17.12.01)

Dubai to Develop Tropical Forest

Dubai municipality is aiming to develop a tropical forest in Dubai with exotic birds, butterflies and insects. The design and concept of the forest which is set to be the first in Middle East, was done by Malaysia's Mardi Tech, privatised arm of Malaysian government's Malaysian Agriculture Research Development Institute (MARDI) in collaboration with FMS International, a marine offshore organisation.

The multi-million dollar facility will have to be enclosed to ensure that temperature and humidity are controlled. It would be a natural habitat of a tropical forest that would be suitable for

students right up to university level to visit. Managing director, FMS International said that they are also looking at a spice garden so that visitors could see, smell and touch the plants.

(GN, 03.11.01)

Development

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New Antibiotic Found in Fish

North Carolina Sea Grant researchers has discovered a new antibiotic isolated from fish that may have implications for treating diseases in both humans and animals. The study is reported in the journal "Nature."

The antibiotics named as piscidins were isolated from mast cells in hybrid striped bass. Mast cells are the most common tissue immune cell found in fish and other vertebrates, including humans. Ed Noga, professor at the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and head of the research team making the discovery informed that peptide antibiotics or piscidins have the potential to fight important bacterial pathogens of both fish and mammals, including multi-drug resistant bacteria.



Noga noted that with the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria, there was an urgent need to find new types of antibiotics that can fight these resistant pathogens. In this context, these antibiotics could be a useful template for designing new drugs, as they are not related to any known and currently used antibiotic. He added that the next step is to identify mast cells in other animals, including humans that contain antibiotics.

(ENS, 15.11.01)

SNAPSHOT

China Turns Corn into Ethanol

China is launching its first fuel ethanol plant in an innovative plan aimed at simultaneously strengthening security of energy supplies and improving farm incomes. Lu Tianxiang, director and senior engineer at Beijing Memsep Technologies Co Ltd said that they have to consider energy security as China is short of petroleum.

(PA, 19.12.01)

Effective Insecticide Sprayer being Developed

Pakistan's Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) has launched a project for the development of a sprayer for environmentally effective application of insecticides on cotton crop. An amount of Rs. 2mn has been allocated for the project under which the Pakistan Science Foundation will manufacture an adjustable height boom sprayer for cotton crop.

(Dawn, 23.11.01)

Bullock-driven Tractor Developed

After extensive research, Bharatiya Cattle Resource Development Foundation, has developed a bullock drawn tractor targeting the medium size farms in the country. This was an attempt to save upto Rs. 900cr spent on importing oil.

(DC, 22.10.01)

TN Govt to Frame Policy on Ecology

Inaugurating a two-day international conference 'Environment conclave', Mr. S.S. Thirunavukkarasu, the Tamil Nadu Minister for Information, Forests and Environment informed that the Tamil Nadu Government has decided to evolve a State Environment Policy named 'Enviro Vision 2005' in consultation with experts, policy makers and service providers. The Policy would aim at sustainable management of precious natural resources like land, water, air and forests.

He said population explosion, increasing industrialisation and urbanisation had seriously damaged the biosphere leading to degradation of forests and pollution of land, air and water and therefore eco-friendly development is 'need of the hour'. He stressed the need for strict enforcement of environmental legislations coupled with awareness programme that would guarantee better environment and quality of life.

(BL, 22.11.01)

Natural Rubber as Green Commodity

At the Common fund for Commodities (CFC) round table meeting, promotion of natural rubber as a green commodity was one of the highlights of the presentations made by the working group. Funding is required for further research to take advantage of the environment friendly nature of natural rubber and study the carbon sequestration properties of natural rubber. Dr. Tharian George of the Rubber Research Institute of India said that rubber known for its carbon sequestering effect would be helpful for eco-restoration as rubber had the potency to fix 90mn tonnes of carbon.

Rubber could be used as alternative source of timber presently being cut from rainforest. In India, use of rubber wood could save 19,000 hectares of rainforests annually.



The other project ideas included upgradation of the quality of natural rubber, diversification in the use of natural rubber to increase the market share and support to small scale producer organisations to ensure sustainable rubber development.

