



Food Security in India : Achievements and Constraints

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Food Security in India : Achievements and Constraints 1) Dr. T Gopal, Academic consultant, Department of Economics, S K University, Anantapuramu 2) Prof. G.Venkata Naidu Department of Economics, S K University, Anantapuramu ABSTRACT In developmental priorities, Food security occupied and important places. India achieved self sufficiency in food grain product after green revolution and has sustained it since then, but the achievement of food grain security at the national level did not percolate down to households resulting in high chronic food in security among the poor.

ABSTRACT

In developmental priorities, Food security occupied and important places. India achieved self sufficiency in food grain product after green revolution and has sustained it since then, but the achievement of food grain security at the national level did not percolate down to households resulting in high chronic food in security among the poor. In this context the National Food Security Bill, 2011 is Revolutionary Initiative if the Government raising hopes for millions of hungry Indians residing across the country.

KEYWORDS

Food Production, Food Security, Food Supply.

INTRODUCTION

Food Security along with human security is one of the major challenges confronting the world today. Annual food production is enough to feed the 6.9 billion people in the world. However, access and distribution of food in order that people do not have to die of hunger continues to remain exclusive even in 21st century, Providing food security is certainly of great importance for a country like India where than one third of the population is estimated to be absolutely poor, not touching the problem of malnourishment of children which is still grave one. However, a modest attempt is made to understand the problem, achievements made in this regard and constraints which are being faced in a developing country like India.

According to Food and Agricultural organization² food security exists when all the

people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to examine the performance, challenges and policies in food security in terms of availability, access and absorption in the recent decades, in short, concentrates on the following objectives:

1. To note the progress in food supply in terms of availability at the national level.
2. To assess the progress of the country in terms of access to food, and
3. Measures needed to realize food security for all the citizens of India

Methodology

The article is based on the secondary data.

The paper is organized as follows: section one is introductory which has been given above, section two examines the performance and policies of food production, section three has the information of access of food, section four deals with the constraints in the implementation of the policies of the government and section five which is final one comprises the conclusion from the study.

Section II

India, after independence was a food importing country for first two decades as things were favourable. But afterwards, U.S. president Lyndon Johnson restricted the food aid as Indian leaders did not agree with him in the case of Vietnam aggression by the U.S.A. Further, as a remedy our then prime minister Smt. Indira Gandhi went in for seed – water – fertilizer policy, popularly known as the “Green Revolution” which made the country to achieve self sufficiency in food grains at the macro level and our food grain production rose from 50 million tonnes in 1950-51 to around 233.9 million tonnes in 2008-09. This made food grains imports almost a thing of the past. Experts like Alagh also feel optimistically that Indian farmer will not fail us as he has responded well in the past when our policies were supportive⁴. In the case of pulses and oil seeds, we have to depend on imports even by 2020. Further, on account of rise in the income with people and due to increase desire for taking quality food demand for non-cereal food items like fruits, vegetables, milk, meat, fish and egg, is increasing.

Section III

It is now known to everyone that the food basket of an Indian is more diversified and dramatic changes in food consumption patterns have taken place in the Post Green Revolution period. As visible in the following table 1 the share of cereals in total consumption has declined significantly even for the bottom 30% of the population in both rural and urban areas.

Table 01: Percentage budget share of cereals by bottom 30% Middle 40% and Top 30% of the Population

Year	Rural				Urban			
	Bottom	Middle	Top	All	Bottom	Middle	Top	All
	30%	40%	30%		30%	40%	30%	
2014-15	53.65	43.65	29.49	38.15	39.85	28.19	13.37	21.58
2015-16	39.37	30.68	18.22	25.93	27.55	19.13	09.49	15.12
2016-17	35.68	27.87	15.72	22.95	25.59	17.14	08.18	13.32
2017-18	29.34	22.04	12.49	18.28	20.59	13.29	06.29	10.21

Note : The shares are derived from the expenditure at constant prices (2016-17 prices)

Source : NSS Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Government of India.

In the decade of 2010- to 2020, a welcome change occurred. People demanded non-cereal food on account of change in their income like milk, egg, and meat on a relatively large scale which show that there is a need for self sufficient in terms of per capita of availability of them also. The table 02 shows provides per capita availability of them and need for their self sufficiency in items of per capita availability of non – ceral items like milk egg, etc., where India has not attained self-sufficient of them.

