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Research Paper Economics

Food Security- Issues and Concerns

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ABSTRACT

Food security implies access by all people at all times to sufficient quantities of food to lead an active and healthy lifeIn 2000-01, about half of the rural children below five years of age suffered from malnutrition and 40% of adults suffered from chronic energy deficiency. Such a high level of wasting away of human resources should be a cause for concern. In the world the number of people lacking access to the minimum diet has risen from 824 million in the baseline year 1990 to 963 million in 2008. More than 850 million people all over the world live everyday with food insecurity. This paper focuses on the food security issues in India and the world. This article is an attempt to understand that how food security is threatened and how can we overcome this problem.

KEYWORDS:

INTRODUCTION

Food security implies access by all people at all times to sufficient quantities of food to lead an active and healthy life .This requires not just adequate supply of food at the aggregate level but also enough purchasing capacity with the individual /households to demand adequate level of food. As far as the question of adequate supply is concerned. It involves two dimensions

1) The quantitative dimension in sense that overall food availability in the economy should be sufficient to meet the food

2) The qualitative dimension (in the sense that the nutritional requirements of the population are properly looked after)as far as the question of enough purchasing power capacity is concerned, it involves the introduction of employment generation of programmes so that the income and purchasing power of the people increases.

From the definition given by Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food security can be explained that it is the availability of enough food to all the people at all the times where people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet the dietary needs and food preferences for survival and active and healthy life.

History

In ancient times, food was always available .We used to run after it or gather it from our neighborhood, when we felt hunger. This was just to quench our hunger and based on our immediate needs only. Then we learned the art of farming so that food was available at arm's length and we wearable to store required quantity based on our immediate as well as future need (or greed). Later we learnt various methods like storing, freezing, packing, and processing it so that food will be kept for long, thus making it more convenient for consumption. These transformations have taken place in thousands of years.

According to NSS, per capita cereal consumption has been declining since the early 1970's despite a significant rise in per capita cereal production. This can be attributed to changes in consumer tastes, from food to non-food items and, within food group, from coarse to fine cereals. The decline in cereal consumption has been greater in rural areas, where the improvement in rural infrastructure has made other food and non-food items available to rural households.

Present Situation

We still run after our food. Not like ancient times with sharp tools, but with present day tools ,sharp minds, money and credit cards. Actually we don't run after our food now, but after the money that may secure our food. We think that the storage system, processing system and the credit systems all make food secure for us. Yet is our food securer safe enough? Did the so proclaimed Green Revolution give us a sustainable productivity or the public distribution systems assured a sustainable availability? The answer is, NO.

In ancient times, before the arrival of organized farming, animals, plants and human beings all had food security with their natural and sustainable methods. During that time food security meant, having good food for all, at all times. They lost it only when there was an undue interference with nature.

How is it Threatened?

So how did our food security weaken? This started when agriculture became agribusiness. In this era of 'profit only' business culture, we need power and everything depends only on power. Ethics and values are cultures of the past. We lost food security to a system of 'ruling only for power' and using distribution system to control power. Food is always there. We either don't produce enough or do not have the money to secure it. Now food itself is a weapon in the pursuit of power. Control oversees is the latest strategy. Food security is controlled by seed control. This has become possible because farmers have lost their traditional agricultural systems and seeds. At present, modern science rules over age-old experiences and agricultural practices.

When population increased, the number of farmers did not increase accordingly because modern science supplemented by chemicals and machinery had replaced farmers, in the name of so-called" productivity". Though the system seemed to be success in the beginning, the quality of soil and environment decreased so much that the scientific system is failing now. Actually, modern science has shown us means to have more sustainability, but, our greed for money and profit has misused science. Thus, Food became expensive and inferior in quality.

Over the past years –

The number of persons consuming food has increased, but

The number of persons who produce it(farmers) has decreased.

The production and productivity of food has increased, but

The quality of food has drastically decreased.

The prices of food has increased, but

The sharing of food has decreased.

The control over food has increased for a few, but

The availability has decreased for the masses.

Let us take a look at water. Water is also food, which was available free and safe. Now there is scarcity and we buy it. Overuse, misuse, and contamination of water are seen everywhere. It is alarming in a state like Kerala, with more than enough rainfall and rivers, when people buy not only their drinking water but also water for their other daily needs. Our greed and lack of responsibility to nature has resulted in this situation. If we do no correct ourselves now, it won't be much longer before we start buying our fresh air also.

