

Food Insecurity among Dalit Communities in India: Searching the Root Causes and Dimensions

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Abstract

This article examines how the definition of food security has evolved over the years to till date and the causes of food insecurity. It looks at the state of food insecurity in India's Dalit communities. The paper tried to identify the main causes of the widespread of food insecurity that prevails in India and it analyzed how to linked food insecurity issue with public stockholding in the WTO's Agreement of Agriculture is one of the key issues being discussed. It indicates that the Scheduled caste (Dalit) groups remain the poorest among the social groups, belonging to agricultural labourer, day labourer and casual labour are the worst sufferers. Thus the problem of insecurity in India is not of general systematic failure that arises due to supply shortage. It is problems where certain sector mainly marginalized population in the rural agrarian sector and urban informal sectors suffer from a shortage a food in a general climate of increasing production. Delving deeper, we observe the main determinates of food insecurity in India in today is shrinking of agrarian population incomes related to productions which are depending on due to policy framework and implication is conducted by international institutions indirectly. Finally, it examines government's balancing policy between national food security act and international institution WTO's 'agreement of agriculture policy' on the behalf of Indian marginalized people who are mostly belong to Dalit communities.

Keywords: Food security; Dalit; Agriculture; PDS; Public stockholding; WTO

Introduction

Food security can be defined as a situation wherein all households have physical and economic access to adequate food for all members, and where households are not at risk of deprivation of this basic access. Explicitly, this access is inseparably linked to the larger question of the survival of humanity. Implicitly, the different elements that influence food security can be classified into three broad dimensions- food availability which depend on food production and imports, secondly food access which depend on purchasing power, and thirdly, food absorption, is a functions of safe drinking water, environmental hygiene, primary health care and education¹[1]. However, we must point out that water security is also an inseparable component of food security. Hence, the question of availability, stability and access is also equally applicable to the question of water security as a part of larger food security. Broadly speaking, concept of food security is based primarily on certain fundamental human values aimed at protecting humanity from the scourges of famine, hunger and malnutrition. The question of food security has become an important issue globally, particularly among developing countries, in the wake of globalization.

Food (in) Security in India

The concept of food security is multidimensional in nature and is determined by whole range of issues such as domestic production of food, import and export of food, purchasing power of people to access food as well as factors that influence absorption of food in the body. Commonly, the concept of food security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs as well as their food preferences. But food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. There is a great deal of debate around food security. If we fail to maintain above there has been food insecurity. Food insecurity exists

¹Sehrawat, Saroha, Promila, WTO and Indian Agriculture, Regal Publication, New Delhi, 2014,p100-104

when all people, at all times, do not have physical and economic access to the sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The need for achieving food security is felt significantly in the recent years due to enormous pressure from the ever increasing population in India. India after 69th year of independence has not only seen development and progress but also becoming one of the fastest growing economies in the world. This accomplishment takes a shattering twist when one looks at the hunger problem booming within it. Out of the estimate 1.27 billion population, a total of 77% are considered poor and vulnerable, and 70% are Dalit out of this poor, and they fail to get two square meals a day² [2]. In the recently released Global Hunger Index of 2015, India ranked 55rd out of 120 countries and this report is quite disturbing because India is one the largest producers of food in the world³.

The Indian National Advisory Council (INAC) drafted a new "Food Security Bill" in 2010, the bill which is considered as the biggest ever experiment in the world for distributing highly subsidized food for any government. The National Food Security Bill after much debate

²Lathi BJ Narkhede, Parag (2010) Food Security in India: Concepts, Realities & Innovations. accessed on http://www.researchgate.net/publication/228096218_Food_Security_in_India_Concept_Realities__innovations

³IFPRI and Concern Worldwide: 2013 Global Hunger Index - The challenge of hunger: Building Resilience to Achieve Food and Nutrition Security. Bonn, Washington D. C., Dublin. October 2013, accessed on <http://iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19-issue4/Version-2/N0194293100.pdf>

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and analysis was passed and became a law on 12th September 2013. According to this Act, Food Security is defined as the availability of sufficient food grains to meet the domestic demand as well as access, at the individual level, to adequate means of food at affordable prices. The globally recognized definition of food security is access to food at the household level at all times to ensure a healthy and active life for all its members. The household is accepted as the unit for consideration, rather than, let us say, a country or an administrative subunit of it because for food security to be meaningful, food must not only be available at these higher levels, but must be accessible at the lowest unit, the household, and indeed every single member within it too. In fact, a central aspect of food security is the discrepancy between availability (at a higher level) and accessibility (at the lowest level)⁴ [3].

