

Food Security in India: Issues and Suggestion to Improve the Public Distribution System

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Abstract

Food security in India is unfavourably affected by several biotic and socio-political situations. The current position may get worse in the future if timely and suitable actions are not executed and planned. The discipline of human population and land for cultivation, climate change, government policies of public distribution and marketing of food grains and lack of a participatory approach all are committing to check down the availability of foods. Also, crop fecundity seems to be very much unsustainable. The situation has to be remedied by all possible means and citizens must be assured of food security. This review summarises several strategies for crop production and food distribution through the public distribution system. Finally, results indicate that India has achieved self-sufficiency in grains; it is still lagging at the back in the production of oilseeds and pulses. It is also commented that there has been a meaningful increase in the reproduction of rice, wheat, cereals, fruits, vegetables, and other products. Among the specific charges made to lift the agricultural sector from its present slowdown and stagnation, we comprise decorated increased public investment and a severe review of subsidies provided to farmers. To improve the infrastructure, credit facilities, inputs, land and water management, effective marketing and price policies, the diversification of agriculture, strengthening the improvement strategies for tackling climate change, and the strict regulation of land use and diversion of land for non-agricultural activities.

Keywords: Food security, Agricultural Production, Consumption, Public Distribution, Expansion of Credit, Water Management.

Introduction

The Food Agricultural Organization (FAO) asserts that food shelter appears when all people at all times have economic and physical access to adequate, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food favourites for an active and healthy life. Food security has three primary and closely related components, that is the availability of food, access to food, and absorption of food.

According to the FAO's most recent food safety report, micronutrient and vitamin A want were the prime determinants to child health and nourishment in India. It lives reported that nearly 57 per cent of pre-school children suffered from vitamin A lack. The newborn mortality rate in India (for infants under one year) was as high as 56 in 2005, but it was declined 39.1 deaths/1,000 live births in 2017. The NFHS-3 reported that 19 per cent of India's children stayed wasted, 38 per cent stunted, and 46 per cent were undersized, characters that are difficult and far from satisfying.

The nature and extent of food insecurity can be broadly labelled into (1) Chronic Food Insecurity (2) Nutritional Insecurity (3) Food Insecurity caused by lack of Food Absorption, and (4) Transitory Food Insecurity. There are several factors, both on the supply side, as well as the demand side, that may cause chronic food insecurity. The most critical supply-side determinants of food insecurity are (a) the level of domestic food production, (b) the imports of food and (c) the distribution of food (PDS). The determinants on the demand side are (i) the growth of population (ii) the purchasing power; (iii) product prices/subsidies and (iv) the extent and effectiveness of supportive social programmes and schemes such as the Integrated Child Development Services ICDS, the Mid Day Meal scheme, Food for Work Programmes, and Rural Wage Employment Programmes.

Objective of the Study

- To assess the status of food security - i.e. access to food, food availability and food operation in India.
- To identify the food grains distribution through the public distribution system.

Ministry of Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, Government of India surveyed public distribution system - procurement, off-take and stocks, agricultural production - food grains, an area under cultivation - food grains.

WTO and Food Security

The Indian agricultural scene has witnessed changes following the economic reforms in the

nineties as well as with the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the mid-nineties. India shows to be a victim of thirty years of agricultural policy with an exclusive focus on spreading HYV varieties of seed-fertiliser technology in a few potential regions for achieving food self-sufficiency. India achieved self-sufficiency in food grains by the mid-seventies and is currently facing the problem of disposing of enormous food grains stocks. It is observed that self-sufficiency in food grains is partly due to the weak purchasing power of the poor. As a result, India should diversify its agriculture and get a foothold in the world food market. Diversified and accelerated agricultural growth would improve food security by enhancing the purchasing power of the poor. However, even after the establishment of WTO, the farm trade did not grow much during the transition period, since agricultural prices have sharply declined in the world markets and there has been no reduction in the degree of protection by the developed countries. The deceleration in the agricultural growth during the nineties is more due to internal factors such as a decline in public investment in agriculture (irrigation and research) slow down in the increase in fertiliser consumption. The slow rise in the expenditure on agricultural research and so on. It is argued that if India is to benefit from the emerging opportunities opened up by liberalised agricultural trade, significant reforms have to live initiated on the domestic front. It is apprehended that cereal prices in the world market, which have declined during the nineties are unlikely to arise on account of reforms in the developed countries.

