Research Paper Economics

Agriculture, Inclusive Groth and Food Security in India: Performance, Challenges and Policies

Mr. BANDAMEEDI NAGARAJU

Ph.D-Research Scholar, (Gold Medalist AP-SET), DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS, OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD-500007, TELANGANA, (INDIA).

ABSTRACT

Like most other developing countries, India has predominantly been an agrarian economy, with agriculture sector contributing the largest share to gross domestic product (GDP) and employment. Under the colonial regime, Indian agriculture was geared towards the production of commercial crops (tea, coffee, rubber, cotton, etc.), while the food crops suffered from neglect. After independence, India depended heavily on imports of food grains as it inherited a stagnant, low-productivity, food-crop sector. Food availability is a necessary condition for food security. India is more or less self sufficient in cereals but deficit in pulses and oilseeds. Due to changes in consumption patterns, demand for fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, poultry, and fisheries has been increasing This is too narrow an approach for implementation of the Right to Food. The Right to Food campaign specifies several other things to be included, apart from universal PDS, under the Food Entitlements Act. The need for achieving food security is felt significantly in the recent years due to enormous pressure from the ever-increasing population in India. Owing to the change in preferences in crop production techniques over a period of time, several new challenges draw attention to food security. This article discusses various challenges to food security in India. Critical analysis is made on challenges like crop diversification, issues related to bio-fuel and medicinal plant cultivation, climate change, mismatch between water demand and availability, recent status in production of high yielding crop varieties and agricultural crop pricing and insurance and new trends in globalization and urban encroachments.

KEYWORDS Agriculture, Incisive Growth and Food security.

INTRODUCTION:

India has the largest number of hungry people in the world; despite various programs the number of undernourished people today is similar as 20 years ago. Hunger and malnutrition in India are still major human and social issues despite the fact that the politicians never fail to swear to eliminate poverty and the accompanying hunger. A recent analysis of global hunger also reconfirms that the alarming state of under-nutrition and malnutrition in India; in fact, experts call it a ―silent emergency‖ for the country Hunger remains the No.1 cause of death in the world – Aids, Cancer etc. follow. Over 10 million people die every year of chronic hunger and hunger-related diseases, of which a quarter deaths take place in India. In comparison, less than 10 percent death is claimed by earthquakes, floods, droughts and wars which get the most media attention. There are 900 million chronically hungry people in the world; one-third of them live in India. Almost 50 percent of Indian children are underweight, 30% of newborn have low weight at birth, and over 55% of married women and about 80% of young babies in the age group 6-35 months are anemic. During 2006 – 2007, malnutrition contributed to seven million Indian children dying, nearly two million before the age of one.

AVAILABILITY OF FOOD:

Food security at the national level refers mainly to availability in the country of sufficient stocks of food to meet domestic demand, either through domestic supply or through imports. Here we look at the performance and policies with regard to availability of food.

Policies for Improving Availability of Cereals and Non-cereal Food:

Since we do not have separate macro policies on food, we discuss here the policies for the entire agriculture sector. As mentioned above, food related agricultural activities constitute the bulk of the output in agriculture. There are basically six factors which need to be focused upon in the short and medium term. These are: (i) infrastructure; (ii) land and water management; (iii) research and extension; (iv) inputs including credit; (v) marketing including price policy; and (vi) diversification and development of the rural non-farm sector. Institutions have to be developed with regard to all these aspects.

PERFORMANCE IN ACCESS TO FOOD AND NUTRITION:

At the individual level, food security means that all members of the society have access to the food they need, either from their own production, from the market and/or from the government's transfer mechanism. In order to achieve food security it is also important that the poor have sufficient means to purchase food. Poor people cannot afford to purchase the food they need at market prices, and therefore, social protection programmes are needed. Adequate purchasing power for the poor to buy food can be ensured in two ways. One is to have an employment intensive pattern of growth which can provide remunerative work to the poor and enhance their power to purchase food. Another way is to increase incomes and subsidize food through social protection programmes like PDS and employment programmes. Even if there is availability as well as access to food, there is no guarantee of adequate absorption or nutrition, especially since, nutrition depends on many other factors such as the condition of pregnant women, breast feeding, health factors, hygiene, drinking water, sanitation, etc. In this section we look at the performance of both access to food and nutritional indicators.

Mid-day Meal Scheme:

The mid-day meal scheme (MDMS) has been revised and universalized at the primary level from 1 September 2004. Recently, the MDMS has been extended to Upper Primary School from 1 October 2007. MDMS was supposed to cover about 18 crore children by 2008–09. There are problems with MDMS with regard to financial allocations and the quality of the scheme. The Sixth Report of the Commissioner appointed by the Supreme Court also points out inadequate infrastructure for mid-day meals. Of the sixteen states that sent data to the Commissioner in this regard, thirteen stated that less than 45 per cent schools have a separate kitchen.