Since early 90s the consumption of natural rubber was dominated by the consumption of synthetic rubber. As natural rubber producing countries account for 100 percent of the share of Natural Rubber production, it was suggested that rubber industries should be started in natural rubber producing countries due to location advantage.

(FE, 01.12.01)

Monsanto Switches to Cleaner Fuel

Monsanto, a target for environmentalists for its big genetically modified seed business, has placed the first corporate order in US for pick-up trucks engineered to run on ethanol-based E85 fuel. E85 a blend of 85 percent ethanol, derived from corn and 15 percent gasoline generally regarded as an environment friendly fuel.

But the move may not be universally applauded as US has

only 100 fuel stations nationwide where E85 fuel is available. Hendrik Verfaillie, Monsanto's chief executive admitted that practically it would be difficult to ensure that the new vehicles actually run on the cleaner fuel.

US corn growers, some of the company's biggest seed customers, have supported Monsanto's move.

(FT, 28.11.01)

EcoLogo Certification

Norske Canada's sawdust-based pulp manufactured at the company's Elk Falls Division has received certification as an environmentally preferable product under Environment Canada's Environmental Choice Programme (ECP). The certification will allow the company to use the Environmental Choice Programme EcoLogo.

Canada's Environmental Choice Programme was developed to help encourage the production of environmentally responsible products, and to help consumers identify such products in the marketplace. Use of the logo is only granted to products that meet a third party's assessment of environmental performance according to the ECP criteria.

The "Elk Prime" sawdust-based pulp is the second Canadian kraft pulp product to receive ECP certification. Jim Miller, vice president sales and marketing described it as an important achievement for NorskeCanada as it reinforces Elk Prime as an environmentally friendly product in the eyes of the consumers.

(PRN, 04.12.01)

Ecofriendly Tourism in Kenya

The Kenya Ecorating Scheme is designed to proceed goals for sustainable tourism through preserving environmental and social values. Ecotourism emerged at the Rio Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 10 years ago involves the promotion of environmentally friendly tourism sites and practices.

The industrial players will be encouraged to pursue sustainable practices in their operations under the ecorating scheme. It aims to provide the businesses to review and improve their operations towards best practice, leading to overall improvement in environmental performance. As environmental concerns increase the future of tourism industry will become more dependent on the protection of the earth's natural environment.

The schemes widely known as certification or ecolabels have marked a logical step in a series of initiatives to 'green' the tourism industry. The principle objective of the scheme is to conserve the natural resource base.

(EAS, 13.11.01)

Ecofriendly Vehicles

The website www.epa.gov/greenvehicles of United States Environment Protection Agency gives information about the cleanest and most fuel-efficient ecofriendly vehicles. Low emissions and good fuel economy are both important for the environment. This guide rates only environmental performance when the vehicle is in use. It does not account for other environmental factors, such as recyclability of the vehicle or safety, cost or driving performance. Information on this site is based on data that vehicle manufacturers submit to EPA.

USDCO Awarded 'Best Innovative Business Model'

Underground Secure Data Center Operations (USDCO) recently has been recognised as the "Best Innovative Business Model" at the Unified Comms International (UCI) Awards 2001, an annual international awards ceremony. UCI is a global publication catering to the data hosting and telecommunication industries. USDCO was one of ten companies worldwide nominated to win the award.

Irvin Wolfson, USDCO partner said that their business model works because of the unique combination of economic and security advantages inherent in the mine and its environmentally friendly features. The mine, which was being used to store food and other cold-storage products, offers almost invulnerable security, superior environmental conditions and was located between two power grids, ideal for high-end technology systems and equipment.

(PRN, 05.12.01)

Environment Friendly Pesticides from UAE herbs

Zayed Complex for Herbal Research and Traditional Medicine has developed environment friendly pesticides from UAE herbs to combat pests that damage palm trees, said a senior researcher at the complex. The natural pesticides were developed in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Municipality and were found highly effective against the pests upon testing.

Dr. Abdul Nasser Al Girfi, Professor of Plant Taxonomy and Researcher Coordinator at the herbal complex said that the pesticides were prepared by using extracts from biological sources. They are environment friendly and have no effect on the date tree or its fruit, he added.

