



Issues and Challenges to Food Security in India: Current Science

Mr. Annepu Yakanna

M.A- Economics, Department of Economics, OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD-TELANGANA STATE

ABSTRACT

Food security is access to enough food by all people at all time for an active and healthy life. India is truly developing now and its income, infrastructure, per capita income has also developed. But the major problem faced by India is "the problem food management and it's distribution". Agriculture is very important to India, employing 55% of its population and providing 16.5% of its annual GDP. Today, India ranks second worldwide in farm output..India is the largest producer in the world of milk, cashew nuts, coconuts, tea, ginger, turmeric and black pepper. It also has the world's largest cattle population (281 million). It is the second largest producer of wheat, rice, sugar, groundnut and inland fish. It is the third largest producer of tobacco. India accounts for 10% of the world fruit production with first rank in the production of banana. Despite ensuring ample availability of food, existence of food insecurity at the micro-level in the country has remained a formidable challenge for India. In the recently released Global Hunger Index of 2013, India ranked 63rd out of 120 countries and this report is quite disturbing because India is one of the largest producers of food in the world. Still India is not in the condition to meet the basic food requirements of people. There are many people in India who strive hard even for the square meals. I don't say that people in village areas are facing this problem, but also people in major cities face the same problems!!Lack of food supply and the nutritional deficiency causes not only a bad mark for the country's image in the international level, but also causes adverse effect on country's developing economic policies and it's structure. Mismanagement of food products and it's supply also puts country under many dreadful diseases too! This paper is focused on the several foods security issues prevalent in the Indian scenario. Data are taken from relevant sources to analysis the gravity of the food security issues in India. It also covered the several development programmes taken up by the Indian government to counter various food security issues including several schemes and yojanas. India's biggest challenge still remains ensuring food and nutritional security to its masses.

KEYWORDS : Food security, Challenges, GDP, Mismanagement of food products, Global Hunger Index (GHI).

INTRODUCTION:

Security (Food and Human) is one of the major challenges confronting the world today. Food security, along with poverty eradication and ecological conservation, is one of the most significant elements of the millennium development goals. The thought of food security is delineated as that take account of both physical and economic admittance to food that congregate people's dietary needs as well as their food predilection (FAO, 2009). Food security exists "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life" (The World Food Summit, 1996). Food Security is pedestal on three essential pillars of Food availability on a consistent basis, Food access for appropriate nutritious diet and Food use for basic nutrition and care as well as adequate water and sanitation. For accomplishing the objective of self-sufficiency in the developing countries, the main concern is specified to food stability and availability (Arya, 2009).

Over one billion Populations in each of the country of China and India have generated a challenge and pressure for both. Research indicates that these countries hold about half of the world's reserves of wheat and the largest reserves of rice (Rice Market Monitor, 2009). India experienced a bumper harvest in year 2010, however, owing to inadequate storage facilities has demolished almost one third of food grains. Thus the government has strong-willed to save rather than to sell the stocks in the market (International Business Times, 2010). India is the world's largest food security puzzle as the country vestiges enormously significant in the global food and nutrition security equation.

Why food security is needed in India?

The International food policy research institute (IFPR) classified the status of hunger into five category-low, moderate, serious, alarming and extremely alarming. **India falls into the category of alarming.** The most important aspect contributing to this development is the non-availability of basic requirement of food. It has been observed that the consumption of food, in terms of nutrition and quantity, is lacking far behind. According to the study conducted by National Institute of Nutrition, the minimum per capita food grain required for an adult is 182.5kg/year whereas in India, the availability is only

173.6kg/year and as far as the protein requirement is concerned, the daily intake should be 50mg but the situation seems to remain stagnant, the per capita daily intake is only 10mg.

