

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL**PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI****Original Application No. 538 of 2024****IN THE MATTER OF:****News Item Titled "Arsenic In Food: Should You Wash Rice Before Cooking It" Appearing In Times Now Dated 31.03.2024** Applicant**Versus****Union Of India & Ors.****...Respondent(s)****Index**

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Respondent No. 2**Filed by****Through**New Delhi
Dated: 03.06.2026**GIGI.C. GEORGE**
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NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
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BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL,
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 538 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF:

NEWS ITEM TITLED "ARSENIC IN FOOD: SHOULD YOU WASH RICE BEFORE COOKING IT" APPEARING IN TIMES NOW DATED 31.03.2024

...APPLICANT

VERSUS

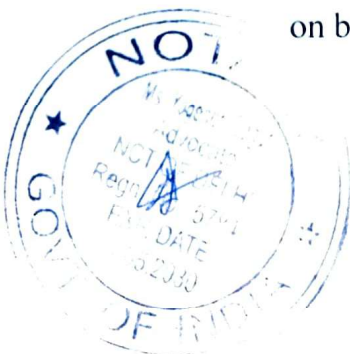
UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

...RESPONDENTS

**ADDITIONAL REPLY AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT
NO. 2, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE**

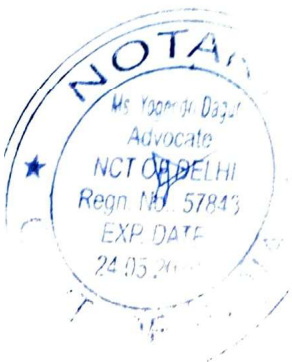
I, Chandra Shekhar Prasad, S/o Madan Mohan Prasad, aged about 45 years, working as Under Secretary, INM, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, having my office at Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under:

- 1) That I am the Under Secretary in the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, the Respondent No. 2 herein. I am fully conversant with the facts and circumstances of the present case and am duly authorised and competent to swear this additional affidavit on behalf of the said Respondent.



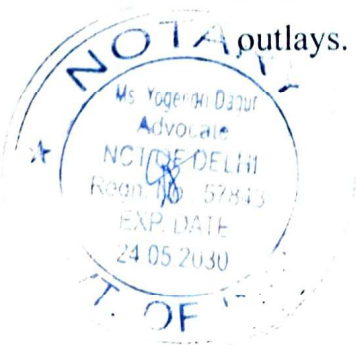
(Signature)
 नरेश शेरवत भारद्वाज/CHANDRA SHEKHAR PRASAD
 Under Secretary
 भारत सरकार/Government of India
 कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण विभाग/Dept. of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
 कृषि भवन, नई दिल्ली/Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001

- 6) That it is submitted that during the period 2012–2024, a substantial area of approximately 15.0 lakh hectares has been brought under SRI/DSR cultivation, replacing conventional transplanted rice. This large-scale adoption demonstrates a significant policy-driven shift towards water-efficient and environmentally safer agricultural practices.
- 7) That the Respondent No. 2 is vigorously promoting organic farming across the country through two dedicated schemes, namely the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) for all States/UTs (except North Eastern States) and the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER). Both schemes, implemented since 2015-16, provide comprehensive, end-to-end support to farmers, from production and certification to processing and marketing. A key component of these schemes is the provision of financial assistance for the use of organic inputs, such as Farmyard Manure (FYM) and other manures, which directly aligns with the remedial measures suggested by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to improve soil health and reduce arsenic bioavailability.
- 8) That it is submitted that under PKVY, financial assistance of Rs. 31,500 per hectare is provided over 3 years, of which Rs. 15,000 per hectare is given to farmers through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for organic inputs. Similarly, under MOVCDNER, assistance of Rs. 46,500 per hectare is provided over 3 years, of which Rs. 32,500 per hectare is for organic inputs, including Rs. 15,000 via DBT. This substantial financial support incentivises farmers to move away from chemical-intensive agriculture towards more sustainable and safer practices.



Handwritten signature of Chandora Srinivasulu Reddy.
 Chandora Srinivasulu Reddy
 National Institute of Organic Farming (NIOF)
 Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
 KVK, Kishinagar, New Delhi-110012

- 9) That since 2014-15, the Respondent No. 2 has been implementing the Soil Health & Fertility scheme with the objective of promoting balanced and integrated nutrient management based on soil testing. Under this flagship scheme, Soil Health Cards (SHCs) are provided to all farm holdings, which contain crop-wise recommendations for nutrients and fertilisers required for the individual farms. This scientific approach prevents the indiscriminate use of fertilisers, which can alter soil chemistry and potentially increase the mobility of heavy metals like arsenic.
- 10) That it is submitted that as on date, a monumental 25.79 crore Soil Health Cards have been generated and distributed to farmers across the country, empowering them with the knowledge to maintain soil health and fertility in a sustainable manner.
- 11) That the aforesaid schemes and initiatives demonstrate the multi-pronged and proactive approach adopted by the Respondent No. 2. The Ministry is not merely addressing the symptoms but is systematically tackling the root causes of agricultural contamination by promoting water conservation, enhancing soil organic carbon, and reducing chemical dependency. This holistic strategy is crucial for long-term food safety and environmental protection.
- 12) That the scale and scope of the initiatives undertaken by the Respondent No. 2 are a testament to its unwavering commitment. The coverage of 15 lakh hectares under SRI/DSR and the distribution of over 25 crore Soil Health Cards are not pilot projects but are national-level programs with significant financial outlays.



(Handwritten Signature)
श्री श्री कृष्ण भवन (Kishu Bhawan) 2/1, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110029
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The emphasis on Direct Benefit Transfer ensures that the financial assistance reaches the farmers directly, empowering them to adopt these beneficial practices without financial hardship.

- 13) That the policies and schemes of the Respondent No. 2 are in complete synergy with the scientific recommendations provided by expert bodies like ICAR. The promotion of organic manures under PKVY and MOVCDNER directly implements ICAR's recommendation to increase the use of FYM. Likewise, the push for SRI and DSR directly addresses the concerns raised by ICAR regarding the high groundwater demand of Boro rice cultivation in arsenic-affected regions. This demonstrates a cohesive, science-backed, and well-coordinated strategy between policy-making and research wings of the government.
- 14) That the Soil Health Card scheme represents a continuous and dynamic mechanism for monitoring and education. It is not a one-time distribution but involves regular soil testing cycles, providing farmers with updated, customised advisories. This creates a robust feedback loop and an institutionalised educational framework to guide farmers towards sustainable practices, which is fundamental to preventing the mobilisation of soil contaminants and ensuring the long-term health of India's agricultural lands.
- 15) That the Respondent No. 2 is continuously monitoring the situation and is committed to taking all necessary steps, in coordination with State Governments and other relevant agencies, to address the issue of arsenic contamination in the food chain and to safeguard public health and the environment.



Deponent
 श्री. को. शर्मा/CHA/DA/...
 Under Secretary
 भारत सरकार / Government of India
 श्री. ए. वि. कृष्ण शर्मा/Min. Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
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, 03 JUN 2026

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Verification

Verified at New Delhi on _____ day of May 2026 that the contents of the above additional reply affidavit is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and derived from the official records.

Deponent

CHANDRA SHEKHAR
अवर सचिव/Under Secretary
भारत सरकार/Government of India
कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण विभाग/Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
कृषि भवन, नई दिल्ली/Kashi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001

ATTESTED
A
NOTARY PUBLIC
NCT OF DELHI