The Department of Ethnobotany and the Department of Pharmacognostic Sciences at the complex joined hands to work on the project. Research was conducted, based on which five plant extracts were prepared. The extracts were handed to the municipality's plants protection department to try them on the infected date palm trees. Dr. Abdul said that the results were encouraging and currently some experiments are being conducted at the Pharmacology Department's Laboratories.

The complex working under the Ministry of Health since 1996 was set up as a comprehensive research and treatment centre to preserve the country's traditional system of herbal medicines. The complex aims at linking scientific research and traditional medicine together to derive the right approach for herbal medical practice and patient care in UAE. It has collected more than 900 plant specimens in their natural habitats that are preserved according to the standard means at the complex's herbarium.

(GN, 03.11.01)

"Green Chemistry" Products

Donlar Biosyntrex Corporation has announced that the offshore oil and gas industry is increasingly utilising the Company's green chemistry for addressing the constant problems of equipment scaling and corrosion on oil platforms with proven product performance while meeting high standards given by the industry for the reduction of toxic chemicals in the environment.

Regulatory agencies in the North Sea oil fields strongly suggest oil platform operators employ non-polluting products in their operations

to meet industry standards. A number of toxic inhibitors are still being used extensively, representing a very large market opportunity for Donlar's environmentally friendly, high performance products. The Company believes the current sales potential for its environmentally safe products in oilfield applications exceeds \$600mn worldwide annually.

The Company has invested more than \$50mn in research and development, manufacturing, and patents, resulting in the issuance of 140 Company owned patents on its non-hazardous, non-toxic, hypoallergenic, environmentally friendly and biodegradable thermal polyaspartate (TPA) biopolymers.

(Business Wire, 03.12.01)

For Quality or Awards?

Every day environment is damaged on account of using convenient-but-harmful items. The environmentalists endlessly urge people to always consider the consequences of any products and services before using with a proper regard for the environment. A researcher at the Indonesian Consumers Foundation (YLKI) regretted that in developing countries, such awareness has not developed into a culture, whereas people in developed countries are already in love with environmentally friendly terms, such as "biodegradable", "recyclable" and "reuse".

As developed countries apply very strict standards for services, products and their manufacturing processes, it is difficult for services and products not conforming to these standards to enter these countries. The standards meant here are stipulated in the International Standard Organisation (ISO). The ISO 14000 series is used for environmental standards for products and services.

In addition to those examples of companies complying to certain standards, several international and domestic non-governmental organisations (NGO) are also actively promoting the care for environment. Ultimately it rests with the common consumer as their attitude will and should have an effect on the attitudes of businesses toward the environment.

(TJP, 11.12.01)

SNAPSHOT

Ecoproducts Exhibition

Ecoproducts 2000, an international exhibition of environmentally friendly products from more than 350 companies and organisations, would be held at Tokyo Big Sight in Koto Ward, Tokyo, Dec. 13 to Dec. 15. About 500 items of ecoproducts will be put on sale during the event. Also, several seminars on environment issues will be held.

At the same venue and at the same time, Bio Fach Japan, an international organic trade fair, would also be running.

(TYS, 11.12.01)

Encore for Environment Award

In the annual VIBES competition to reward firms that have increased their operating efficiency through actions good for environment, Edinburgh-based Encore Environmental Aggregates has won the small business award. It was applauded for recycling 120,000 tonnes of building material, which would otherwise have gone to landfill.

(The Herald, 05.12.01)

HC Notice to Destroy GM Cotton

The Delhi High Court has issued notices to the Centre and two of its agencies, Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) and the Department of Biotechnology directing them to submit replies on why a petition seeking CBI probe into the Bt cotton seed issue should not be admitted. The selling of genetically engineered cotton seeds in the market of Gujarat by Navbharat Seeds Ltd (NSL), a private company was brought before the court in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by Gene Campaign, an NGO describing the sale of genetically engineered cotton seed as a 'big scam'.

The Centre has already taken action to prevent further flow of genetically engineered Bt cotton crop into commercial centres. State government was to retrieve the Bt crop from the market either through the Cotton Corporation or the Gujarat Cotton Growers Association and destroy. Earlier, hundreds of farmers were ordered to hand over genetically modified (GM) cotton crops as its commercial production is illegal. The Centre does not allow commercial production of genetically modified crops but has allowed a few companies to carry out field trials under government supervision.



