

Crop Care Federation of India

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2nd April 2024

To

Shri. Jayen Mehta

In-Charge Managing Director

Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited

PO Box 10,

Amul Dairy Road,

Anand, Gujarat – 388 001

Email: gcmmf@amul.coop

Dear Sir,

Sub: Misleading advertisement about Amul organic toor dal.

Greetings to you from Crop Care Federation of India (CCFI), an apex trade body for Indian crop protection industry. Our members account for 70% of India's export of agrochemicals @ \$5.5 bn in 2022.

We are sending this communication with reference to your advertisement in Times of India, Mumbai edition on 31st March 2024 (See the annexure).

This advertisement and the primary pack of the product concerned makes two bold claims: 1. Safety claim and 2. Health claim.

We are of the considered opinion that both these claims are misleading, false and therefore invalid. We are giving in the annexure titled "**Amul Organic Toor Dal. Contentious Claims**" a detailed analysis.



The matter merits your immediate attention for corrective action. We urge you to: -

1. Retract the impugned advertisement and publish a statement undoing the misleading claims made therein;
2. Amend the misleading claims made on the primary pack of the product (Amul Organic Toor dal);

We look forward to hearing from you within the next 10 days about the actions completed and contemplated by you.

We are sending this without prejudice to our other rights.

Thanking you

Yours Sincerely

Nirmala Pathrawal
Executive Director

Encl:

Annexure 1 - Your advertisement in Times of India, Mumbai edition on 31st March 2024.

Annexure 2 - A detailed analysis titled **“Amul Organic Toor Dal. Contentious Claims”**.

Amul
ORGANIC



The safe choice for your family.

No chemicals | No pesticides



Amul Organic Range	Dehraduni Basmati Rice Whole Wheat Atta Sona Masoori Rice
	Toor Dal Chana Dal Masoor Dal Kabuli Chana Desi Chana
	Rajma Whole Green Moong Whole Urad Besan

Amul Organic Toor Dal. Contentious Claims.

Relevant definitions from Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations 2018

1. **“advertisement”** means any audio or visual publicity, representation or pronouncement made by means of any light, sound, smoke, gas, print, electronic media, internet or website and includes through any notice, circular, label, wrapper, or other documents.
2. **“claim”** means any representation which is printed, oral, audio or visual and states, suggests, or implies that a food has particular qualities relating to its origin, nutritional properties, nature processing, composition or otherwise.

I. Safety Claim

The advertisement released by you in Times of India, Mumbai edition on 31st March 2024 shows a retail pack of Amul organic toor dal and claims:

<p style="text-align: center;">Amul Organic Toor Dal The safe choice for your family. No chemicals No pesticides</p>

Clearly, the advertisement suggests that Amul’s organic toor dal is safe(er) to consume by virtue of it purportedly being organic and completely free from chemicals and pesticides.

We would like to assert that this **safety claim** by you for your organic toor dal is misleading, false, unscientific, and unsubstantiated, for the following cogent reasons.

- a. According to the Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017 **(the Regulations)** ‘organic’ food means food products that have been produced in accordance with specific standards for organic food production.



- b. The Regulations also state that organic foods must comply with, either NPOP, PGS-India or any other system/standard that may be notified by FSSAI from time to time.
- c. The scope of NPOP is limited, *inter-alia*, to national standards for organic products, accreditation of certification programmes, and certification of organic products. NPOP provides no certification that the organic products are safe(er) in any manner.
- d. In 2021, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said the term "organic" is not a guarantee of food safety. The FAO states that any claim such as "organic food is safer" is a false statement. Organic certification refers to a product made in line with certain standards throughout the production, handling, processing, and marketing stages. It doesn't cover the characteristics of the final product. You can find further details from their publication "**Organic foods: Are they safe?**".(Link:<https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=cb2870en#:~:text=Therefore%2C%20while%20organic%20agriculture%20may,a%20guarantee%20of%20food%20safety.>)
- e. According to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the term organic represents practices that are not related to the safety of the product. The USDA makes no claim that organic food is safer or more nutritious than the conventionally produced foods.

Your advertisement also claims that Amul toor dal is completely free of **chemicals** and **pesticides**.

According to Regulation 7 of Chapter II of Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulation 2017, organic food shall also comply with relevant provisions, as applicable under the Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations, 2011 except for residues of insecticides for which the maximum limits shall be 5% of the maximum limits prescribed or Level of Quantification (LoQ) whichever is higher.

This above regulation, in fact, implies that organic food may contain presence of contaminants (pesticide residues) at least upto the LoQ. This is completely contrary to your claims in the advertisement.



We would like to question - What is your definition of “chemicals”? There are over 30,000 chemicals in the world. Besides, everything made of matter is a chemical. Scientifically speaking “chemical free foods/drinks” don’t exist. Chemicals free world is a myth. Toor dal contains several chemicals such as Quercetin, luteolin, apigenin, isorhamnetin, cajaninstilbene acid, pinostrobin, cajanol, cajanin, longistylin A, longistylin C, cajanuslactone, betulinic acid, hordenine, juliflorine, stigmasterol, beta-sitosterol, genistein, genistin, vitexin, orientin, pinotrobin chalone, isoprenylated genistein, isoflavonoid phytoalexin, cajanone, 2-O-methylcajanone, cajaflavonone, 2-Hydroxygenistein, biochanin A. (Source: <https://drugcart.com/herbs-details/toor-dal>). Structurally and functionally, there is no difference between phytochemicals and their synthetic counter parts.

We would also like to question - what is your definition of “pesticides”? Please note India has over 300 pesticides registered. Are you aware that there are several pesticides allowed to be used in the organic farming?

Please note, in pesticide residue analysis you cannot find residues beyond the Below Detection Level (BDL). Therefore, your claim “free from pesticides” is rather naïve.

Secondly, presence of acceptable levels of pesticides in food commodities does not mean that the product is unsafe for consumption. Remember, the maximum residue limits are legal limits and not safety limits. In fact, FSSAI in its Guidance Note No. 13/2020 has observed that “*Under ideal conditions, the pesticide residues left in/on the food commodities are not supposed to pose any harm to consumers.*”

II. Health Claim

Your retail pack of Amul Organic Toor Dal claims, “***The food we grow and the food we eat should always be chemical free and nutrient rich.... Amul organic range, a step towards a healthier world***”.

According to Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations 2018, “***health claim***” means any representation that states,



suggests, or implies that a relationship exists between a food or a constituent of that food and health.

Healthier? We seek to know from you if your organic toor dal is superior in terms of assessed nutritive values (energy, protein, carbohydrate, total fat, etc.) when compared to conventional toor dal. If you have the relevant data, give details.

Your impugned advertisement violates *prima facie*, various provisions of “Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018”.

We urge you to ensure that you don’t contravene any of the following laws while marketing and advertising your organic products:

1. National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)
2. Food Safety and Standards Act-2006
3. Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulation 2017
4. Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations 2018
5. The Consumers Protection Act 1986
6. Guidelines for the Prevention and Regulation of Greenwashing, 2024

We are not against organic agriculture in any manner. In fact, many of our member companies do produce a range of microbial, mineral and bio-pesticides that are approved for use in organic farming worldwide. But we are against the greenwashing involving organic foods. We are ethically committed to exposing this growing menace.

Amul is among the most trusted brands in India. Amul cannot afford to make erroneous and questionable product claims unknowingly or otherwise.

2nd April 2024