

**Minutes of the Webinar**  
**“Recent Advancements in Pakistan for Trade Compliance to Aflatoxin & MRLs in Red Chilies” held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

In pursuance of annual Work Plan for the year 2022-23, PHDEC planned to hold a series of product specific and capacity building webinars. In this context, a webinar on “Recent Advancements in Pakistan for Trade Compliance to Aflatoxin & MRLs in Red Chilies” was conducted on 21<sup>th</sup> March, 2023. The primary aim of the webinar was to take on board the maximum of the stakeholders on the issue of aflatoxin and MRLs.

Due to aflatoxin issue, chilies export from Pakistan has observed a decrease of around 9% in past two years. Taking the cognizance of the situation, CEO PHDEC directed Agri Team to take the issue on board. Agri team planned a webinar and invited the experts in the sector as keynote speakers from TDAP, NARC and CABI-Pakistan to discuss Aflatoxin and MRLs issues with stakeholders.

A large number of stakeholders of red chilies attended the webinar through Zoom link. PHDEC invited 4 keynote speakers to give presentation to the stakeholders of the chili. Speakers of webinar are as under;

<b>Speaker Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Dr. Mubarak Ahmed	Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP)	Consultant (Agro)
Dr. Hamza Shahbaz	CABI-Pakistan	Program Officer
Dr. Farrakh Mehboob	Institute of Plant and Environmental Protection (IPEP) NARC, Islamabad	Program Leader/ Principal Scientific Officer, Ecotoxicology Research Program,
Dr. Atif Jamal	Crop Diseases Research Institute (CDRI) NARC, Islamabad	Principal Scientific Officer,

Mr. Jafar Ali (A.M Agri-Products) briefed about the purpose of the webinar. After introduction, he welcomed all the participants and extended the thanks for attending the workshop.

**Major points discussed during Webinar;**

**Dr. Mubarak Ahmed** presented an exhaustive overview of the sector in his presentation. The salient points of his presentation are;

- Major problems in chili production in Pakistan are poor quality due to exceeding limits of Aflatoxins, uncontrolled pesticide applications and competition with other exporters viz. India, Mexico, Thailand etc.
- Quality standards can be improved by switching to Good Agricultural practices, initiation of HACCP in processing system, switching to Good Dying Practices and Good Storage Practices and through research on the prevention & control of aflatoxin in red chilies.
- Main reasons of aflatoxins are the poor existing of pre & post-harvest practices such as; excess irrigation, stagnant water or drought stress during cultivation and delayed drying after harvest.

The occurrence of aflatoxin in heavy concentrations is not only alarming for the safety of the people of Pakistan but the people of importing countries.

Dr. Mubarak recommended that how aflatoxins may be controlled on different levels

- **At farm level we may control aflatoxin by;**
  - Production of disease free and healthy seed.
  - Marketing of suitable hybrid varieties.
  - Financial and technical support to farmers.
- **At market level aflatoxin may be controlled by;**
  - Designing and construction of suitable ventilated stores for storage of red chilies.
  - Implementation of grading standards of chilies.
- **At public sector aflatoxin issue can be controlled by;**
  - Investment and support to public sector organizations for undertaking research on chilies for pre and postharvest problems.
  - Organizing training and conducting workshops of stakeholders of red chilies.
  - Development of reference laboratory for determining the quality of produce.

**Dr. Hamza Shahbaz** from CABI-Pakistan explained about the project of aflatoxin and MRLs in red chilies they are working with MNFS&R from past 5 years with the support of USAID. He said we initiate the program in 2018 to control the exceeding levels of aflatoxins and MRLs red chilies. He explained that Dr. Farrakh Mehboob and Dr. Atif Jamal had shared their technical expertise with us to overcome the said problem and results are very positive.

**Dr. Farrakh Mehboob** give presentation on “Pesticide Residues in Pakistan”.

- Pakistan is importing approximately 74% insecticides, 14% herbicides, 9% fungicides and 2% acaricides. Whereas, in other country farmers uses 75% herbicides adding to MRL issue in Pakistan.
- That farmers should follow the Good Agricultural practices (GAP), follow the pesticide label which include usage dosage etc. and stop spraying banned pesticides.
- That farmers should be trained through workshops and trainings.

At the end **Dr. Atif Jamal** give presentation on aflatoxins.

- That 25% of world's crop is effected by aflatoxin, 5 billion of world's population is exposed and 40% of the human productivity is lost because of aflatoxin.
- Pakistan's export of chili is gradually decreasing from 2017 to 2022 because of aflatoxin.
- That fresh chilies contain more than 80% moisture and drying is very important for preservation and storage.

Participants at the end asked the questions to the key speakers about solar drying of chilies and its effect on aflatoxins and what are alternate methods of drying the red chilies other than traditional methods. Dr. Mubarak Ahmed responded that solar dryer available in market have very low capacity, as Pakistan is 4<sup>th</sup> biggest producer of chili of world so, Pakistan needs dryers of high capacity or alternatively farmers move towards traditional ways. Dr. Mubarak added that SMEDA install a dryer with the cost of Rs. 240 million which is not functional because of certain reasons.

Dr. Mubarak Ahmed also suggested that issue of exceeding aflatoxin and Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) may be controlled by doing the following actions;

- By organizing training sessions or conducting field workshops for stakeholders of red chili in the chili producing Hubs for the awareness of exceeding aflatoxin and Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs).
- By designing and construction of suitable ventilated stores for storage of red chilies.

Jaffar Ali

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