(BL & ET, 20.11.01)

Cotton Mills Advocates Cultivation of Bt Variety

The Chairman of Indian Cotton Mills Federation (ICMF) has suggested that the Government should make an official pronouncement permitting the cultivation of Bt cotton. As the yield of cotton in India is one of the lowest in the world, ICMF opined that cultivation of Bt cotton would result in increase in cotton production thereby increasing the income level of the farmers due to less expenditure in pesticides and insecticides.

According to ICMF genetically modified (GM) cotton is extensively used in the environmentally conscious nations like US, Australia, China, South Africa, Argentina, Mexico, Indonesia after extensive field trials and research which has helped them to raise their production per hectare.



(BS & FE, 28.11.01)

Aventis and AVEBE Started GM Potato Research

Aventis Crop Science, a unit of German-French pharmaceuticals group Aventis and Dutch cooperative AVEBE, an internationally active cooperative of 4500 farmers and suppliers, have set up a joint venture called Solavista GmbH based in Potsdam, east Germany to research into the commercial use of genetically modified potato starch.

After a lot of fundamental research at Potsdam they have made some interesting products. Their aim is to further develop these things to find commercial uses in industry and also uses in food. The jointly developed products are expected to be in the market by the end of this decade.

Potato starch is used in industries including paper production, textiles and glues, wide range of processed foods, as a thickener in soups and in milk products such as yogurt.

(PA, 19.11.01)

Cloning Human Embryos

The stunning announcement that a small Massachusetts-based biotech company cloned human embryos has evoked a predictable storm of protest. The work conducted by Advance Cell Technology (ACT) is the closest that anyone has come to cloning a human being.

The president of ACT recently predicted that his company would make quick progress toward developing therapies. Offering what outside experts described as an overly optimistic forecast, Michael D. West of ACT told a Senate subcommittee that within the next six months he expected his company's scientists to extract stem cells from cloned human embryos and use them to create specialised cells, like heart muscle, skin cells or neurons.

(NYT, 05.12.01 & TH, 04.12.01)

India may Soon Allow Sale of Gene-Altered Seeds

The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of India may allow commercial use of genetically modified (GM) cottonseed in the country. The government is also considering permitting the commercial production of other GM crops, such as potato, tomato, and mustard.

Approval of the GEAC set up by the federal environment ministry is mandatory for field trials and commercial production of GM crops in the country. India has so far only allowed a few firms and research bodies to undertake field trials of gene-altered crops. Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company in which US biotechnology giant Monsanto owns a stake is currently field testing for GM cotton.

(PA, 06.12.01)

Genentech Awarded US Patent for Antibody Technology

US Patent and Trademark Office has awarded Genentech Inc a patent for some of its antibody technology. The patent has been granted after almost ten years of proceedings in the Patent Office and in the US District Court as there was a doubt whether scientists at Genentech or Scientists at Celltech have invented it.

Genentech Inc, the biotech company mentioned that the patent covers a principal way that therapeutic and diagnostic antibodies are made by biotech and pharmaceutical companies using recombinant DNA technology.

(AFX, 18.12.01)

BBJ Environmental Solutions Uses Biotechnology

BBJ Environmental Solutions, a wholly owned subsidiary of BBJ Environmental Technologies Inc. creates unique products and procedures to enhance our indoor environment and improve indoor air quality by combining biotechnology with engineering. This combination approach is now being applied to lessen the long-range threats from Anthrax and other agents of bio terrorism.

There are numerous other applications of BBJ's biotechnology expertise that lead to a

4/2001

healthier and more comfortable indoor environment. BBI products are environmentally friendly, easy to use and biodegradable.

(Business Wire, 03.12.01)

Biotech, IT Converge to Fight Diseases

Presently battle against disease is being fought inside supercomputers as much as in laboratories. The convergence of biotechnology and computing at the cutting edge of biology has bred dozens of new alliances. According to Head of Life Sciences at Sun Microsystems the ideal company of the future may be a combination of big pharma, a computing giant and a consumer goods player.

Information Technology (IT) companies are aware that biotech cannot function without their help. George Poster who now heads Health Technology Networks, a consulting group specialising in the impact of genetics and computing on pharmaceutical research, believes convergence is inevitable. Alliances between biotech and IT companies are already flowing thick and fast.

