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‘Additives and preservatives injurious to health’

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SHGs take part in food safety programme

Udhagamandalam: A two-day programme to train women on ways to detect adulterants in food got under way here on Monday.

Over 30 members of various self-help groups in and around this hill station are participating in the food safety programme organised by the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs in association with a Chennai-based organisation Centre for Consumer Education, Research, Teaching, Training and Testing (CONCERT) and the Udhagai Consumer Protection Association.

Speaking to *The Hindu* the Coordinator, CONCERT, G. Santhanarajan said that such a programme was being conducted for the first time in the Nilgiris.

Pointing out that it was the 40th in the State, he said that the objective was to enhance awareness about the various forms in which food was being adulterated.

Stating that globalisation has paved the way for the entry of food items from different parts of the world, he alleged that the additives and preservatives, which were being liberally used, were injurious to health.

While some of the items used for value addition violated the Prevention of Food Adulteration (PFA) Act, life style changes have made people throw caution to the winds and go for wax polished fruits, GM food etc.

Testing kits

Expressing the hope that such programmes will help promote health consciousness among the people, he said that the beneficiaries will be provided with spot testing kits developed by CONCERT for detecting adulterants.

Stating that goal of the organisation was to create a society in which the consumers were well informed and capable of taking care of themselves and people in their neighbourhood, Mr. Santhanarajan said that those who have undergone training will train others.

The trainees were women who had passed standard X and in the age range 18-50.

They were all social activists.

In the programmes conducted so far in different parts of the state tea was found to be one of the most adulterated items.

While a demonstration on how to use the kits formed part of the programme, some of the participants said that the training will go a long way in checking the activities of adulterants.

Meanwhile, some of the consumers opined that if the public was allowed to gain access to such programmes they could put forth their views which will help expose the adulterators.