

REASONS FOR CHALLENGES WITH FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In India a high level of hunger and malnutrition perseveres although we have rapid economic growth in the last two decades. It may take some more time before we eradicate it utterly. However, the disadvantaged communities like Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, rural and urban poor still suffer the most. Nourishment is the focal point of health and wellbeing. It is directly linked to the human resource development, productivity and affluence of a country. Health status of any individual or a community is directly indicated by the nourishing status of the particular individual or community. Raising the nutritional status of the population has been a global concern and therefore food security has been the major concern of governments particularly in developing countries. The term food security has many conceptual aspects. A group of experts primarily consider food security synonym to availability of food at national, regional, household and individual level. The amount and quality of food available globally, nationally and locally can be pretentious temporarily or for long periods by many factors including climate, disasters, wars, civil unset, population size and growth, agricultural practices, environment, social status and trade. 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. Food security is a condition related to the supply of food, and individuals' access to it. The final report of the 1996 World Food Summit states that 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".

Keywords: Food security, India, Nourishment, Health status, Agricultural practices

INTRODUCTION:

Food security, in general, is increasingly affected by global economic and environmental phenomena. Under this, the food prices are affected due to food scarcity which causes social and political instability, and can escalate humanitarian crisis. In this context it is better to study the definition of food security given by the Rome Declaration on World Food Security at the World Food Summit, held in 1996. Here the researchers wanted to understand the impact of food security a Global concern. The definition as per the Rome Declaration is, "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." On the same guidelines India's initiatives to ensure food security for its citizens ranges from concerted efforts to boost agricultural production to far-ranging market interventions aimed at price stabilization. Besides, measures have been introduced to improve the access to food of the poor people through public distribution and income generating schemes. The problem of underinvestment in agriculture as far as the status of India, world is compounded during economic turmoil, because when both private and public budgets contract, investments tend to be cut to a greater extent than other expenditures in all sectors including agriculture. The promulgation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) is in the offing to ensure economic and social access to adequate food and a living with dignity, for all persons in the country, at all times. However, in spite of several initiatives and strategies, the problems of food and nutritional security continue to persist in India.

India is home to one-third of the world's undernourished children, almost half of the Indian children are stunted and 40 per cent are underweight; one third of the Indian women are also underweight. And high rates of micro-nutrient deficiencies prevail across the board (Joshi et al., 2011). At the same time, India is the second fastest growing economy in the world. The paradox of high economic growth and slow reduction in the number of food insecure persons needs to be understood in proper perspective. In this backdrop, the paper examines the performance, challenges and the underlying policies in food security in terms of three main pillars of food security, viz., availability, accessibility and absorption. Specifically the paper intends to examine the (i) progress in food supply in terms of availability at the national level; (ii) progress in terms of access to food and nutritional security at the household level; and (iii) assessment of programmes and policies being pursued for meeting food and nutritional security.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To define food security
2. To recognize the importance of food security for a nation.
3. List the measures taken by Indian government to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains.
4. Identify the poverty alleviation programmes launched by the government.

SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION:

Data were collected from secondary sources. The Data collection was a painstaking effort, and all endeavors were made to collect the relevant information with missionary zeal. Secondary sources of data were used to prepare this paper. They include annual reports, office records, files, brochures and other published and unpublished material as well as books, and Government reports, internet etc.,

LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. Schulthes (1994) opined that food security meant not only assuring availability and access to sufficient quantities of food for all including the poor, but also to expand even further with the population explosion.
2. Haddad et al. (1994) expressed food security as availability of sufficient food at all times for all people in order to ensure an active and healthy life. Sufficient food referred to both quantity and quality needed for good health.
3. Food Agricultural Organization (1996) slightly modified its view on the concept of food security as access by all people to "safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life".
4. Swami Nathan (1996) conceptualized the food security in general perspective as livelihood security for the households and all members that ensured both physical and economic access to balanced diet, safe drinking water, and environmental sanitation privacy, educational and basic health care.
5. Chapter - II Concepts, Definitions & Review of Literature Food Security in Tamil Nadu with a special reference to Tiruchirappalli District 17 Rottach and Welt (1996) observed that household food security is not only a matter of access to food but it had to do with the awareness and preference of individuals as well as with the attitude towards food as a special group of society.

6. According to Costa (1997) the concept of food security essentially meant a state of affairs where all people at all times have access to safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. Government of India (1997) highlighted the importance of food security at different levels. A household food security implied a situation where everyone has access at all times, to the food needed for an active and healthy life. Essential elements of food security are: (a) adequate availability of food, (b) efficient distribution, and (c) the availability of adequate purchasing power in the hands of the people.

WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

Food security is the access of all people to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet the dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The food energy intake at household level is the best indicator of food security. Having money to buy food is not synonymous with 1 food security. A country having enhanced capacity to grow a lot of food items, can still be far from being food secure.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF FOOD SECURITY:

Availability: Food availability relates to the supply of food to production, distribution, and exchange. A variety of factors determine Food production such as land ownership and use; soil management; crop selection, breeding, and management; livestock breeding and management; and harvesting. Crop production is not required for a country to achieve food security.

