



An Overview of Food Policy in India

KEYWORDS

Food Security, Poverty, Public Distribution System, Unemployment

Khushvir Singh Saini

Research Scholar , Department of Geography
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Savita Ahlawat

Research Scholar, Department of Geography
Panjab University, Chandigarh

ABSTRACT

Food policy plays a very crucial role in ensuring food security in any area. In this regard, the government of India has taken many steps from time to time by introducing various food policies. Initially the rationing system was introduced in 1939 in Bombay and was extended in the form Public Distribution System especially for urban areas. During 1980s the Public Distribution System was linked with anti-poverty and employment programs and in order to increase the household level food security the Revamped Public Distribution and Targeted Public Distribution System schemes were introduced during 1990s. Recently National Food Security Bill has been passed in 2013. Therefore, the objective of the present paper is to provide an overview of food policy in India and the steps taken by government to improve it in order to ensure the food security to all people in the country.

Introduction

Food policy is the area of public policy concerning how food is produced, processed, distributed, and purchased. It plays a very crucial role in ensuring food security in any area. In present times, it is very difficult to formulate a stable food policy that can sustain and satisfy the masses for a long period of time. Thus a continuous effort is necessary on the part of the policy makers to appreciate the interdependence between food demand and supply and also took care of the economic chains. In this regard, the government of India has taken many steps from time to time by introducing various food policies for assuring food security among the general masses. These policies have been generated mixed response from the academic community. So this paper goes through the various efforts/policies of Indian government to ensure safe, sufficient and economically viable food for the people.

The present paper is divided into three sections. Section I deals with Introduction; Section II states the objective and methodology of the paper and Section III includes the result and discussion part.

Section II

Objective

The objective of this study is to provide an overview of food policy in India and the steps taken by government to improve it in order to ensure the food security to all people in the country.

Data sources and methodology:

In order to achieve the above said objective secondary data sources like Government of India reports, books and journals have been used from. Data is critically analyzed and discussed in the next section.

Section III

Results and Discussion

Evolution of Food Policy

The inception of modern day Indian food policy happened during the 2nd World War when it was introduced as rationing system mainly for urban areas. At the initial stages the whole system was dependent on imported food. Immediately after independence the rationing was abolished,

and was reintroduced in 1950 as Public Distribution System (PDS). After Green Revolution the outreach of PDS was extended to tribal blocks and areas of high incidence of poverty in the 1970s and 1980s. PDS, till 1992, was a general entitlement scheme for all consumers without any specific target. Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was launched in June 1992 in 1775 blocks throughout the country. Later on the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced with effect from June 1997.

Evaluation of TPDS

TPDS was introduced to provide food specifically to the poverty stricken families. Even the offtake by the poor under TPDS was substantially higher than under universal PDS. But still large errors lingers in inclusion of the BPL households as TPDS covers only 57% of all the BPL families. Apart from it this system has also been plagued by leakages of off take. The amount of leakages also varies among different states of India. In the total leakage in Bihar and Punjab, exceeds 75% while in Kerala, Orissa and Tamil Nadu it is less than 25%. The consumption of the foodgrains provided under this system also varies between various states of India. The states of Jammu and Kashmir (56%), Tamil Nadu (48.3%), Mizoram (47.4%), Himachal Pradesh (37.5%) have highest share of PDS rice consumption in India. While on the other hand Punjab (0.1%), Haryana (0.6%), Manipur (1.3%), Rajasthan (1.5%), Nagaland (4.9%) have below 5 percent share. As far as the PDS wheat Consumption as percent of monthly per capita consumption is concerned, it is highest in Tamil Nadu (69.9%), Jammu and Kashmir (47.8%), Mizoram (47.4%) and Kerala (46.9%). While Nagaland, Manipur Jharkhand, Sikkim, Gujarat states have below 10 percent share of PDS wheat.

