



Food Security In India

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Abstract:

Food security has been an important developmental objective since the beginning of planning in India. Though there has been impressive growth in the recent past still the country is facing acute shortage of food grains. The primary objective of India's food security policy is to provide food grains to the people at reasonable and affordable prices. This was to be achieved by increasing the food grain production and procurement and maintenance of buffer stock of rice and wheat to be distributed through Public Distribution System (PDS). The need for achieving food security is felt significantly in the recent years due to enormous pressure from the ever-increasing population in India. In spite of the economic progress that the country has made in food production over the last 66 years, most rural population still has to deal with the uncertainties of food security on a daily basis. The government has been over the past few decades trying to address the food insecurity through implementing various schemes for the poor. The paper examines the food productivity and availability in the country, the various food security schemes of the government prior to Food Security Bill-2013, the working of TPDS and PDS in providing food security to APL and BPL families and the challenges faced by the PDS in providing food security to the target segment.

Keywords: *National Food Security Bill, food security, food productivity, constraints, TPDS, APL, BPL*

Introduction

Food security has been an important developmental objective since the beginning of planning in India. Though there has been impressive growth in the recent past still the country is facing acute shortage of food grains. The primary objective of India's food security policy is to provide food grains to the people at affordable prices. This to be achieved by increasing the food grain production and procurement and

maintenance of buffer stock of rice and wheat to be distributed through Public Distribution System (PDS). Food security will provide legal entitlement for food grains to 68% of the country's 1.2 billion population.

Need of the study

The need for achieving food security is felt significantly in the recent years due to enormous pressure from the ever-increasing population in India. In spite of



the economic progress that the country has made in food production over the last 66 years, most rural population still has to deal with the uncertainties of food security on a daily basis. Over 1/5th of India's population suffers from chronic hunger. Food insecurity in India is not only due to under production, bad monsoon or the fall of buffer stocks, in fact there are other factors that contribute towards food insecurity in India. The government has been over the past few decades trying to address the food insecurity through implementing various schemes for the poor. Food grain production was 196.81million tones in 2000-01 which increased to 255.36 million tones in 2012-13, still millions of people go hungry and millions are on the brink of starvation. The implementation challenges faced by the government machinery fail to provide the benefits to the targeted segment.

Objective of the study

The main objectives of the present study is to find out the food productivity and availability in India, to study the various food security schemes in existence before the Food Security Bill-2013 and the working of Targeted public Distribution System (TPDS) in India in providing food security to above poverty line (APL) and below poverty line (BPL) people and to analyze the constraints faced by TPDS in providing food security to the target segment of the society and discuss the issue which needs to be

addressed for improving food security in India.

Methodology

The required data for the study has been taken from the government reports from the websites and magazines and they are tabulated and analyzed to draw conclusions. For the purpose of the above study secondary data is taken from the government reports and bulletins, Department of food and Public Distribution-Annual reports, Food security Bill-2013, Census-2011, Food Corporation of India (FCI) reports, newspapers and magazines, articles, journals, websites of government bodies etc. are being referred.

Analysis

Food grain availability is essential for providing food security to the masses and hence there is a need of improved food grain production. India attained self sufficiency in food grain production in the mid-1960's after the introduction of high-yielding variety (HYV) technology. The Table 1 and Table-2 below shows that there has been a significant increase in the agricultural productivity in India with the increase in population which clearly state self sufficiency in food production. According to 2011 Census, 30% of the population lives in urban area and 70% of the population is dependent on agriculture.



Year	Rice	Wheat	Other Cereals	Pulses	Total food grain	Increase per Year
2000-01	84.98	69.68	31.07	11.08	196.81	-
2001-02	93.34	72.77	33.37	13.37	212.85	8.1
2002-03	71.82	65.76	26.06	11.13	174.77	-17.8
2003-04	88.53	72.16	37.59	14.91	213.19	21.98
2004-05	83.13	68.64	33.46	13.13	198.36	-6.95
2005-06	91.79	69.35	34.08	13.38	208.60	5.2
2006-07	93.36	75.81	33.91	14.20	217.28	4.2
2007-08	96.69	78.57	40.76	14.76	230.78	6.2
2008-09	99.18	80.68	40.04	14.57	234.47	1.6
2009-10	89.09	80.80	33.56	14.66	218.11	-7.0
2010-11	95.98	86.87	43.4	18.24	244.49	12.2
2011-12	105.30	94.88	42.02	17.09	259.29	6.1
2012-13	104.40	92.46	40.05	18.45	255.36	-1.5

