

Intake naturally ripen fruits: Consumers awareness crucial

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Fruit consumption is essential for preserving a healthy diet, as fruits are rich in nutrients and vitamins. However, consuming improperly matured and chemically ripened fruits can be detrimental to human health. Sadly, some unscrupulous farmers and businesspeople transport unripe mangoes, lychees, bananas, papayas, pineapples, and guavas to market, ripening them with chemicals such as calcium carbide or ethylene. Although these chemicals make fruits more appealing to consumers, they are potentially hazardous to human health.

When fruits are harvested before they have reached maturity, they lack vital nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Consequently, the nutritional value of unripe fruits is lower than that of matured fruits. Moreover, the chemicals used to ripen fruits can be harmful to human health. Calcium carbide, for instance, contains trace amounts of arsenic and phosphorus that, when consumed, can cause food poisoning, diarrhea, vomiting, headache, and even cancer. When inhaled in significant quantities, ethylene gas can cause respiratory problems. Such fruits also have a shorter shelf life and can spoil quickly due to the untimely harvesting and chemical treatments.

Calcium carbide is sometimes used to ripen fruits. Because it is less expensive, impure calcium carbide is frequently used, despite the fact that it contains traces of toxic compounds that can cause severe health problems. Farmers use carbide to imitate the vibrant colors of completely ripe fruits on the fruit's outer skin, thereby making the fruit appear more appealing. However, consumers may not realize they are purchasing produce ripened with harmful chemicals.

Consuming chemically matured fruits can deprive the body of essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients required for proper functioning. These fruits can also cause digestive issues, such as bloating and gas. In some cases, they can trigger allergic reactions. Another severe health risk associated with consuming untimely prematurely ripened fruits is an increased risk of cancer.

Apart from affecting human health, the production of chemically matured fruits has negative environmental impacts. The chemicals used in their production, such as ethylene gas and calcium carbide, can contaminate soil and water, causing harm to the ecosystem.

Mango is one of the most popular fruits in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, some dishonest farmers try to harvest them prematurely to meet high demand. Similarly, lychees have a short shelf life and are highly perishable, so they are usually consumed within a few days of harvesting. In some cases, farmers may use chemicals to extend their shelf life, further exposing consumers to harmful chemicals.

To combat the premature ripening of fruits with chemicals, the Government of Bangladesh has enacted laws and regulations to control their use. The Department of Agriculture Extension has determined the appropriate time to collect and sell a particular variety of mango produced in a particular district. The early season mangoes mostly come from Satkhira, while a significant amount is produced in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, and Naogaon.

To facilitate the collection of different types of mangoes in these districts, mango calendars are created. In Satkhira district this year, the harvesting of Gopalbhog, Govindbhog, Bombay, Golapkhas, and Baisakhi, as well as other local varieties of mangoes, will begin on May 12. The harvesting of Himsagar and Khirshapati mangoes will commence on May 25. Langra mango will be available on June 1, and Amrapali on June 15.

The government is taking legal action against those who harvest mangoes from trees before the appropriate time or mix unripe mangoes with carbide and chemicals to market them. The government has awareness campaigns to inform consumers about the dangers of eating prematurely ripened fruits. These campaigns emphasize the health risks associated with consuming chemically ripened fruits and promote the consumption of fully ripe fruits for better health.

However, consumers should also take steps to ensure that they are buying fully ripened fruits that are safe to consume. Fully ripened fruits have a characteristic aroma and a sweet taste. In contrast, fruits that have been prematurely harvested and chemically ripened lack these qualities. Consumers should also avoid fruits that have a uniform color, as this may be a sign that they have been artificially ripened. Additionally, washing fruits thoroughly before consuming them can help remove any traces of harmful chemicals.

It is important to choose fully ripened fruits and promote the cultivation and consumption of naturally grown fruits to maintain good health and a sustainable environment. The government of Bangladesh has taken measures to control premature ripening of fruits through law enforcement, promotion of natural ripening methods and awareness campaigns. Before the appropriate season of the fruits, consumers should refrain from consuming chemically treated unripe fruits.

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