Food Insecurity among Dalit Communities

Historically, India's Dalit populations were prosperous and enjoyed the fruits of the nature. Due to their own indigenous culture, they find it difficulty in intermingling with the general population in India. Through the successive government's intervention and deforestation led to the disintegration of the Dalit culture which directly threatened their subsistence. They were further marginalized in the society and mostly served as the group D job in the government sector, house maids, agricultural labourers, day labourers, etc. Successive census data reveals that although the literacy rate has been increased, but it is still below compared to other communities in India. Literacy rate, per capita rate, etc. were also low among the Dalit in, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, etc compared to Dalits in other belts like north eastern states. Government's subsequent policy intervention could not change drastically the life pattern of the Dalit particularly providing two square miles in a day or putting their children in the school. The existence of this problem is not merely confined to rural areas but also extend to urban region. To combat this perennial problem, Government did introduce some major programme such as Public food distribution system (PDS), the Integrated Child Development System (ICDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGS), Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)⁵ etc. [4]. This major programme fails to penetrate in every section of the society and hunger continues to thrive among the poor people. The disappointment in the failure of this programme can mainly be attributed to the prevalence of inequality among the society, unsuccessful delivery of public services, pathetic liability system and infringement in the implementation of pro-poor policies⁶. This is mainly due to lack of improvement in agricultural productivity owing to inadequate resources and markets needed to obtain agricultural stability. An agrarian crisis is currently being unleashed in India and it has a variety of causes, the prominent being the huge cut in government's development expenditure in the nineties, particularly in rural areas. Following the adoption of structural adjustment policies from the early 1990s, the focus was shifted on expenditure reduction. As against an average of 3.8 per cent of the country's Net National Product (NNP) spent on rural development per year during the seventh plan period 1985 – 90, the share of spending on rural development was down to 1.9 per cent of NNP in 2000 – 01 and rose only to 2.5 per cent

in 2008 – 09. This adversely affected the availability and expansion of irrigation facilities, improvement in agricultural technology and overall food grain output. Lack of education and job opportunities in rural areas have further added to the problems. Climate change too, has an impact on the agricultural productivity, which affects the availability of food items and thus, food security. Major impact of climate change is on rain fed crops, other than rice and wheat⁷. For the tribal communities, habitation in remote difficult terrains and practice of subsistence farming has led to significant economic backwardness. The key issue which catalyzes the problem of food insecurity in urban areas and needs to be addressed is the large proportion of informal workforce resulting in unplanned growth of slums which lack in the basic health and hygiene facilities. Rural-to-urban migration has shown a gradual increase, with its share in total migration rising from 16.5% to 21.1% from 1971 to 2001. These rural migrants form a large chunk of population referred to as 'informal sector'. The emergence of these rural origin pockets in the urban areas has resulted in a number of slum settlements characterized by inadequate water and sanitation facilities, insufficient housing and increased food insecurity⁸ [5]. Another important point which might promote food insecurity is the dependence of this labourer class on daily employment wages which tends to be variable on different days of the month and thus the food procurement and access is also fluctuating. A striking issue is that in India, all the privilege of the government schemes and programmes, aimed at helping the urban slum people, is enjoyed only by those slums that are notified. Ironically, around 50% of the urban slums are not notified and thus are deprived of the government schemes [6]. People from these un-notified slums have to buy their food from the common market at the competitive price and are devoid of the subsidized food made available through Public Distribution System (PDS) Inadequate distribution of food through PDS mechanisms is also a reason for growing food insecurity in the country. The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) has the disadvantage in the sense that those people who are the right candidates for deserving the subsidy are excluded on the basis of non-ownership of below poverty line (BPL) status, as the criterion for identifying a household as BPL is arbitrary and varies from state to state. The often inaccurate classification as above poverty line (APL) and below poverty line (BPL) categories had resulted in a big decline in the off take of food grains⁹. Besides this, low quality of grains and the poor service at PDS shops has further added to the problem. With the onset of the imperialist-dictated policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization by the ruling classes of our country during the last decade and a half, the problems of Dalits, adivasis, other backward castes and the working people as a whole have greatly aggravated. The drive to privatize the public sector has directly hit reservations for the SC/STs. The closures of thousands of mills and factories have rendered lakhs jobless and this has also hit Dalits and other backward castes. The ban on recruitment to government and semi-government jobs that has been imposed in several states has also had an adverse effect. The growing commercialization of education and health has kept innumerable people from both socially and economically backward sections out of these vital sectors. In this background, reservation in private sector has become very important because the joblessness among the SC and STs has witnessed a steady increase in the recent period¹⁰.

