



FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Ensuring food security is an issue of vital significance for India as well as for any country across the globe. It is one of the basic amenities of life. In India more than one-third of its population is estimated to be absolutely poor and as many as one half of its children have suffered from malnutrition over the last three decades. The Food security has three important and closely related components, which are availability of food, access to food and absorption of food. The present paper aims at analyzing the significance and reasons for food insecurity in an Indian context. Further it attempts to give an overview of the conditions of food security and in brief the government measures to enhance it. The paper is based on secondary data.

KEYWORDS

Food Security, Productivity, Nutrition and Reseach

INTRODUCTION:

"The food security emerges 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." - *Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)*

Ensuring food security is an issue of vital significance for India as well as for any country across the globe. It is one of the basic amenities of life. In india more than one-third of its population is estimated to be absolutely poor and as many as one half of its children have suffered from malnutrition over the last three decades. The Food security has three important and closely related components, which are availability of food, access to food and absorption of food. The present paper aims at analyzing the significance and reasons for food insecurity in an Indian context. Further it attempts to give an overview of the conditions of food security and in brief the government measures to enhance it. The paper is based on secondary data.

WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY:

Food security can be achieved 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 life. According to *M.S.Swaminathan*, food security may be defined as "providing physical and economic access to balanced diets and safe drinking water to all people at all times". According to *World Bank (1986)*, access to all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Food security is a measure of ensured access to essential nutrition. The *World Health Organisation (WHO)* defines three facets of food security as Food Availability, Food Access, and Food Use. The Food Availability is having sufficient quantities of food on a consistent basis, where as Food Access is having sufficient resources, both Economic and Physical, to obtain appropriate food for a nutritious diet. Food Use is the appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and case, as well as adequate water and sanitation. The *Food and Agriculture Organisation of United States* has added a fourth facet as the stability of the first three dimensions of food security over time. As per *International Food Policy Research Institute's 2011 Global Hunger Index*, about 60 million children in India are underweight and malnourished, while 21 percent of the population as a whole in general is malnourished.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FOOD SECURITY

Hunger or lack of food continues even today to be major problem for nearly one third world population. A substantial

proportion of this hungry population lives in India. The basic concept of food security implies availability and accessibility of food all times

According to *article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* "everyone has the right to a standard of living an adequate for the health and well being of himself and his family including food, clothing and housing". The *World Food Summit* held in 1996 in Rome also laid stress on the right to food. In connection with FAO definition, the *United Nations* in 1987, further expanded the concept of food security in incorporating to availability of life indicators. Nutrition aspects of food consumption have also been addressed as a part of food security. The available and accessible food should be absorbed to convert food into energy, to achieve necessary nutrition status.

The issue of food security is very much linked with increased agricultural productivity, management of natural resources like land, water, weather, etc., and environmental protection. In the context of India it is true that per acre of production vis-à-vis agricultural growth is comparatively lower than other similar countries of the region. In India nearly 75 percent population directly or indirectly depend on agriculture for their life and livelihood.

India got itself concerned with the problem of food security long before the adoption the international undertaking on world food security. In fact, it was introduced during the second world war by setting up *Public Distribution System* to supply food grains and other essential articles at affordable prices. Although the nation has achieved near self-sufficiency at present, the Public Distribution System continuous and is more formal and comprehensive than before.

Thanks to the *green revolution*, the nation has been able to eliminate food imports almost completely and achieve nearly self sufficiency in food production. Food production increased from 55 million tones in 1951 to 217 million tones in 2009. National Sample Survey data on hunger show that the proportion of the rural households having two square meals a day was 81 percent in 1983 which rose to 88 percent in 1991 and 93 percent in 1993. In other words, only 7 percent of the people reported that they did not have enough to eat.

REASONS FOR FOOD INSECURITY:

Insufficient allocation of funds in National and State budgets to guarantee food security. The government is lacking a clear and strategic plan with specific provision of funds in the budget to deal issues like fertilizers, seeds and water facilities.

As far as Agricultural Development is concerned much of the funds are being provided by the central government in national budget and the contribution of the state government is very less and sometimes even nothing.

In 2012-13 budget Rs.1550 crores were allotted to agricultural sector by the central government which if distributed among all the states each state gets Rs.100 crore, which are very less to deal with the related issues of agriculture. Presently, 58 percent of population is employed in the agricultural sector, but the allocation of funds in the budget is not in proportion to this. This year the production of food grains is 25 crore tones and in the next coming 8 years the requirement would be nearly 30 crore tones, but unfortunately there has been no strategic improvement in the allocation of funds to increase the production. The schemes such as NREG has not only increased the agricultural labour cost but also made it difficult for the farmer to get agricultural labours who play an important role in production, which resulted in increased cost of production. The situation becomes still worse when the farmers are not being provided with minimum floor price for their crops, leading to farmer's suicides.

The government has to justify itself regarding the essentiality of spending crores of rupees towards schemes such as providing subsidized rice for maintaining their vote bank or to provide reasonable floor price for the farmers for their crops, which is very important to maintain their spirit of cultivation. The government is also neglecting the role of Agricultural Research Universities in increasing the agricultural production and educating the farmers regarding various new technologies.

The alarming threat to food security is improper food chain supply, much of the food grains are getting rotten in the godowns due to the lack of proper food supply scheme with the government. Much could be done to tackle the problem of food security without going for GM food, if the political will is not lacking.