INDIA'S FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES:

Food security is the back bone of national prosperity and well-being. The health of any nation is directly linked to food security. Food security may be defined as availability of food and access to it. A family is considered to be food secure when its members do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. As per definition of FAO- Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. There is direct relationship between food consumption levels and poverty. In India, 30 million people have been added to the rank of hungry since the mid-1990s and 40% children are underweight. Worldwide 852 million people are hungry due to extreme poverty and 2 billion people lack food security intermittently due to varying degree of poverty (Sources FAO, 2003). 600 million children die of hunger every year and 17000 every day. In India approximately, 320 Indians go to bed without food every night and recent data is very much alarming and situation is going even worse. Food riots have taken in many countries of the world. It's becoming very difficult to maintain food security. In rural context, agriculture development for small and marginal farmer is the most important dimension of food security. The diversification of agriculture for food e.g., cereals, pulses, edible oil yielding, vegetable, fuel & timber yielding plants, medicinal and fodder crops are necessary to meet the food and augment income to farmers to meet the food security. Natural vagaries like excessive rainfall, drought, and availability of water for irrigation, undulating topography, soil erosion, and soil type such as degraded soil, acidic & alkaline soil affect the food security. The income levels of farmer families govern the access to food affordability. Food distribution is a big problem. PDS (Public Distribution System) is not satisfactorily functioning. The families very poor within adequate income cannot escape food crisis. Globalization may and may not help food security. However, there are people who feel that globalization will definitely help food security due to trade but its matter of debate. We will have to aim at food security in developing countries through increased and

stabilized food production on an economically and environmentally sustainable technologies/ methods. Diversification in agriculture is highly required. We cannot afford to hunger, malnutrition and famine.

Accordingly, all of us including Govt. policies seriously need to redesign in order to meet the present demand and fill the gap of existing system in order to ensure food security to every citizen of the country

INDIA'S FOOD SECURITY ISSUES:

The prevailing situation in the contemporary farming community needs serious attention in order to produce 61.2 million tonnes of food grain. Food and non-food prices have increased significantly in recent years and it's becoming unaffordable for the poor families to cope with the rising price. The expenditure on cultivation has increased extensively but the agricultural income has not increased in proportion with its input. In recent years, real wages in agriculture has increased much faster than the real growth in gross value added in agriculture. During the period (2007-2011), real farm wages recorded an average growth rate of 6.8% while real growth in agriculture was only 3.3%. This has put serious distress among the farmers. Another equally significant factor is the energy. Energy plays an important role in determining the output of production. The increase in the price of the energy has affected the food prices in two ways. Firstly, the rise in the price of petroleum product motivates the government and the corporate sector to go for producing bio-fuel. The policy for production of bio diesel from *Jatropha* plant and ethanol from molasses has already been initiated. This will seriously reduce the land area under cultivation for the production of food grain.

Secondly, the raising price in the inputs like fertilizers, pesticides and cost of mechanical cultivation has made agricultural production very expensive. The share of mechanical and electrical power in the total power consumption has increase significantly from 39.63% in 1972-1973 to 86% in 2005-2006, while corresponding human and animal power has come down from 60.37% to 13.4% during the same period. In recent years, with the increase of income and changes in the dietary pattern, the middle class families have been spending more on horticulture and livestock product as it provides more nutrients. And on the other hand the poor farmers whose income remains more or less stagnant see this as means to earn more income. Marginal farmers change to more income oriented occupation to support their household. Considering this, there is a possibility that the production of horticulture or livestock production may increase tremendously but the whole purpose of food security will be useless as this product are costly and poor people will not be able to afford it. This current development will have serious effect on the sustainability of food security. Not only it will reduce the area under cultivation but it will also increase the demand for feed grain and subsequently increasing the cereal prices, affecting the poor household.

Issues faced in India:

In spite of surplus food-grains stock, it is also a reality that a vast number of people do not have enough money to feed them twice a day.

1. Inadequate and improper storage facilities for grains, which are often stored outside under tarps that provide little protection from humidity and pests.
2. Insufficient cold storage and cold chain transportation system is a major cause for fruits, vegetables and other perishable products to rot.
3. Poor roads and inefficient transport systems can cause massive delays. This in turn causes decay of temperature sensitive produce.
4. Limited reach of Mandis, which are currently the point of aggregation for agricultural produce. This poses problems for small farmers who don't have proper transport facilities at their disposal and have to travel an average of 12 km to the closest Mandi.