⁴Jaswa, Singh. Sultan (2014), "Challenges to Food Security in India", IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science, Vol 19, Issue 4, Ver. II, Apr. 2014, pp-95, <http://iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19-issue4/Version-2/N0194293100.pdf>

⁵Ibid

⁶These are an Indian government welfare programme which provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children' SC/ST, women and marginised people 6 years of age and their mothers. These services are provided mainly in rural areas and staffed with frontline workers. In addition to fighting malnutrition and ill health, the programme is also intended to combat inequality. Accessed on en.wikipedia.org/wiki/welfareprogramme

⁷Athreya VB, Bhavani RV, Anuradha G, Gopinath R, Velan AS. Report on the state of food insecurity in rural India. 2008 Dec;14. M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, accessed on <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/>

⁸Athreya VB, Rukmani R, Bhavani RV, Anuradha G, Gopinath R, Velan AS. Report on the state of food insecurity in urban India. 2010 Sep;34. M S Swaminathan Research Foundation. Accessed on <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3481742/#b10-ijph-40-31>

⁹PrakashR Upadhyay, Palanive,C (2011), Challenges in Achieving Food Security in India, Iran J Public Health. 2011 Dec; 40(4): 31–36.

¹⁰Sharma,S.J "Economic Liberalization Policy and Its Impact on Dalit" In Kumar, Arun (eds), Dalits and Economic Reforms, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2010

The most disastrous effects of these policies can be seen in the deep agrarian crisis that has afflicted the rural sector. Rural employment has sharply fallen and this has hit Dalits and adivasis the most. Mechanization of agriculture has further compounded the problem. The real wages of agricultural workers, of whom a large proportion are Dalits, have fallen in many states. No efforts are made to implement minimum wage legislation even where it exists, and periodic revision of minimum wage is also conspicuous by its absence. The dismantling of the public distribution system has increased hunger to alarming proportions. An overwhelming proportion of the malnutrition-related deaths of thousands of children in several states are from Dalit and adivasis families. Thus, the neo-liberal policies have accentuated both the economic as well as the social divide in the country¹¹.

India and WTO provision

Even as these important changes are happening in domestic food policy, the implications of the current direction of food policy in India for India's trade relations in the global community are a growing cause for concern. This stems from a perception that in implementing the Food Security Act, India would need to maintain distortionary interventions in domestic foodgrain systems that would breach its international commitments under the WTO AoA, specifically to keep the procurement price support below 10 per cent of the value of production for primary commodities [7].

