

Avoiding standards

Reasons given by the cola companies and the government for not setting standards, and why they are wrong

The company-government reason	Why this reason does not make sense
<p>Sugar standard has not been set so pesticide residue of final product cannot be set.</p>	<p>Tests done by labs, including company sponsored analysis shows that refined and processed sugar, used in the product does not contribute significantly to the residues (See note: Sugar).</p>
<p>Product is complex and cannot be tested for pesticides at sub-ppb level.</p>	<p>Testing is routinely done across the world for pesticide residues in soft drinks. Companies themselves tested product in laboratories to claim that they are 'safe'.</p>
<p>Final product standard cannot be set for pesticide residues. It is not done anywhere in the world.</p> <p>Standard should not be set until the ministry of health committee and its sub-committees finalise their reports. The ministry of health was not consulted.</p>	<p>It is true that western governments have not set standards for pesticide residues in soft drinks. But they have set standards for pesticide residues in other more complex -multi-ingredient processed foods.</p> <p>It has been over two years since the committees of the ministry were set up, with no outcome and no date has been set for finalising the standard. The committee is examining the issue of pesticide residues in raw sugar, when there is data available of over 150 samples, which shows that sugar does not contribute to the pesticides in the final product. The committee is also looking at raw sugar, while companies use refined sugar, which undergoes further treatment and so purification.</p> <p>It is also not correct to say that ministry of health was not consulted. The committee included officials of the ministry. At all times letters were written asking for advice and information, with no response.</p>
<p>The government cannot set the standard because the Supreme Court is listening to a case on health issues of soft drinks. The matter is sub judice.</p>	<p>In this same case, the government has informed the Supreme Court that it should not concern itself with the matter, as BIS is in the process of finalising standards for final quality, which will take into account health imperatives. So on the one hand the court is told that it should leave the matter of standard setting to the government, the government committee actually setting the standard is asked to refrain from doing so as the matter was pending in court.</p>
<p>The BIS standard will be in conflict with the mandatory standard, set under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act.</p>	<p>But PFA does not have final product standards for pesticide residues in soft drinks. PFA only includes standards for water used in manufacture of the product. There is no conflict.</p>
<p>Standard cannot be set because companies do not agree.</p>	<p>If this contention is accepted as the basis for regulation, then standards for public health can never be set.</p>