Table 02: Per capita Availability and Deficit of Milk, Egg and Meat

Food items	Per capita availability	ICMR dietary guidelines for Indians	Per capita deficit
Milk	21 grams/day	300 ml/day	34 grams/day
Egg	21grams/day	180 eggs/annum	150 eggs/ annum
Meat	3.23Kg/annum	10.95 Kg/ annum	7.71 Kg/annum

(Source: GOI -2003)

Food distribution policies and problems

As a developing country which is, as long as said by Gunnar! Myrdal– A soft state – known for the ‘Softness’ that is to be exact weak in implementing policies in a meaningful manner. India, like other developing countries is weak in implementing even so called simple policies where corruption, nepotism, administrative slackness at each and every level, becomes hurdles. As it is known from 1951 India is known for having very good policies but extremely weak in delivering the goods to the people. As for food distribution many problems come in the way of it in several states.

Public Distribution System (PDS)

With the main purpose providing essential food articles like rice, wheat, sugar, edible oil, kerosene etc. At subsidized rates it was started in 1960’s. But it has been successful only partially that too in some states, like Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Further, in Karnataka consumers have said wheat etc., are dumped outside; as a result in the rainy season wheat which is unfit for consumption is sold through ration shops and poor people who have not alternative have bought it for consumption. Again in Karnataka Fair price shops, it is learnt that, are not opened daily. Further, people who sell commodities have sold it to private shops at a higher price and consumers have no option but to buy them at a higher price in the open market. Besides, inspecting authorities have colluded with private shop owners 5 in this respect. Ration Card holders, who have not united, are not making strong protests for getting their quota of commodities from fair price shops. So, impressive coverage of the schemes is no guarantee that the poor and deserving are better served. As per the latest news of London source, it is said that every year 210 lakhs tonnes wheat is unnecessarily wasted and it is totally perished (Praja Vani, Kannada Newspaper, Friday, 11th January 2013, page 10). In this connection, again it is apt to mention that Food Corporation of India buys superior food grains and supplies them for P.D.S. but quite a good proportion of these supplies find their way into the open market and P.D.S. outlets supply very inferior gains to ration card holders. The poor consumers have to accept whatever is supplied to them. It is this mismanagement and corruption which needs rectification.

Targeted Public Distrubtion System (T.P.D.S.)

As P.D.S. System failed to deliver the goods, with effect from June 1997, TDPS was introduced and results have been slightly better according to Economic Survey of the Govt. of India in 2002-03². In all self-sufficient of food grains at national level and availability of food grains at affordable cost at local level have not got translated in houseld level food security for the poor. Further, authors feel that, at present, when food inflation is on higher side compared to the past, common man is suffering from both sides i.e. i) even if food articles are available in P.D.S. their coverage is no sufficient and

ii) vegetables and fruits have to be purchased in the open market at a higher price.

The working of TDPS system is also not fully satisfactory. Saxena says that there is exclusion of large number of deserving households associated with identification and exclusion. Further, in its implementation TDPS is associated with problems like misappropriation as Tamil Nadu State had issued BPL Cards to the entire population of the State considering everyone to be below poverty line 10.

Nutrition: However, programmes promoting it are not included as their performance is far from satisfactory.

Section IV

India has plethora of policies for i) Increase of agricultural production and ii) providing nutrition to the people. However, important constraints in achieving food security are;

- i) Agriculture, even after six decades continues to be a state subject;
- ii) Although we have almost attained self sufficiency in food grains production ; at the national level, but on a long term basis the following problems have to be solved and these are given below:
 - a) Investment, credit and infrastructure deficit;
 - b) Land and water management deficit;
 - c) Research and extension (technology) deficit;
 - d) Market deficit;
 - e) Diversification deficit and
 - f) Institutions deficit

Section V

CONCLUSIONS

As the world lauds India's progress in achieving self-sufficiency in food grain production, policy makers have now a bigger challenge in providing multi-faceted food security posed by the 1.5 billion by 2050. On the one demand side, factors such as steadily increasing population raising per capita income and changing demographics are constantly increasing food consumption which has to be met without depending on imports in future. On the supply side, weakening culture on account of above constraints which need a long term planning for agricultural sector notwithstanding the fact that different political parties are ruling in the States, in necessary. Strong political will and administrative commitment for efficient implementation, greater monitoring and evaluation can help keep ahead of schemes from offenders and improve performance of the public distribution system will go a long way in meeting the challenges which may occur in future. While public sector will remain a key contributor to basic and strategic agricultural research, need for the conventional supply driven approach that yielded great success during the Green Revolution may no longer be the only appropriate model for India. In addition, what is the need of the hour is that less politics and more economics in whatever we do from now onwards will go a long way in utilizing the resources fully and better accountability in the use of them can save the nation from future possible unpleasant changes. Here, Chinese practical approach with our democratic policies will make the country stronger in all possible ways. Otherwise in 22nd century we have to face unpleasant things both internally and externally.

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