The 11th Five Year Plan has given the following action points for improving the performance of MDMS: (i) MDM to be managed by the local community and PRIs/NGOs, and not

contractor-driven: civic quality and safety to be prime considerations; (ii) sensitize teachers and others involved in nutrition, hygiene, cleanliness, and safety norms to rectify observed deficiencies; (iii) involve nutrition experts in planning low cost nutrition menu and for periodic testing of samples of prepared food; (iv) promote locally grown nutritionally rich food items through kitchen gardens in school, etc.; (v) revive the School Health Programme; disseminate and replicate best practices adopted by states; (vi) provide drinking facilities in all schools on an urgent basis; (vii) display status regarding supplies, funds, norms, weekly menu, and coverage in schools to ensure transparency; (viii) central assistance to cooking cost should be based on the actual number of beneficiary children and not on enrolment; (ix) Promote social audit; (x) Online Monitoring.

RIGHT TO FOOD AND NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT:

The Presidential address to Parliament in 2009 indicates that implementation of the National Food Security Act will provide a statutory basis for a framework which assures food security for all. According to this proposed law, every family below the poverty line in rural as well as urban areas will be entitled by law, to 25 kilograms of rice or wheat per month at Rs. 3 per kilogram. It is felt that the statutory guarantee to food with fixed entitlements to the poor would be an important step in the direction of ensuring food and nutritional security of the country. Although the ongoing 'targeted public distribution system' (TPDS) is supposed to provide subsidized food grains to the BPL population, the legislative measure may lead to better accountability by making the PDS system more responsive in reaching out to the targeted population. Since the announcement of the proposed food security law, several people have raised a number of policy level and operational issues that need to be addressed while extending food guarantee to the citizens through a statutory mandate.

FOOD SECURITY IS MULTI-DIMENSIONS:

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (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."15 Implicit in this definition is the recognition that food security is multidimensional. There have been many formulations of what the components of food security are. For instance, the Committee on World Food Security identified four main dimensions or "pillars":16

- Availability is ensured if adequate amounts of food are produced and are ready to have at people's disposal.
- Access is ensured when all households and all individuals within those households have sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods (through production, purchase, or donation) for a nutritious diet.
- Utilization is ensured when the human body is able to ingest and metabolize food. Nutritious and safe diets, an adequate biological and social environment, and a proper health care to avoid diseases help achieve adequate utilization of food.
- Stability is ensured when the three other pillars are maintained over time. Several experts have noted the need for a pillar on environmental sustainability, where food production and consumption patterns do not deplete natural resources or the ability of the agricultural system to provide sufficient food for future generations.17 Therefore, for the purposes of this Background Paper; we identify five pillars of food security.

Conclusion:

Overall, it may be concluded that food security in India can be achieved by paying higher attention to issues such as climate change, integrated water management, agricultural pricing and crop insurance. The impact of globalization in the form of SEZs and other factors has been both positive and negative in terms of agricultural prosperity and there is a strong need to regulate the policies related to globalization for reducing its negative effects on food security in India.

In this paper we have examined the performance, challenges, and policies in food security in terms of availability, access, and absorption or nutrition. It may be noted that all three are inter-related. For example, availability and access to food can increase nutrition among the households. Food availability is a necessary condition for food security. India is more or less self sufficient in cereals but deficit in pulses and oil seeds. Due to changes in consumption patterns, demand for fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, poultry, and fishery products has been increasing. There is a need to increase crop diversification and improve allied activities. It may be noted that the slowdown in agriculture growth could be attributed to structural factors on the supply side, such as public investment, credit, technology, land and water management, etc

REFERENCES

➢ Foundation, M. R. Atlas of the Sustainability of FoodSecurity in India. | ➢ G. o. (2004). Economic Survey 2003-04. New Delhi:Ministry of Finance. | ➢ GoI. (2006). National Family Health Survey-III data. | ➢ Jain, S. K. (2009). Is the food plate in MP becomingempty? Debating Development and Society . | ➢ Jain, S. (2009). The truth of Malnutrition FreeMadhya Pradesh (India). HELLOarticle.com .Madhya pradesh. | ➢ NSSO. (2008). National Survey of StasticalOrganisation. | ➢ R.RadhaKrishna, & Reddy, K. V. (2002). FoodSecurity and Nutrition: Vision 2020. | ➢ Singh, M. (2009, Feburary). Food security in Indialeaves much to be desired . |