5. Multiple layers of middlemen between the farmer and the end consumer, driving up prices and reducing bargaining power and price transparency for the farmers. These intermediaries have led to a cost inflation of ~250% (over the cost of production).

Recommendations:

There is a need to shift from the existing expensive, inefficient and corruption ridden institutional arrangements to those that will ensure cheap delivery of requisite quality grains in a transparent manner and are self-targeting.

Futures market and free trade: The present system marked by input subsidies and high MSP should be phased out. To avoid wide fluctuations in prices and prevent distress selling by small farmers, futures market can be encouraged. Improved communication systems through the use of information technology may help farmers get a better deal for their produce. Crop insurance schemes can be promoted with government meeting a major part of the insurance premium to protect the farmers against natural calamities.

To start with, all restrictions on foodgrains regarding inter-State movement, stocking, exports and institutional credit and trade financing should be renounced. Free trade will help make-up the difference between production and consumption needs, reduce supply variability, increase efficiency in resource-use and permit production in regions more suited to it.

Food-for-education programme: To achieve cent per cent literacy, the food security need can be productively linked to increased enrolment in schools. With the phasing out of PDS, food coupons may be issued to poor people depending on their entitlement.

Modified food-for-work scheme/ direct subsidies: With rationalization of input subsidies and MSP, the Central Government will be left with sufficient funds, which may be given as grants to each State depending on the number of poor.

The State government will in turn distribute the grants to the village bodies, which can decide on the list of essential infrastructure, work the village needs and allow every needy villager to contribute through his labour and get paid in food coupons and cash.

Community grain storage banks: The FCI can be gradually dismantled and procurement decentralized through the creation of foodgrain banks in each block/ village of the district, from which people may get subsidized foodgrains against food coupons. The food coupons can be numbered serially to avoid frauds. The grain storage facilities can be created within two years under the existing rural development schemes and the initial lot of grains can come from the existing FCI stocks. If culturally acceptable, the possibility of relatively cheap coarse grains, like bajara and ragi and nutritional grains like millets and pulses meeting the nutritional needs of the people can also be explored. This will not only enlarge the food basket but also prevent such locally adapted grains from becoming extinct. The community can be authorized to manage the food banks. This decentralized management will improve the delivery of entitlements, reduce handling and transport costs and eliminate corruption, thereby bringing down the issue price substantially. To enforce efficiency in grain banks operation, people can also be given an option to obtain foodgrains against food coupons from the open market, if the rates in the grain banks are higher, quality is poor or services are deficient. A fund can be set up to reimburse the food retailers for the presented coupons. This competition will lead to constant improvement and lower prices. It must also be mandatory to maintain a small buffer stock at the State level, to deal with exigencies.

CONCLUSIONS:

Over the two decades of rapid growth of the Indian economy, the urban economy is generally perceived as having done very well.

However, high urban economic growth need not by itself imply improved living standards for all urban residents. In particular, the recent and continuing phenomenon of rising food prices reminds us that considerable sections of the urban population may face serious food insecurity even while the urban economy grows rapidly.

REFERENCES:

1. Akiojam.S. L (2011), "Food Security: Challenges and Issues in India", Research Journal of Economics and Business Studies, vol-01, No.:01, 2011.
2. Ali.M, Rehman. H and Husain. M.S, (2012), "Status of food insecurity at household level in rural India: A case study of Uttar Pradesh", International Journal of physical and social sciences, Volume 2, Issue 8.
3. Atherya. V, (2010), "Food insecurity in Urban India" The Hindu dated on 24th Sep, 2010.
4. Atherya. V, et.al (2008), "Report on the state of food insecurity in rural India", World food programme.
5. Bhandari and Dubey (2001), "Calorie Deficiency, Poverty and the Public distribution System- A household level Analysis for 1993-94", RGICSWorking Paper (24).