The road ahead for India is a tough one. When India filed the base year notifications, India reported the base period reference price in Indian rupees for both rice and wheat, the two commodities that are core of the food procurement and distribution system. The WTO method of computing the indicator for domestic support, called the Aggregate Measure of Support (AMS) uses a fixed external reference price (ERP) pertaining to 1986–88 as a benchmark for assessing levels of price support annually to measure the potential distortionary impact [8]. It is easy to see that this is a deeply flawed measure of trade-distorting support because it allows for neither the changes in world prices, nor domestic inflation nor fluctuations in the exchange rate. It is hard to imagine what the AMS really represents. If India were to report the support for rice and wheat using this 'mis measure' of support, India would appear to have exceeded the *deminimis* of 10 per cent permitted for developing countries way back in 1995-96 for reasons that have little to do with its price support policy and entirely to do with the way AMS is measured as part of the AoA which adjusts the fixed ERP for inflation or uses a moving ERP. By these measures, it emerges that India's procurement policy via a support price is far from protectionist, and in fact disprotects rice and wheat farmers as reported for the 1990s. Indeed, in the case of rice, during the peak of the rice price crisis in 2007-08 and after, India's rice prices domestically did not increase as much, leading to a sharp decline in the price differential. Indeed, when one maps the levels of minimum support price against the cost of cultivation in different states, which is one of the elements forming the basis of the determination of the Minimum Support Price (MSP), it is evident that the MSP does not cover the costs of cultivation in several states. This suggests that the MSP is unlikely to provide incentives to higher cost producers to continue rice-wheat production. India's 'distortionary' policies have more to do with trade controls than domestic price support interventions. These mainly pertain to export controls that insulate Indian grain markets. It is relevant to note that India renegotiated its bound rates for rice and wheat and set these fairly high at 80 per cent (broken) and 100 per cent respectively. Actual tariff rates exist below these bound rates for wheat. State trading enterprises

still control much of the international trade in grains. This conservative approach to international trade is one of the more salient aspects of Indian trade policy [9]. Public stockholding issue is of most importance not only in terms of trade but also the livelihoods of millions of small farmers and the food security of people in developing countries. The acquisition of food stocks has always been an important instrument for development and was also used by many developed countries during their development process. It remains an important policy tool for developing countries for the following reasons:

(1) In the face of volatility of food stocks on the global market today and fluctuations in global food prices, building national reserves has been widely acknowledged to be a critical part of developing countries' food security strategy. Today's global food market is structurally different from the market when the Uruguay Round was completed. In the 1990s and early 2000s, food on the global market was cheap and stocks were plentiful. It is no longer so.

(2) Acquiring surpluses from some regions of the country and sending these supplies to other regions of the country that are food deficit has been and remains an important food security instrument for developing countries.

(3) Many developing countries continue to struggle with widespread rural poverty. At least 1.5 billion individuals depend on small-scale farming for their livelihoods. These remain a major issue especially when the share of the population engaged in agriculture continues to be significant and the industrial or services sectors cannot provide sufficient employment. For broad-based development to take place, countries must ensure that the living standards and purchasing power of the majority can be increased. Governments' programmes acquiring foodstuffs at administered prices are therefore an important avenue whereby resource poor farmers' incomes can be stabilized and even guaranteed.

(4) Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights imposes on States three levels of obligations in the realization of such right: to respect existing access to adequate food, to protect and to fulfill the right to food; they 'must facilitate it by proactively strengthening people's access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security'. The adoption of the G33 proposal will be instrumental to the realization of the human right to food. Preserving the current situation under the Agreement on Agriculture might, in fact, force WTO members to violate their human rights obligations¹². At present "Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes" is included in the Green Box, the category of subsidies that are minimally or non-trade distorting. There are many other items also in this Green Box, including measures to protect the environment and subsidies to farmers that are not directly tied to production, most of which are used by the developed countries, which provide very large amounts of subsidies under this Box. WTO member countries are allowed to provide all these other Green Box subsidies without limit. However only in the case of the Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes does the Agriculture Agreement place the condition that the difference between the acquisition price and the external reference price should be accounted for in the AMS¹³. This treatment of the developing countries' support for public stockholding is discriminatory and there is thus much logic in the G33 proposal not to count this expenditure

¹¹Ibid

¹²Document(2013), The WTO,s Bali Ministerial and Food Security, EPW VOL XLVIII NO.49 DEC,2013 ,PP 70

¹³AMS means the amount of total subsidies, subject to reduction commitment given by Government to its agriculture sector is measured in forms of aggregate Measure of support. Source: Document(2013), The WTO,s Bali Ministerial and Food Security, EPW VOL XLVIII NO.49 DEC,2013 ,PP 70