Agriculture Production- Food Grains (Million Tonnes)

Year	Cereals				Pulses	Total Foodgrains 5+6
	Rice	Wheat	Coarse Cereals	Total 2+4		
2000-01	84.98	69.68	31.08	185.74	11.07	196.81
2001-02	93.34	72.77	33.37	199.48	13.37	212.85
2002-03	71.82	65.76	26.07	163.65	11.13	174.78
2003-04	88.53	72.16	37.60	198.28	14.91	213.19
2004-05	83.13	68.64	33.46	185.23	13.13	198.36
2005-06	91.79	69.35	34.07	195.22	13.38	208.60
2006-07	93.36	75.81	33.92	203.08	14.20	217.28
2007-08	96.69	78.57	40.75	216.01	14.76	230.78

2008-09	99.18	80.68	40.04	219.90	14.57	234.47
2009-10	89.09	80.80	33.55	203.45	14.66	218.11
2010-11	95.98	86.87	43.40	226.25	18.24	244.49
2011-12	105.30	94.88	42.01	242.20	17.09	259.29
2012-13	105.24	93.51	40.04	238.79	18.34	257.13
2013-14	106.65	95.85	43.29	245.79	19.25	265.04
2014-15	105.48	86.53	42.86	234.87	17.15	252.02
2015-16	104.41	92.29	38.52	235.22	16.35	251.57
2016-17	110.15	98.38	44.19	252.73	22.95	275.68
2017-18	111.01	97.11	45.42	295.12	23.95	319.07

Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India

Public Distribution System (PDS)

India has launched the biggest programme of public food distribution through fair price shops, accounting for an important part of the government's budgetary subsidies. The PDS in its present form a producer price-support-cum-consumer subsidy programme has evolved in the wake of food grain shortages of the sixties. The welfare dimension of the PDS has gained importance since the early

eighties, and its coverage has been extended to rural areas in some states as well as to areas with a high incidence of poverty. The food subsidy of the Central Government, at Rs.17,612 crores, accounted for 0.89 per cent of GDP in 2001-02. In the wake of economic reforms, the PDS is perceived to be the main safety net to protect the poor from potential short-run price-induced adverse effects of economic reforms.

Public Distribution System - Procurement, Off-Take and Stocks

Year	Procurement			Off-Take			Stocks		
	2000-01	21.28	16.36	37.64	10.42	7.79	18.21	23.19	21.50
2001-02	22.13	20.63	42.76	15.32	15.99	31.30	24.91	26.04	51.02
2002-03	16.41	19.03	35.48	24.85	24.99	49.84	17.16	15.65	32.81
2003-04	22.90	15.80	38.70	25.04	24.29	49.33	13.34	6.93	20.65
2004-05	24.67	16.80	41.47	23.20	18.27	41.47	13.68	4.07	17.19
2005-06	27.58	14.79	42.36	25.08	17.17	42.25	13.17	2.01	16.62
2006-07	25.11	9.23	34.34	25.06	11.71	36.77	13.84	4.70	17.93
2007-08	28.74	11.13	39.86	25.23	12.21	37.44	21.60	5.80	17.75
2008-09	34.10	22.69	56.79	24.62	14.88	39.50	26.71	13.43	35.58
2009-10	32.03	25.38	57.42	27.34	22.35	49.72	28.82	16.13	43.31
2010-11	34.20	22.51	56.74	29.93	23.07	53.00	33.35	15.36	44.31
2011-12	35.04	28.34	63.38	33.12	24.26	56.38	35.47	19.95	53.40
2012-13	34.04	38.15	72.19	32.64	33.21	65.85	30.55	24.21	59.76
2013-14	31.85	25.09	56.94	29.21	30.62	59.83	23.82	17.83	49.52
2014-15	31.55	28.02	59.57	30.73	25.22	55.95	28.81	17.22	41.34
2015-16	34.14	28.09	62.23	31.82	31.84	63.66	28.80	14.54	43.60
2016-17	36.48	23.63	60.11	31.45	30.65	62.11	27.70	14.50	43.60
2017-18	6.23	30.10	36.33	8.50	5.70	14.20	21.50	30.10	57.80

Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India

The Share of the PDS in Rice and Wheat Consumption in the Different States, 1993-94 to 2015-2016