Access; Food access refers to the affordability and allocation of food, as well as the preferences of individuals and households. Poverty can limit access to food, and can also increase how vulnerable an individual or household is to food price spikes. Access depends on whether the household has enough income to purchase food at prevailing prices or has sufficient land and other resources to grow its own food. Households with enough resources can overcome unstable harvests and local food shortages and maintain their access to food.

Utilization: Once the food is obtained by a household, a variety of factors affects the quantity and quality of food that reaches members of the household. In order to achieve food security, the food ingested must be safe and must be enough to meet the physiological requirements of every individual. Food safety affects food utilization and can be affected by the preparation, processing, and cooking of food in the community and household. Nutritional values of the household determine food choice, and whether the food meets cultural preferences is important to utilization in terms of psychological and social well-being.

Stability: Food stability refers to the ability to obtain food over time. Food insecurity can be transitory, seasonal, or chronic. In transitory food insecurity, food may be unavailable during certain periods of time such as during natural disasters, civil conflicts and droughts. Seasonal food insecurity can result from the regular pattern of growing seasons in food production. Chronic (or permanent) food insecurity is defined as the long-term, persistent lack of adequate food. Chronic and transitory food insecurity is linked since the re-occurrence of transitory food security can make households more vulnerable to chronic food insecurity.

TYPES OF FOOD INSECURITY:

1. Transitory Food insecurity - occurs as acute problem mostly due to non-availability or non-accessibility for example: In natural calamities or disasters like drought, earthquake, cyclone, floods, etc. Specific micro-nutrient depicts projected gross deficiencies of essential food items over the next two decades, considering the present agricultural production. It is obvious from the above graph that edible oil, sugar and pulses are the worst hit. However, cereals like wheat and rice production is keeping pace with 2 the increasing demands of the population. Deficiency and nutritional imbalance are together called as hidden hunger and account for 40% of nutrition problems.

2. Chronic food insecurity - is associated with poverty and arises due to continuously inadequate dietary intake for example: Malnutrition, stunting, wasting, and under nutrition.

INITIATIVES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA:

Food Corporation of India was set up on 14 January 1965 under the Food Corporations Act 1964 to implement the following objectives of the National Food Policy:

- Effective price support operations for safeguarding the interests of the farmers.
- Distribution of food grains throughout the country for Public Distribution System.
- Maintaining satisfactory level of operational and buffer stocks of food grains to ensure National Food Security.
- Regulate market price to provide food grains to consumers at a reliable price.

The **National Food for Work Programme** was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development on 14 November 2004 in 150 of the most backward districts of India with the objective of generating supplementary wage employment. The programme is open to all Indian poor population who is prepared to do manual unskilled labour work and is in the need of wage employment.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is an Indian government welfare programme which provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children less than 6 years of age and their mothers. These services are provided from Anganwadi centres established mainly in rural areas and staffed with frontline workers. In addition to fighting malnutrition and ill health, the programme is also intended to combat gender inequality by providing girls the same resources as boys.

Public Distribution System (PDS) is an Indian food security system. Established by the Government of India under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution and are managed jointly by state governments in India, it distributes subsidized food and non-food items to India's poor. This scheme was launched in India on June 1947. Major commodities distributed include staple food grains, such as wheat, rice, sugar, and kerosene, through a network of fair price shops (also known as ration shops) established in several states across the country. Food Corporation of India, a Government-owned corporation, procures and maintains the PDS.

The **National Food Security Act, 2013** (also Right to Food Act) is an Act of the Parliament of India which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two-thirds of India's 1.2 billion people.

It was signed into law on 12 September 2013, retroactive to 5 July 2013. The NFSA converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programmes of the Government of India. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services scheme and the Public Distribution System. Further, the NFSA 2013 recognizes maternity entitlements. The Midday Meal Scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme are universal in nature whereas the PDS will reach about two-thirds of the population (75% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas).

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) is a Government of India sponsored scheme to provide highly subsidized food to millions of the poorest families. It was launched by the [NDA] government on 25 December 2000 and first implemented in the Indian state of Rajasthan. Poor families were identified by their respective state rural development facilities through the use of surveys (NSSO). The scheme has been expanded twice, once in June 2003 and then in August 2004, adding an additional 5,000,000 BPL (Below Poverty Line) families each time and bringing the total number of families covered up to 20,000,000.

Minimum Support Price is the price at which government purchases crops from the farmers, whatever may be the price for the crops. Minimum Support Price is an important part of India's agricultural price policy. The MSP helps to incentivize the framers and thus ensures adequate food grains production in the country. It gives sufficient remuneration to the farmers, provides food grains supply to buffer stocks and supports the food security programme through PDS and other programmes.

WHY FOOD SECURITY MATTERS?

Food is a fundamental human right. And yet **one in nine people around the world (805 million)** go hungry every day. While this is still 805 million too many, we are making progress towards eliminating hunger. The world committed to halving the proportion of hungry people between 1990 and 2015 through the **Millennium Development Goals (MDG)**. There are **209 million fewer hungry people now than in 1990**. Already **63 countries** have met the MDG target.