Source- Economic Survey,2011-12

year	Population (in million)	Net production of food grains(in million tonnes)	CGR per decade of the growth of population	CGR per decade of the growth of food grains
1951	363.2	48.1	-	-
1961	442.4	72.0	1.99	4.12
1971	551.3	94.9	2.23	2.80
1981	688.5	113.4	2.25	1.80
1991	851.7	154.3	2.15	3.13
2001	1027	172.2	1.95	1.10
2011	1210.2	210.2	1.65	2.89
Average	733.47	123.59	-	-
S.D.	28.9	53.57	-	--
C.V.	39.40	43.34	-	-

Source: The relevance of the concept of food security in the context of the Indian economy, Dharendra Nath Konar, 201



Table-3 India's food grain(Rice,wheat, coarse grains and pulses) production

India's food grain(Rice,wheat, coarse grains and pulses) production(Million Tonnes)	
Year	Food Production
1950-51	50.8
1960-61	82
1970-71	108.4
1980-81	129.6
1990-91	176.4
2000-01	196.8
2011-12	259
2012-13	255
Source: Ministry of agriculture, India	

The government over the past years have been providing foods security to the people under various schemes which are as follows:

Integrated Child development services(ICDS)-

This scheme was launched as a Central Sponsored scheme in 1975 with an aim to improve the nutritional and health status of children below the age of six years ad pregnant and lactating mothers. This scheme is through Anganwadi network.

Mid Day Meal Scheme

Under this scheme which was launched on 15th of August 1995 food grains are supplied free of cost @ 100 grams per child per school and it is processed or cooked hot meal is being served with a minimum content of 300 calories and 8-12 gm protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 days and 3 kg per student per month for 9-11 months in a year. The students of class I-

V of government primary schools or primary schools aided by the government and the primary schools run by local bodies are covered under this scheme of the government.

Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)

For ensuring minimum quantity of food grains to the families living below the poverty line the government launched TPDS in June1997.Under this the states are required to formulate and implement foolproof arrangements for identification of the poor for delivery of food grains and for its distribution in a transparent and accountable manner at the Fair Price Shop(FPS). The total number of BPL families is 652.03 lakh as against 596.23 lakh families original estimated when TPDS was introduced.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana(AAJ)

In order to make TPDS more focused and targeted towards the poorest section of population, the Antyodaya



Anna Yojana was launched in December, 2000. It contemplates identification of one crore poorest of the poor families from amongst the BPL families covered under TPDS within the state. The monthly allocation of food grains and for AAY was around 8.51 lakh tones per month as on 31st Dec., 2012. It covers 38% of the BPL families.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Initiated in 2005, MGNREGA is the first ever law internationally that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. Aiming at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country

National Food Security Mission

This centrally sponsored mission has been launched in the country to enhance the production of rice, wheat and pulses by 10, 8 and 2 million tonnes respectively by the end of 11th plan.

Despite the above schemes of the government over the past few years to provide food security to the people, it was felt that the schemes and the efforts have not been successful in ensuring food security to the beneficiaries and as a result Food Security Bill-2013 was passed as an extension of the work of removing food insecurity in India.

National Food Security Bill (NFSB)- 2013

NFSB makes a paradigm shift in addressing the problem of food security from the current welfare approach to

right based approach. It implies a massive procurement of food grains and a very large distribution network entailing huge financial expenditure. NFSB has a laudable objective of eradicating hunger and malnutrition from India in the shortest possible time

India's population is 1.25 billion and the food grain production is 259 million tones. Yet 35% of the population remains food insecure. Another important aspect of India's food insecurity is that even after over three decades of its operation, Public Distribution system (PDS) meets less than 10% of the consumption of grain by the poor.

As per the Food security Bill 2013 the government will provide -

- food entitlement to 75% of the population in Rural India and
- 50% of the population in Urban India
- Each eligible household will get 5 kg of food grain per person per month @ 3/2/1/per kg of rice/wheat/coarse grains.
- Central and state governments will undertake PDS reforms.
- The Central government in case fails to provide food grains or funds to state government.
- The distribution under this will also be through TPDS-identification of BPL, APL and AAY households

Implementation Constraints



To address the shortcomings of food for poor households, India has for the past few decades implemented an extensive system of food security safety net called PDS, which is the world's largest social safety net for food. But the death of people due to starvation and hunger in 2001 questioned the distribution of food grains to the beneficiaries.

