

Extension

Is our food safe?



Info sheet answers.

1) What is the average CAPTAN residue on apples at:

a) Holly Farm? Answer: 1.53 mg/kg b) Ivy Farm? Answer: 1.58 mg/kg

2) Are the averages of either set of data higher than the Maximum Residue Level (MRL) of 3mg/kg?

Answer: No

3) Do you think that all the apples from each farm are below the MRL?

Answer: No. Some of the apples tested at Ivy Farm have CAPTAN levels above the MRL. At Holly Farm, though, all the apples are below the MRL.

4) Do your results give a *valid* answer to the question 'is this food safe to eat'?

Answer:

- For Holly Farm, no. It only gives an answer to the question, are CAPTAN levels below the MRL. A factbox tells you that two other pesticides are used at the farm which you have not tested for, so you have no idea whether levels of those pesticides are safe.
- For Ivy Farm, no. We know that some of these apples are above the MRL for CAPTAN, but we don't know what the safe level is (it will be higher).

5) Can you say that apples from either farm are definitely safe? Justify your answer.

Answer: No. (See answer to Q.4)

6) If CAPTAN levels were above the MRL in both wheat and in parsley, which do you think scientists would worry most about?

Answer: Wheat. Wheat is a very important foodstuff, central to Western diets. Parsley, on the other hand, is eaten in very small quantities. Most people will ingest far more CAPTAN from wheat because they eat so much more wheat than they do parsley.