Some regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean have made impressive progress in increasing food security. However, there has been only modest progress in Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia, where natural disasters and conflict continue to trap people in hunger. There is also a more insidious type of hunger, a hidden hunger caused by deficiencies in micronutrients such as **iron, Vitamin A and Zinc** affecting two billion people. For the individual, the effects of micronutrient deficiencies can be devastating. If a child does not receive sufficient nutrition in the **first 1,000 days of life they are at risk of mental impairment, poor health, low productivity and even death**. The economic costs of micronutrient deficiencies are also considerable, **reducing gross domestic product (GDP) by 0.7-2% in most developing countries**. Global losses in economic productivity due to macronutrient and micronutrient deficiencies reach **more than 2-3% of GDP**.

To feed the world in **2050** we need to increase total global food production by **70%**. This will be increasingly challenging a changing climate. By **2030** crop and pasture yields are likely to decline in many places. In parts of Brazil, rice and wheat yields are likely to **decline by 14%**. By 2050, widespread impacts on food and farming are highly likely with 8% average decline in yields for eight major food crops across Africa and South Asia.

AVAILABILITY OF FOOD GRAINS:

During **1950-51** annual net imports of cereals amounted to **4.1 million tonnes**. This figure was **10.3 million tons** during **1965-66**. Since then there was a decline and after 1995-96 India became an exporter of cereals. During the last 50 years, there has been an increase in the per capita availability of cereals to the extent of **9%**. However, the country has failed to increase the production of pulses consistent with the needs of the growing population. This is significant since a large number of vegetarians in the country depend on pulses for their protein requirements. **Tenth Plan** data indicate that consumption of milk and meat products, as well as vegetables and fruits, has increased as a natural outcome of economic development.

SOURCES OF FOODGRAINS ACROSS THE NATION:

Rice is grown mainly in **Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir valley, Eastern Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Coastal areas of Maharashtra**.

Rice is now also being grown in the irrigated areas of **Punjab and Haryana**. **Rice** Production Touched the figure **863.5 lakh tones in 2003-2004**. Wheat growing areas include **Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, parts of Rajasthan, and Bihar**. Wheat production for **2003-2004** was estimated at **727.4 lakh tones**. **Millets** include **jowar, bajra, and Ragi**. **Bajra** is a crop of dry and warm regions of **Rajasthan**. **Ragi** is a rain-fed crop grown in drier parts of **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**. **Maize** is

mainly produced in **Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh**. Pulses are grown both as **Rabi and Kharif** crops. The Rabi (winter season) crops are **Masoor and Peas**. The Kharif crops (sown around April and harvested in September- October) include **Arhar, Urad, and Moong**. The major gram producing areas are **Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan**. Food grains production touched **229.9 Million tons** in **2008-09**.

FOOD SECURITY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:

There are many issues and challenges that India has to address in-order to provide adequate food security for its growing population.

1. Increase yield per hectare of land: increasing population and reducing per capita availability of agricultural land, are hinting at increasing the per capita yield of food as a must. This could be achieved by using better quality seeds and adapting scientifically sound, evidence based agricultural practices and techniques.
2. Eliminating food wastage: Measures like appropriate infrastructure for the post-harvest handling of crops, providing access to efficient transport facilities, and better storage facilities at district and sub district levels.
3. Strategies to overcome the adverse climatic effects on agricultural production. Research on utilization of the dry land for cultivation, explore newer technological avenues like Agro-infrastructure, below sea level farming etc could be some of the solutions.
4. Thrust on food processing and packing industry: These measures can create more employment opportunities and also improve exports, thus generate revenue for the government.
5. Achieve nutritional security by promoting other sectors related to food production like the fisheries, poultries, horticulture etc. This move can help production of cost effective, highly nutritious food items for the populations.
6. Tap the potential of promoting crops like potatoes, which have an inherent versatile property of being less susceptible to vagaries of climate. Potato crops can generate good income as there is an ever increasing demand for finished products of potato like chips, chats, etc in the international market.
7. Need to rethink food pricing policies - Using Minimum support price (MSP) as a proxy to increase the income may not be the ideal approach. Instead, measures like direct subsidies to farmers on procurement of seeds, fertilizers, tractors, etc could be used. Also, promoting the sale of crops using price information on electronic spot exchanges, trading terminals, ware houses, mobile sms services, toll free 24 hours market price portal, etc could be a utilized.

CONCLUSION:

In this paper we have examined the issues, 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 39 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., rather than globalization and trade reforms per se. There are six deficits in Indian agriculture. These are: (i) investment, credit, and infrastructure deficit; (ii) land and water management deficit; (iii) research and extension (technology) deficit; (iv) market

deficit; (v) diversification deficit; and (vi) institutions deficit. Reforms are needed to reduce these deficits in order to achieve the following goals of agriculture: (i) 4 per cent growth in agriculture; (ii) equity in terms of higher growth in lagging regions, small and marginal farmers, and women; and (iii) sustainability. Access to food can be increased through employment due to growth in labour intensive sectors and/or through social protection programmes. The problem of malnutrition is much broader than that of access to food.

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