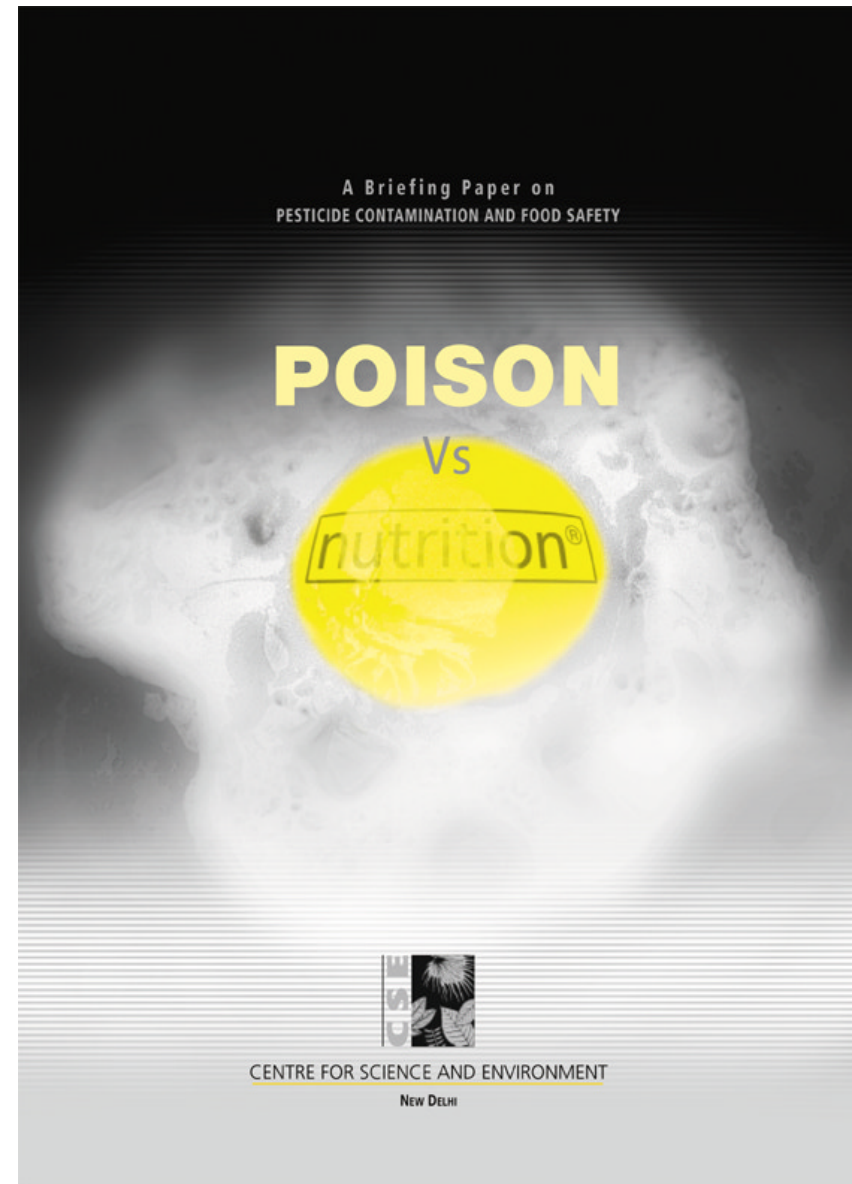


Session 4

Define what is 'potable'

Briefing
workshop
August 4-5,
2004





We do not have the “right” to “clean” water

- **55 years after Independence we do not have ‘right’ to ‘clean’ water.**
- **Why? Because standards for what is “clean” water are not legal.**
- **What is “potable” water? What is “wholesome” water?**
- **For this we need standards for each parameter for what constitutes “safe” water.**
- **Then we need a law that enforces these standards so that agencies supplying water are held responsible. Citizens then have the “right” to clean water.**



But in India..

- **The Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO) under the Union ministry of urban development and poverty alleviation sets **guidelines** for drinking water quality.**
- **BIS has also set standards. But these are “voluntary”.**
- **These are “guidelines”. Municipalities and other agencies and “expected’ to follow these. But there is no requirement that they **must**.**



Municipal acts therefore are vague.

- **Section 234 of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act, 1980 also says, “as far as possible”.**
- **Tripura Municipality Act says it will “try to supply”.**
- **Rajasthan does not even say it will supply in all times.**



Safe drinking water

No law

- **1996; parliamentary committee on subordinate legislation says, water should be brought under “food” as the agency responsible for supplying drinking water to the public has to ensure purity and the statute should bind it to do so.”**
- **Otherwise population will be exposed to serious health hazards, with no one owning responsibility.**
- **But ministry of urban development says no. It would mean that a “legal commitment to adhere to standards”.**



Dirty water kills.

- **Biggest killer of babies in India.**
- **Death and diseases because of dirty water shame India. Gastro, cholera...are the standards.**
- **We say we are too poor to afford clean water.**
- **Rich pay peanuts for municipal water they consume. Subsidised to defecate in convenience. Drink bottled water. Industry uses free water. Charges more than milk. We pay.**
- **Poor do not get municipal water. Pay more. Pay with their health. No options.**



What should we do? And How?

- **Set standards for ‘potable’ water**
- **a. set best standards as preventive systems**
- **to ensure that technology leapfrog takes place;**
- **b. set road map for progressively tightened standards;**