

**Crop Care Federation of India**

China's Rejection of Indian Dried Chili Consignment.

**Ignores international standards, arbitrary and
objectionable under WTO-SPS Agreement.**

Introduction.

Around the second week of June 2026, reports appeared in the media about border rejections by China of a few consignments of dried chili exported from India, allegedly due to pesticide residues. Thereafter, we objectively analyzed this matter using all available facts and applying the basic tenets of the WTO-SPS Agreement that governs international trade of agricultural products.

Essential information about Maximum Residue Limit (MRL).

A **Maximum Residue Limit (MRL)** is the maximum concentration of pesticide residue legally permitted in a food or feed commodity. An MRL is assessed as representing the maximum residue level expected to be found in foodstuffs or feed if a pesticide is applied according to the good agricultural practice or GAP (FAO, 2002).

The **Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)** is an international body created by the FAO and the WHO in 1963 to develop food standards, guidelines, and MRLs for pesticides and antibiotics.

The **Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR)** is responsible for establishing Codex MRLs for pesticide residues in specific food items or in groups of food or feed that move in international trade.



The Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticides Residues (JMPR) determines the exact “**residue definition**” for each pesticide and the portion of the commodity to be analyzed (e.g., whether the MRL applies to the whole fruit, or just the pulp) for thousands of pesticide/crop combinations.

For an MRL, a pesticide residue is defined as the combination of the pesticide active ingredient and its toxicologically relevant metabolites, if any.

Essential information about MRLs under the WTO-SPS Agreement.

The JMPR recommendations are the basis for the establishment of Codex MRLs which are referenced by the WTO under the SPS Agreement. Under **Article 5** and **Annex B** of the SPS Agreement, transparency is mandatory.

Whenever a shipment is detained or rejected:

Notification: The importing country must notify the exporting country's authorities.

Analysis Report: The exporting country has the right to request, and the importing country is expected to provide the underlying laboratory analysis report or test results. This is to verify the alleged MRL exceedances.

Opportunity for Review: The detailed laboratory report allows the exporting country to verify the testing methodology to ensure accuracy.

When a consignment is rejected unjustly, exporting nation can raise a Specific Trade Concern before the WTO-SPS Committee.

Essential information about Acephate and its residue definition for MRLs

Acephate is a highly effective, broad-spectrum insecticide used to control

a wide variety of sucking, chewing, and boring pests in field and horticultural crops. Upon application, Acephate is readily degraded by plants and only about **1-10%** degrades to Methamidophos. The exact proportion depends on plant species and environmental conditions. Methamidophos itself is an unstable compound and it progressively mineralizes into carbon di oxide, sulfate and phosphite.

According to Codex, the residue definition for Acephate includes Acephate and its metabolite Methamidophos.

For MRL enforcement (compliance) purpose, the measured concentration of Acephate and the measured concentration of Methamidophos, a breakdown product (metabolite) of Acephate are combined to get the total residue, which is expressed **solely as Acephate** - under Codex Alimentarius in plants and animal commodities.

It is very important to understand this particular MRL compliance requirement.

This definition allows testing laboratories to enforce a singular MRL threshold for both the compounds, Acephate and its breakdown product Methamidophos across various plants and animal commodities.

Since being elected host of the **Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues** (CCPR) in 2006, China has hosted over 15 sessions. Over 5,000 MRLs have been discussed and adopted during sessions organized in China including the one for Acephate.

In other words, China is perfectly aware of the Codex definition for Acephate residues and the CCPR recommendations.

The Codex MRL for Acephate in dried chili is **50 parts per million (ppm)**. This includes residues of both Acephate and Methamidophos. **Pertinently, China's MRL in dried chili for Acephate is also 50 ppm in sync with that of Codex.**

The Codex MRLs for seasoning agents (spices and culinary herbs) are generally high because these foods are consumed in very small quantities.

The issue with recent rejection of dried chili consignment by China.

On or around 11th June 2026, several newspapers and digital news media in India reported that China had rejected a few consignments of dried chili exported by India alleging presence of Methamidophos residues. The reports did not mention the measured levels of Methamidophos allegedly found by China.

Methamidophos has never been registered and used as an insecticide in India. It is not used as an insecticide anywhere in the world now, especially after its inclusion in the PIC list of the Rotterdam Convention way back in 2015.

So, where did the alleged Methamidophos residues come from? If China's claim is true, then the residues of Methamidophos must have originated from the legitimate/labelled uses of Acephate.

The alleged presence of Methamidophos should indeed be a sequential consequence of legitimate/labelled uses of Acephate in chili cultivation in India. Because Methamidophos naturally arises as a degradation product, food safety authorities must legally account for both the compounds together in the definition of Acephate residues in accordance with Codex guidelines.

China's rejection of dried chilli consignment is questionable on several grounds:

- ✚ China has failed to report the Acephate residues in accordance with the Codex definition for Acephate.
- ✚ The Codex MRL for Acephate in dried chili is **50 ppm** (50 mg/kg). This includes the parent compound Acephate and Methamidophos, a breakdown product.
- ✚ **Therefore, a consignment of dried chili would become unacceptable, only if the test result showed presence of residues of**

the sum of Acephate and Methamidophos expressed as Acephate >50 ppm. There is no evidence available to demonstrate this.

- ✚ Pertinently, the measured values of the violating residue/s allegedly found in the chili consignments rejected by China have not yet been made public.
- ✚ The rejection was apparently based on an inappropriate phytosanitary measure, and it did not align with the Codex residue definition for Acephate.
- ✚ The rejections lack empirical and scientific justification, which is a core requirement under **Article 2** of the WTO-SPS Agreement.
- ✚ Allegations of unjustified, arbitrary, or politically motivated import consignment rejections by the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) have been a flashpoint in international trade. China's rejection of Indian dried chili consignments is arbitrary, unjustified and not based on the Codex definition of residues for Acephate.

When a rejection results from a pesticide “**residue definition**” not recognized by Codex, the exporting country – India in this case - can challenge the rejection.

Under the circumstances, India, the exporting country, has the full right to demand the original laboratory reports, testing methodologies, the residue definition and MRL used to verify the findings.

Our attention must move from the reason cited for the rejection to the process adopted for it. This is of utmost importance.

Crop Care Federation of India (CCFI) is an apex trade body for Indian agrochemicals industry with 50 companies as members. Our members account for over 70% of agrochemicals export from India.

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