(ET, 03.12.01)

Biotechnology may Improve Australian Sugarcane

At the meeting with Australia's main cane grower body CANEGROWERS, the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations (BSES) commented that biotechnology could enhance both the productivity and production options of Australian sugarcane industry.

Jim Pedersen, CANEGROWERS chairman opined that biotechnology could result in sugarcane 'biofactories' grown specifically for energy co-generation, ethanol production and the creation of biodegradable plastics. BSES has already developed varieties, which is genetically enhanced to promote herbicide and pest resistance to plant in field for trials with consent of sugarcane industry.

BSES feel that biotechnology would be an important tool in maintaining an edge over international competitors, said Eion Wallis, chief executive officer of BSES.

(PA, 28.11.01)

GM Crop Research Slow to Reach Hungry Third World

The developing world's heavy dependence on staple foods such as rice, soya, wheat and maize make for a precarious existence. If these crops are destroyed by unexpected drought, disease, and flood or freak weather, which are common events in poor countries, thousands of worlds poor would die from starvation. According to United Nations children's fund, UNICEF malnutrition contributes to nearly seven million child deaths each year in developing countries, which is more than any infectious disease, conflict or natural disaster.

Some feel that this is where the controversial research known as biotechnology can help feed the starving millions as this technology would make the same crop more insulated against some of the elements of nature and more nutritious. But everyone does not agree that genetically modified (GM)

food would serve, as the savior for the world's hungry as yet there is no conclusive evidence of its benefits. Powerful biotech multinationals are also accused for using poor countries as 'dumping ground' for products that have failed in European market.

The debate is still going on whether increased funding should go into GM research for the staple foods of the developing world or should the resources be better used to promote sustainable agriculture in the world's poorer nations.

Despite the financial influence of some agribusiness giants, research into plant genetics still suffers from a lack of funding, which delays field trials and safety tests.

(PA, 09.11.01)

Taiwan's First Biotech Science Park

Taiwan's first Biotech Science Park is expected to be built in Hsinchu, northern Taiwan in 2003. The planned park that will occupy 38 hectares will be used as a biotech research and development centre and a medical centre. In future, priority will be placed on cancer research so that cancer patients could be offered advanced care technology. The park's establishment is expected to upgrade the level of Taiwan's medical services and improve Taiwan's biotech capability.

(AP, 18.12.01)

French Firm Clones First Rat Embryo

A French biotechnology firm has said it had produced the first living cloned rat embryo, paving the way for possible future advances in stem cell therapy. "We achieved the key milestone of a living cloned rat embryo with no apparent abnormalities," Dr. Alexander Fraichard, Chief Executive Officer of functional genomics firm genOway SA, has said.



(BL, 12.12.01)

SNAPSHOT

Contribution of Biotechnology

A new study published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reveals that the use of biotechnology in industry invariably leads to processes that are more environmentally friendly than those they replace. It also leads to a reduction in either or both operating and capital costs.

(Edie, 23.11.01)

Indo-Russian Biotech Centre Ready

The Indo-Russian Centre for Biotechnology is ready to become operational at Allahabad. Initially, the joint venture will focus on bio-informatics. The centre, to be housed in the campus of the International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Allahabad is being funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

(BL, 14.12.01)

New Zealand to Resume Transgenic Crop Trials

The New Zealand Labor Government has decided to allow the resumption of field trials of genetically modified organisms. The move, announced by Prime Minister Helen Clark has been welcomed by biotech lobby groups and rejected by environmental and indigenous Maori groups.

(ENS, 31.10.01)

Letters

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Safety Articles

Thank you very much for sending me copies of three CUTS articles published in The Times of India in which different problems relating to safety have been very well published. It is undoubtedly important to highlight the issues of this nature in the interest of all consumers.

*H.D. Shourie
Director*

Common Cause, New Delhi, India

Request for Report

I would like to get your detailed report on lead recycling in India. Could you kindly send me the whole report?