Other Key Food Programs

Apart from TPDS the other key food programmes are Antyodaya Anna Yojna, Mid Day Meal Scheme and Village Grain Bank Scheme. The Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) was started in December, 2000 for one crore poorest of the poor families of India. Mid Day Meal (MDM) Scheme was implemented in 2004 in order to improve the nutritional status of children. Village Grain Bank scheme was launched the in tribal villages of 11 states in 1996-97.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013

It is the world's largest welfare scheme guaranteeing cheap food grains to 67% of the population. This act aims to bring substantial reforms to the already existing TPDS. The act also target to enhance women empowerment in India. Further an improved grievance redressal mechanism has also been charted out under this act and more emphasis has also been given to put transparency and accountability at the centre stage of the whole system.

Under this act, the central Government is obligated for the allocation of foodgrains, transportation of foodgrains to the depots and for the maintenance of the storage facilities. The state government is responsible for the implementation & monitoring of the schemes, assurance of the actual supply of foodgrains to the entitled persons and for the institutionalized licensing arrangements for fair price shops. Under this act, the local authorities have to ensure the proper implementation of this act.

Criticism of NFSA, 2013: No matter how beneficial the National Food Security Act, 2013 is in tackling the menaces of hunger and food insecurity, in the long haul it will ultimately prove as a burden on the national economy. Apart from it chance of errors in identifying the targeted population is also very large under this act. Apart from all the issues concerning the various food policies of India the issue of foodgrains quality has always plagued each of them. By enacting various acts and policies the government of India has curbed the problems of hunger but till date it could not ensure the eradication of the problem of malnutrition.

Suggestions to Improve Food Policy

The government of India could enhance the efficiency of NFSA by overcoming the aforementioned problems. To target the BPL population, all the MGNREGA workers must be covered under this act. Further to address the issue of nutrition security pulses should also be included at subsidized rate for the poorest of the poor population. The footsteps of the Chhattisgarh Public Distribution System model should also be followed as it leads the way in the field of efficient working of PDS system. The Chhattisgarh model ensures the proper working of the fair price shops (FPS) by giving the ownership of FPSs to women self help groups, panchayats and cooperative societies. The storage capacity of foodgrains has also been increased 5 times under this model. Further in an attempt to curb corrupt practices by the FPSs owners the commission of the FPS owners has been increased 4 times. To check the proper deliverance of foodgrains, computerised monitoring system & smart ration card system has also been introduced under this model.

REFERENCE

- Ahluwalia, D. (1993). Public distribution of food in India: Coverage, targeting and leakages. *Food Policy*, 18(1), 33-54. Allen, P. (1999). Reweaving the food security safety net: Mediating entitlement and entrepreneurship. *Agriculture and human values*, 16(2), 117-129. Dutta, B., & Ramaswami, B. (2001). Targeting and efficiency in the public distribution system: Case of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1524-1532. George, P. S. (1996). Public distribution system, food subsidy and production incentives. *Economic and Political Weekly*, A140-A144. Khera, R. (2011). Revival of the public distribution system: evidence and explanations. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46(44), 36-50. Khera, R. (2011). India's public distribution system: utilisation and impact. *Journal of Development Studies*, 47(7), 1038-1060. Kumar, P. (2010). Targeted public distribution system performance and inefficiencies. *Targeted public distribution system performance and inefficiencies*. Maxwell, S. (1996). Food security: a post-modern perspective. *Food policy*, 21(2), 155-170. Mooij, J. (1999). Food policy and the Indian state: the public distribution system in South India. Oxford University Press. Planning Commission. (2005). Performance Evaluation of Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). Radhakrishna, R. (2006). Food trends, public distribution system and food security concerns. *Indian Agriculture in the New Millennium: Changing Perceptions and Development Policy*, 2, 227. Suryanarayana, M. H. (1994). Urban Bias in PDS. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29(9), 510-512. Swaminathan, M. (2002). Excluding the Needy: The Public Provisioning of Food in India. *Social Scientist*, 30(3), 34-58.