The stock lying in the godowns of FCI are rotting due to lack of proper warehousing facilities. In the data accessed through RTI, FCI has admitted that the amount of damaged wheat has increased from 2,010 tonnes in 2009-10 to 2,401.61 tonnes in 2011-12. The annual food grain requirement for implementing the National Food security bill is at 61.2 million tonnes. PDS evolved as a system of management of scarcity for distribution of food grains at affordable prices to poor people. It is one of the most important parts of government's policy for management of food economy in the country. It is operated as a joint responsibility of the Central and the State governments. The Central Government through Food Corporation of India (FCI) has assumed the responsibility for procurement, storage,

transportation and bulk allocation of food grains to the State government. But the problem arise when the deceitful dealers replace good supplies received from the FCI with inferior stock and sell FCI stock in the black market.

Recent World bank report says that PDS which accounts for 1% of GDP benefits only 40% of targeted beneficiaries (A leaky bucket, times of India, may 20,2011) The benefits due to proper distribution mechanism fail to reach the target segment of the society. NFSB aims to simplify the identification of beneficiaries for food security. Households covered or uncovered are determined based on the national cut-off level for per capita consumption. The NFSB will provide 61.2 million tons of food grains per year throughout India. This will have significant financial cost which is estimated at over 23 billion dollars a year which is equivalent to about 0.72% of India's GDP. Apart from this there are other cost also like setting and maintaining distribution centres and government monitoring agencies. The quantum of food subsidy by the government is enormous which will ultimately fall on the consumers.



Quantum of food subsidies released by government of India		
Year	Amount(crore)	% of total Govt. Expenditure
2001-02	17,494.00	3.61
2002-03	24,176.45	4.83
2003-04	25,160.00	5.17
2004-05	25,746.45	6.21
2005-06	23,071.00	7.02
2006-07	23,827.00	7.90
2007-08	31,259.68	8.46
2008-09	43,668.08	9.60
2009-10	58,242.45	10.42
2010-11	62,929.56	13.20
2011-12	72,370.00	14.12

Source: Department of Food and Public Distribution

Issues which need to be Addressed to improve Food Security System

The delivery of food grains to the beneficiaries is done through TPDS where the numbers of beneficiaries are to be identified by the State. The targeting error by excluding vulnerable people and in their place including people who are food secure, displays the flaw in the system. Computerization of data will help solve the problem to a certain extent.

The role of FCI needs to be redefined and should be limited to managing buffer stocks and welfare programs, price stabilization and imports, exports and market intervention for price stabilization and contingencies. In order to improve efficiency and enable distribution in the entire supply chain of procurement to delivery there is a huge scope for private sector participation

either by itself or in PPP (Public private partnership) mode. Increasing the coverage and scope of the PDS will result in escalating operational stocks, which would strangle food grain trade in the country.

Storage, transportation, and distribution infrastructure and systems need to be improved in many parts of the country in order to prevent grain from going bad before it reaches the people who need it. A large portion of food fails to reach the beneficiaries because of flaw in distribution system. The need is to build a strong supply chain management which should make the distribution process accountable. The official records for 2011-12 reveal that there was a leakage of 35% in the distribution channel as compared to 65% in 2009-10.



The prices of grain for above poverty line (APL) cardholders were hiked and the gap between prices for below poverty line (BPL) and AAJ households widened. In many states, APL prices of food grain were very close to market prices as a result APL cardholders stopped buying grain from the PDS. In the present situation a person who belongs to a household that has neither a BPL nor antyodaya card is excluded from the PDS.

The poor people have no access to banks so the direct transfer of cash instead of food poses a big challenge. An infrastructure development boosts the growth of the economy and it will also smooth the process of distribution networking of grain distribution through PDS throughout the country. Mere providing food security per day per person is not enough. The need is to generate employment opportunities for the masses which would in turn solve the problem of food insecurity. For rural people skill development programmes should be stressed upon and incentives be given for active participation in these programmes.

A well defined system is required to eliminate the collusion between the various agencies to direct a large part of subsidized grain from supply chain of PDS. Above all, the need is create more awareness among the beneficiaries as to their Right to Food under the National Food Security Bill.

Conclusion

Right to Food Act is a significant contribution on the part of the government towards humane and accountable governance. According to NCAP report, India will require 280.6 million tonnes of food grains, 130 million tonnes of Rice and 110 million tonnes of wheat by 2020. The country is self sufficient in food production, a well-chalked procurement, allocation and distribution system will make available the food grains without wastages. This will enable the government redeem its pledge to attain true freedom by exiling hunger from every home in India. But the need is to make sincere efforts in making the government machinery work to provide the benefits to the beneficiaries, only then we will succeed in providing food security to each and every individual and make the system of PDS a success.

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