*Michikazu Kojima
Research Fellow*

*Institute of Developing Economies,
JETRO, Japan*

Interesting Reading

Thanks for the next issue of CUTS' publication, which made interesting reading. We would like to subscribe your publication entitled "Greening the Lead Acid Battery Sector: Structure, Problems and Needs". Kindly let us know as to how to go about this.

*Sushil Bhatler
President-Projects*

Binani Industries Ltd., Mumbai, India

Chapter 4

Thank you very much for your e-newsletter Chapter 4. I will disseminate it among interested people and organisation in Kazakhstan.

*Tatiana Shakirova
National expert of the UNDP- Republic of Kazakhstan
Government Program,
Kazakhstan*

Useful for Our Mission

Many thanks for sending newsletter on sustainable production and consumption and also the publication about "Green Advertisements". These are useful for our mission.

*Debabrata Jena
General Secretary
Federation of Consumer Organisation,
Orissa, India*

CUTS Played an Important Role

Thank you for the very important role CUTS played in the 46th Annual Session of International Lead and Zinc Study Group from 16th to 18th October 2001, at New Delhi. Many participants have echoed the viewpoint that the session was a great success.

*Don Smale
Secretary General
International Lead and Zinc Study Group (ILZSG),
London, England*

**JUST
OUT!**

In India, multi-national refrigeration companies are trying to promote their products as environment friendly under the pretext of using ozone depleting substance free technology. But actually they are using hydro-fluoro-carbon technology that is adding to global warming. Importantly, in Europe and certain parts of America most of these multinational companies are producing and selling ozone-friendly hydro-carbon based refrigerators, popularly known as Ecofrig, that have negligible global warming potential.

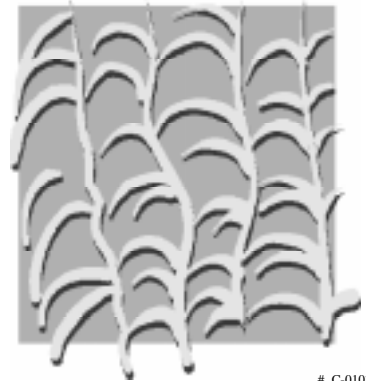
All these manufacturers have the capacity and the know-how to produce HC-based refrigerator in India. But they hardly have any regard for the Indian consumers. Hence, CUTS Centre for Sustainable Production and Consumption (CUTS-CSPAC) felt the need of exposing the double-standards of these multinational

refrigerator manufacturers through generating consumer awareness and putting pressure on these companies to change over to environment-friendly product. This monograph is an effort to present our activities in this regard.

The monograph is divided into four sections. The first section gives an idea about the Montreal Protocol and Kyoto Protocol. The second section explains the rationale behind taking the campaign. It speaks about those multinational companies that are practicing double standards. The third section gives in detail the series of events that took place on Earth Day (April 22), World Environment Day (June 5) and International Ozone Day (September 16) in different parts of the country. The final section talks about the future responsibilities.

QUEST FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT

A REPORT



C-0103

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SOURCES

ACBJ: AMERICAN CITY BUSINESS JOURNAL, AP: ASIA PULSE, ABP: ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA, AFX, BBC MS: BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION MONITORING SERVICE, BL: BUSINESS LINE, BP: BANGKOK POST, BS: BUSINESS STANDARD, BW: BUSINESS WORLD, DAWN, DC: DECCAN CHRONICLE, EDIE, EAS: EAST AFRICAN STANDARD, ENS: ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE, ET: THE ECONOMIC TIMES, FE: FINANCIAL EXPRESS, FT: FINANCIAL TIMES, GN: GULF NEWS, IHT: INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, IT: IRISH TIMES, JP: JERUSALEM POST, JT: JAPAN TIMES, KB: KUENSEL BHUTAN, KT: KOREAN TIMES, NGN: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC NEWS, NYT: NEW YORK TIMES, OG: O GLOBO, PA: PLANET ARK, PC: PHYSICS CENTRAL, PRN: PR NEWswire, SW: SCIENCE WORLD, TCP: THE CHRISTCHURCH PRESS, TG: THE GUARDIAN, TH: THE HINDU, TJP: THE JAKARTA POST, TOI: THE TIMES OF INDIA, TP: THE PIONEER, TYS: THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN, UNEP INFORMATION RELEASE.

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