as part of the trade distorting subsidy which goes into the calculation of AMS. Just like the treatment for other Green Box measures such as decoupled supports, insurance, environmental protection and other support instruments provided by developed countries under the 'Green Box', Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes should all the more be treated as a Green Box measure without any conditions attached to it. It is important and pertinent to note that the G33's proposal is not a new proposal only recently formulated by the group. In fact the proposal reproduces a part of the last version of the WTO's Doha agriculture modalities text of 6 December 2008. The text on this issue had been included by the Chair of the Agriculture negotiations in this modalities draft, without square brackets, denoting that it enjoyed consensus and that the text on this issue had there was already 'stabilized'. The G33 proposal therefore is being put forward as a text that had already been agreed to by the membership and that should be part of an "early harvest" of the Doha work programme. The proposal is also in line with the 2001 Doha Ministerial mandate and the subsequent mandate from the 2005 Hong Kong Ministerial recognizing the need of developing countries to safeguard food security, rural livelihoods and rural employment. The G33 proposal would also provide a solution for the discrimination in the way the Agreement on Agriculture rules stipulate how the AMS is to be calculated when developing countries undertake public stockholding programmes. The present formula in the Agreement leads to an artificial and inflated figure, making it very difficult for developing countries to provide for or to implement these programmes in an adequate manner or to an adequate extent. The reasons for this problem is that prices of agricultural commodities, especially staple foods, and including vegetables and meats, have increased manifold, in some cases by three or four or more times, compared to the period when the Uruguay Round was negotiated. Yet the benchmark used to calculate the AMS supports as stipulated by the Agreement is still the prices of 1986-1988. Thus there would be a very significant difference between the prices at which the government presently purchases food items from the farmers or the traders, and the reference prices which are based on 1986-88 levels. Such large price differences would be used to count the amount of subsidies. With this type of calculation, which is clearly unfair, the government schemes could easily exceed the maximum level of AMS or any de minimis that the developing countries could have. This is especially because most developing countries declared zero or low amounts of AMS in their Uruguay Round schedules, as they were too poor to provide subsidies in the past periods and their negative support was not reflected in their AMS schedules [10]. Thus many of them have to rely on the de minimis subsidies (which are limited only to 10% of the production value for the majority of developing countries, and 8% in the case of China)¹⁴. The G33 proposal sidesteps these problems by making developing countries' public stockholding programmes a Green Box measure without any conditions thereby bringing this Green Box measure in line with other Green Box measures largely used by Developed Countries. This implies that the Developing Countries will not have to restrict their Public Stockholding programmes fearing that they may breach their 10% de minimis¹⁵. Food security is non-negotiable for the developing countries since it directly relates to the livelihood concerns of millions of subsistence farmers and food security of the poor and vulnerable sections in these societies. Accordingly, developing countries wanted to change the present WTO rules on agricultural subsidies that hinder the ability of governments to purchase and stock staple foods from farmers

at Bali conference, 2013¹⁶. It was agreed that a permanent solution involving changes to the rules would take more time, so Bali discussed an interim measure - a 'peace clause' whereby WTO legal cases will not be taken against countries having a public food stockholding programme. The issue was how long this peace clause would last. India, backed by many developing countries, wanted it to last till the permanent solution is found. The US and others wanted the peace clause to expire in four years. The final agreement was that the WTO would negotiate a permanent solution within four years, and countries will refrain from taking cases until that solution is found.

Government Policies Regarding Food Security

The Indian government has used various programs and policies to insure the country's food security with limited success. Some of these policies and programs, instead of contributing to food security, had a detrimental impact on assuring food security to its people. Food security at both the national and household levels has been the focus of India's agricultural strategy since the mid-1960s, when two consecutive droughts significantly pushed up India's import dependence for staple grains. The new strategy launched at that time, aimed at achieving "self sufficiency" in foodgrains (mostly wheat and rice), was providing farmers an improved technology package, consisting mainly of high yielding seed varieties, modern farm inputs and credit, and assurance of a remunerative and fixed price, popularly known as "Green Revolution". However, the over-emphasis on wheat and rice production has led to a decline in area planted to other nutrition rich crops such as pulses, coarse grains and oilseeds, making the country increasingly dependent on imported pulses and vegetable oils. Furthermore, over exploitation of natural resources particularly irrigation water, indiscriminate use of farm inputs, and a continuous wheat-rice rotation in major growing areas has waned the impact of green revolution, prompting policy makers now to look for a sustainable "Ever Green Revolution" [11].