State	Rice		Wheat		Rice and Wheat	
Andhra Pradesh	20.6	29.7	9.1	4.0	20.4	28.5
Assam	3.2	10.4	2.7	1.3	3.1	10.0
Bihar	0.2	4.7	0.3	4.8	0.3	4.7
Chhattisgarh	2.2	38.8	2.4	28.7	2.3	37.7
Gujarat	20.1	13.7	0.4	10.5	6.6	11.4
Haryana	4.3	0.5	0.0	12.4	0.4	11.4
Himachal Pradesh	32.5	43.3	0.3	44.3	12.3	43.9
Jammu & Kashmir	5.5	53.4	0.3	32.5	2.2	46.9
Jharkhand	0.3	12.7	1.9	15.4	0.7	13.5
Karnataka	14.5	34.5	1.4	26.1	12.5	32.9
Kerala	44.4	26.2	13.7	27.1	41.8	26.3
Madhya Pradesh	3.6	17.2	0.2	19.7	2.0	19.2
Maharashtra	13.4	22.4	0.3	21.4	7.2	21.8
Odisha	0.8	22.9	5.1	12.6	0.9	22.3
Punjab	2.3	0.1	0.1	12.7	0.3	11.5
Rajasthan	7.4	0.3	0.1	9.3	0.3	9.0
Tamil Nadu	17.9	47.6	2.8	51.8	17.1	47.9
Uttar Pradesh	3.2	16.1	0.0	6.8	0.9	10.0
Uttarakhand	45.90	19.6	0.2	13.2	20.6	16.0
West Bengal	1.7	5.3	2.0	28.3	1.7	8.3

Source: Estimates of Anjani Kumar et al., 2012, using NSS data.

The PDS in states such as Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have not performed well and provided limited access to households. The PDS in these states requires to be made more effective as these states account for a large population of low-income families who still lack access to affordable food grain. However, in general, the penetration of the PDS has increased in most states over time, and the share of household requirements of food grain accessed has improved though to varying degrees. The PDS has thus proved to be one of the most effective policy instruments in providing greater access and food security. The increased supply of food grains to the rural areas has also contributed to crop diversification, especially in the southern, western and the northeastern regions. Though the system is poorly targeted and suffers from widespread leakages and the diversion of grain to the open market, it has still gone a long way in protecting and covering a large number of poor consumers. With the proposed

NFSA, the improved functioning of the PDS would become several essential and concerted efforts would have to be made in effectively plugging leakages and ensuring the smooth operation of the PDS.

The Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS)

This scheme provides a free cooked meal to primary school children of government, government-aided, and schools run by local bodies. This scheme is centrally assisted with the State Governments making some contributions towards the cost of cooking the meal provided to school students.

Suggestions for Improvement

Several measures are required to be taken for improving the effectiveness of the Procurement and distribution system. The most critical among these are:

1. The decentralisation of procurement and distribution has become necessary to recover and

strengthen the PDS.

2. More active involvement of the panchayats in the PDS can significantly progress access at the village level.
3. A comprehensive review of the functioning of the FCI and the modernisation of its operations is overdue and the greater involvement of cooperatives, self-help groups, and other community organisations in procurement, as well as distribution, should be a top priority.
4. Promote the turnover and margins of fair price shops, provision of credit to enable frequent lifting and sale of supplies, and the regular monitoring of retail sales is necessary for effectively tackling and plugging diversion as well as other malpractices such as contamination.
5. Improving storage space and the introduction calibrated weighing equipment in fair price shops has become essential both for maintaining regular and uninterrupted supplies and efficient sale.

Conclusion

Food Security is circumscribed by the availability of food, the access to food and the absorption (or nutrition) of food in the system. These three conditionality's for food security are closely inter-related, and thus availability and admittance to eating can improve absorption or nutritional levels among the houses. It occurs recognised that in hatred of India becoming achieved self-sufficiency in cereals, it is still lagging in the product of pulses and oilseeds. It is further mentioned that there has been a significant increase in the production of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat, poultry and fishery products. However per capita availability of these is, however far lower than international and national norms and measures. The trends in availability appear not to be improving as required solely on account of the stagnation of the agricultural sector. An attempt has

been thus made to identify the significant constraints and deficiencies in horticultural growth and specific proposals have been put forward for improving the description of the agricultural sector and to intensify the growth rate so that it is capable of meeting the food and nutritional requirement that have been projected in the next decade. Among the specific suggestions made to lift the agricultural sector from its present slowdown and stagnation, we have highlighted increased public investment and a severe review of subsidies provided to farmers. To boost infrastructure, expansion of credit, and essential inputs, land and water management, agricultural research and extension, effective marketing and price policies, the diversification of agriculture, the strengthening of institutions catering to these needs, strengthening the mitigation strategies for tackling climate change, and the strict regulation of land use and diversion of land for nonagricultural activities.

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