The food security system in India has been problems on various counts. The main problems are as follows:

Limited benefit to poor from Public Distribution System

Regional disparities in PDS benefits

The question of urban bias

The burden of food security

Inefficiencies in the operations of FCI

Leakages from PDS

FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

With about 2.5 percent of global land resources, 4 percent of water resources and 17 percent of global population living in India, achieving food security by increasing agricultural production has to be at the core of India's agricultural development strategy.

The last great famine in India occurred in 1943, and served as a case study for *Amartya Sen*, in his ground breaking work "Poverty and Famines", in which he showed that famine was rarely the result of lack of food, but was rather the result of intervening economic factors, such as unemployment, declining wages and, poor food distribution systems in India. The current food insecurity of India lies in poor food supply chain mechanism.

The bumper rot is in spite of the *Supreme Court's directive (2010)* to the centre to ensure free distribution of food grains to the hungry poor of the country instead of allowing it to rot in the FCI go-downs. The alarming situation can be understood from the statement of former CMD of Food Corpo-

ration of India (FCI). *Even if a small amount of food grain is wasted, this is nothing short of crime. Instead of letting it rot, we should export it.*

A positive note is that Government of India is expected to remain self-sufficient in production of food staples until at least 2025. The Central Government is attempting to rectify the problem of malnutrition with its *National Food Security Bill – 2013*, which was introduced to provide for food nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to the people to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. Rather than correcting supply chain issues, which increases the availability of food at reduced costs, the government has chosen to subsidize grain purchases. In addition, the government is doing this at a time when it can ill afford the expense associated with underwritten grain purchases for almost two thirds of the country's population.

It is likely that continued government subsidies has contained in the food bill, will only lead to further market distortions. Absence of legislative progress and further market liberalization, market distortions, along with vested interests by middlemen in perpetuating the existing lengthy supply chains, will continue to plague the population of India for some time. The result of this grim situation will surely be a continuation of the ongoing malnutrition epidemic, which will continue to handicap an already slowing economy.

GOVERNMENT INITIATION IN FOOD SECURITY:

The National Food Security Mission is presently under implementation in 482 districts of 19 States of the country with a view to enhance the production of Rice, Wheat and Pulses through area expansion and productivity enhancement; restoring soil fertility and productivity; creating employment opportunities; and enhancing farm level economy to restore confidence of farmers. The basic strategy of the mission is to promote and extend improved technologies, i.e., seed, micronutrients, soil amendments, integrated Pest Management, Farm Machinery and Resource Conservation technologies along with capacity building of farmers with effective monitoring and better management in the high potential districts in order to bridge the yield gaps. Implementation of Mission in the 11th Plan has not only achieved the targeted food gains production but has also widened the base of food grains production with significant contribution from low productivity districts.

The All India Coordinated Research Projects and various institutes of the ICAR strived to develop new crop varieties which had specific traits that improve yield and nutritional quality and form part of the food security mission of the country. The Micro-irrigation systems and laser leveling have potential of enhancing 80 to 90 percent and water use efficiency are essential to derive maximum income, livelihood, employment and food security.

The National Mission of Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) is one of the eight Missions under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). It seeks to address issues on 'Sustainable Agriculture' in the context of risks associated with climate change by devising appropriate adaptation and mitigation strategies for ensuring food security, enhancing livelihood opportunities and contributing to economic stability at National Level.

The Joint Liability Groups is mode of financing serves as collateral substitute for loans to be provided to the target group, i.e., small, marginal, tenant farmers, oral lessees, share croppers, etc., It builds mutual trust and confidence between the bank and the target group and minimizes the risks in the loan portfolio for the banks through dynamics, cluster approach, peer education and credit discipline. The objective of the JLG mode of financing is to provide food security to vulnerable section by enhanced agricultural production, productivity and

livelihood promotion.

The process of technology transfer in India has been a mix of field extension carried out by line departments, anchored by frontline extension systems of the ICAR institutes and SAUs, Community Boards, NGOs and Voluntary Organisations. Recently farmers' Consortiums under different nomenclature have also emerged with this mandate. But most of them have not been able to reach out to the broad spectrum of clientele, who need problem solving, relevant technologies and ground level initiatives, viz., ever increasing ICT interventions; growing emphasis on people's participation and democratic decentralization; increasing role of NGOs; growing trust on entrepreneurship development and multiplicity of facilitating and consultancy services required by different stakeholders are bound to play a catalytic role.

THE RIGHT OF FOOD SECURITY AS FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT:

Food security and Human Development components are highly significant for every country in the globalised environment. **Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** says "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and his family, including food..." Moreover, **Article 38** of the Constitution provides that the state should strive to promote the welfare of the people in securing and promoting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice social, economic, political shall inform all the institutions of the natural life. Similarly, **Article 47**

requires that the state should regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of the status of the public health as one among its primary duties. Food security is thus a constitutional commitment and a basic human right in all facets.

Similarly, there is a imperative need for better rural livelihood system for the community to have better life and high standard of living.

CONCLUSION:

The food security for all citizens of the nation should be one of the fundamental right. It should also be the obligation on the part of the nation to provide accessibility and adequacy of nutritious food to all at all time. Even though it stressed in the constitution and various governmental measures, it still remains to be the unrealized goal of the nation. It is soon going to be the global issue which requires to be dealt at the huge cost of human lives. The governments and national and international organizations should come ahead to serve the humanity atleast by offering the basic needs, i.e., food, shelter and clothing. The development of the nation can be assessed on the basis of the quantity and quality food available to every individual citizen at every time periods. It is the need of the hour to think and act on this issue which is fundamental need of every one. The measures to food security also further encourages the quality of life of farmers and definitely helps genraly in the reduction of farmers suicides across the globe and Indian particularly.

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