Let us understand the limitations of science in producing healthy food. Food, to most people is what they get in a packet. Children nowadays

connect milk not to a cow but to the plastic bag or to the milkman. Fruits they get the idea from the picture on the cover, the taste what the packet offers. They do not have an idea what food comes from which plant. Tomorrow, misuse of modern science for profit may take the picture of the packet. Then it is the processor who will decide what the food looks like and what it tastes like for his convenience.

Overcoming the Problem

So how do we secure our food, water and air and maintain the quality of all these necessities? Depending only on chemical farming and more mineral water bottling plants is not the answer. Do not follow modern science blindly. Science, human values, and our responsibility to nature all will have to merge together. This is how the organic farming systems evolved. The organic farmer wanted to maintain a healthy soil and environment for a sustainable production and the consumer wanted safe and healthy produce. To enjoy good and safe food, we need to encourage more people to take up farming and make it remunerative enough for them. Let everyone learn the art of producing food with whatever little space they have, terraces or even window sills.

India's Initiatives to ensure Food Security

- Passing of the Essential Commodities Act in 1955.
- 'Green Revolution' in 1960
- The establishment of a public distribution system (PDS)`
- The Integrated Child Development Scheme(ICDS) in 1975
- The Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), in 2000
- National Food for Work Programme(NFFWP) in 2004
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Action 2005
- Sampoorna Grameen RozgarYojana(SGRY)
- National Food Security Mission (2007)
- In 2007, the Indian government approved two initiatives – the National Policy for Farmers and the Rashtriya Krishi VikasYojana – that take a holistic approach to agricultural development.
- It also proposes to pass a National Food Security Act in 2009under which below poverty line (BPL families) will be provided with 25 kgs. Of grain a month at a subsidized price of Rs.3per kg.

Organizations for Food Security

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
- World Food Programme(WFP)
- Food Corporation of India(FCI)
- Concern Worldwide
- International Planning Committee(IPC)Food Sovereignty

Some strategic goals for NGOs to ensure adequate food

Besides efforts to solve the rood causes of hungers described above, NGOs should commit themselves to the following goals in order to enforce the human right to adequate food:

- Food in sufficient quantities and quality to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, that are free from adverse substances, are acceptable within a given culture are available year round.
- Everybody has access to adequate, safe and culturally acceptable foods that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights.
- Food is produced, processed and transported in a sustainable way.
- Long-term stability in food availability must be ecologically sustainable. Food production also needs to be economically and socially sustainable.
- Women empowerment and emancipation must led to gender equality and the increase to women's participation in development.
- Food and nutrition security of all children in a given community is achieved.
- Peoples participation in the socio-political decision making process – at least on local level – is guaranteed.
- Last but not least, human rights – including the right to adequate food – are social processes. Rights are written on paper but they only become reality when the political structure, attitudes and behavior of individuals and societies make them so. Therefore, NGOs should continue their campaigns to make all people aware of the fact that in the time it has taken to read this short article, at least 50 children have died of hunger somewhere on the globe.

Conclusion

The achievement of food grain security at the national level did not percolate down to households and the level of chronic food insecurity is still high. Over 225 million Indians remain chronically under nourished. In 2000-01, about half of the rural children below five years of age suffered from malnutrition and 40% of adults suffered from chronic energy deficiency. Such a high level of wasting away of human resources should be a cause for concern.

Food security, as defined by FAO, provides a useful goal towards which the world should strive. It can also be useful for monitoring an important aspect of the well-being of households and for the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs and projects. However, the interaction between household food access (usually referred to as household food security), and household food acquisition and allocation behavior means that household food security is of only limited value as an indicator of individual food security. The impact of climate change on agriculture is therefore likely to lead to a loss of stability in productivity and an overall decline in food production. Unless urgent action is taken, climate change will undoubtedly worsen global food security, more especially in developing and populous countries like India, and dramatically increase the number of people facing hunger and malnutrition. Besides efforts the NGOs should commit themselves to the goals in order to enforce the human right to adequate food. Apart from this to enjoy good and safe food, we need to encourage more people to take up farming and make it remunerative enough for them. Let everyone learn the art of producing food with whatever little space they have, terraces or even window sills.



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