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is a major market intervention by the government aimed at assuring food security to all its citizens, especially the poor. Under the PDS, wheat and rice procured by the government under the price support operation and in some years through imports are distributed in through a network of fair price or ration shops at highly subsidized prices. Although in the beginning the PDS was a universal program, later the government made it a targeted program, categorizing the PDS clientele into three categories, namely the Above Poverty Line (APL), Below Poverty Line (BPL), and the "Poorest-of -the Poor" (Antyodaya) with differential entitlement and pricing for the wheat and rice distributed to these categories. Over the years, the efficacy of the PDS in insuring food security has eroded due to high inclusion and exclusion errors in the BPL category, non-viability of the fair price shops, failure in fulfilling the price stabilization objectives by reducing the state allocations and high leakages. Furthermore, the subsidy burden in operating the PDS has skyrocketed reaching around Rs. 730 billion in FY 2011-12. The Supreme Court-appointed Central Vigilance Committee (CVC) had slammed the PDS as one of the most corrupt sectors, saying the root cause of its failure in several states is political interference. With a view to maximize government purchase, the government in the past had imposed various restrictions on private trade under the Essential Commodities Act, which include limiting stocks holding of essential food commodities by private trade, indirect restriction on private trade buying of wheat and rice, etc. Although this helped to increase government procurement, it discouraged private investment in warehousing and processing infrastructure [12].

Buffer Stocking: Another major policy devised used by the

¹⁶Ibid

¹⁴https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/agric_e/ag_intro03_domestic_e.htm accessed on 11 Aug 2015

¹⁵Document(2013), The WTO, s Bali Ministerial and Food Security, EPW VOL XLVIII NO.49 DEC, 2013, PP 71

government to achieve food security is building up and maintaining a buffer stock of wheat and rice. In fact the government's grain import and export decisions are largely governed by the level of stocks in its warehouses and not by the overall domestic grain availability. However, recent experience shows that maintaining a large buffer stock of grains alone is not a sufficient condition to achieve food security. In fact the government policy of maintaining large grain stocks had an adverse impact on food availability. By offering high support prices to farmers the government mopped up a major share of the market surplus thereby significantly lowering the open market availability and contributing to higher open market prices (Table 1). As the government had no efficient mechanism to effectively deliver these stocks to the needy due to flaws in its PDS, this in effect resulted in reduced grain availability and high open market grain prices accentuating food insecurity.

International trade regulation

International trade regulation through tariff and non-tariff measures such as, minimum export price, reference prices, export bans, export quotas, etc. have often been used by India to achieve food security. The global food price crisis in 2008 and the more recent domestic food price inflation prompted the government to ban or restrict exports of several food items such as rice, wheat, corn, vegetable oils, pulses and sugar jeopardizing the food security of countries depending on India for its food needs such as Bangladesh and several poor African countries. Although the government lifted export restrictions on most commodities following an improvement in production and stocks situation, such action tends to discourage domestic crop production and a profitable crop diversification by denying access to Indian farmers high international prices for their produce. There is no guarantee that the government will not impose such trade restrictions in future. Such off again-on again trade policy adversely impacts on the credibility of India as a consistent and reliable supplier of farm goods to the world.

Nutrition programs

The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)¹⁷, which among other things focuses on increasing the nutritional and health status of children has been in operation for over three decades. However according to the 11th Five Year Program document, it had only a limited impact to address the problem of child and maternal malnutrition mainly due to limited coverage. Another popular nutritional program, the Mid-day Meal Scheme, is a school meal program, which involves provision of lunch free of cost to school-children on all working days. The key objectives of the program are: protecting children from classroom hunger, increasing school enrolment and attendance,

¹⁷<http://wcd.nic.in/icds.htm>

improved socialization among children belonging to all castes, addressing malnutrition, and social empowerment through provision of employment to women. Roughly hundred and twenty million children are covered under the Mid-day Meal Scheme¹⁸, which is the largest school lunch program in the world. The Food & Nutrition Board (FNB), set up in 1964, is an attached office of the Ministry of Women & Child Development and has a countrywide set up. Originally with Ministry of Food, the FNB was shifted to Ministry of Women and Child Development (then Department of WCD) in 1993. Activities of Food & Nutrition Board include: (a) Nutrition Education and Training, both for the masses and for ICDS functionaries; (b) Mass Nutrition Awareness Campaigns; (c) Development, production and distribution of nutrition education/training material; (d) Training in Home Scale Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables and Nutrition; (e) Development and Promotion of locally available Nutritious Foods; and (f) Food Analysis and Standardization [12].

Recent policy initiatives and programs

The government in recent years has initiated several new programs to achieve and enhance food security. The flagship National Rural Employment Guarantee Program (now renamed as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme)¹⁹, conceived as the largest rural employment guarantee program in the world, legislatively guarantees 100 days of paid employment per year for one member in a rural family. The annual budgetary allocation for this program in IFY 2010-11 is Rs.401 billion. Other programs which aim to contribute to national food security include (a) National Food Security Mission targeted towards increasing the production of wheat, rice, and pulses, in selected districts with an outlay of Rs. 48.8 billion for five years²⁰; (b) the *Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana* (National Agricultural Development Program)²¹ with a five year outlay of Rs. 250 billion, which aims to incentivize the state governments (agriculture is a state subject in India) to increase their share of investment in agriculture; (c) approval of the National Policy for Farmers²², which focuses on economic well being of farmers; and (d) a farm loan waiver program of Rs.710 billion to provide relief to 40 million farmers to make them eligible for fresh loans [10].

The government is now embarking on implementing an ambitious Food Security Act²³, the main features of which are:

¹⁸http://india.gov.in/sectors/education/mid_day_meal.php <http://nrega.nic.in>

¹⁹<http://nfsm.gov.in/>

²⁰nfsm.gov.in/.../2%20India%20food%20security%20conundrum.docx

²¹<http://agricoop.nic.in/Rkvy/Rkvyfinal-1.pdf>

²²<http://www.agricoop.nic.in/NPF/npff2007.pdf>

²³<http://dfpd.nic.in/fcamin/FSBILL/food-security.pdf>

Marketing Year	Procurement (Million Metric Tonne)		Minimum Support Price (Rs per Tonne)		Food Subsidy (Billion Rs)
	RICE	WHEAT	RICE	WHEAT	
2002/03	16.4 (22.8)	19.0 (26.1)	5,500	6,200	241.8
2003/04	22.9 (25.8)	15.8 (24.0)	5,500	6,300	251.8
2004/05	24.7 (29.7)	16.8 (23.3)	5,600	6,300	258
2005/06	27.6 (30.1)	14.8 (21.6)	5,700	6,400	230.8
2006/07	25.1 (26.9)	9.2 (13.3)	6,200	6,500	240.1
2007/08	28.7 (29.7)	11.1 (14.6)	7,450	8,500	313.3
2008/09	34.1 (34.4)	22.7 (28.9)	9,000	10,000	437.5
2009/10	31.4 (35.2)	25.3 (31.4)	10,000	10,800	584.4
2010/11	34.2 (35.6)	22.5 (25.9)	10,000	11,000	638.4
2011/12	35.0 (33.6)	28.3 (32.0)	10,800	11,700	728.2
2012/13		38.1 (40.6)	12,500	12,850	***750.0

Note: Figures in parenthesis shows procurement as a per cent of production

Table 1: India: Higher Procurement Prices Leads to Larger Government Procurement.

- Legal entitlement to subsidized food grains to be extended up to 75% of the country's rural population and 50% of the urban population
- The priority households (46% in rural areas and 28% in urban areas) to have a monthly entitlement of 35 Kgs (equivalent to 7 Kgs per person) at a subsidized price
- Government of India to specify the criteria for categorization of population into priority and general households
- Legal entitlements for child and maternal nutrition, destitute and other vulnerable Groups
- Reform of the Public Distribution System

Although the implementation of the provisions of this act will be a challenge considering the ambiguity regarding the number of BPL families, the problem in delivering the grain to targeted families, the additional government subsidy involved, etc., the government is giving topmost priority to this program. However, some experts are of the view that long-term food security lies not just in giving subsidized grain, but in raising production of staples on the one hand and augmenting farmers' income on the other through horticulture, livestock and poultry production. There are also some Indian economists who argue that instead of supplying grains to BPL consumers directly, which often results in corruption and leakage of the highly subsidized grain into the open market, the objective of food security can be achieved through issuing food coupons. Finally, India is not prepared to address a major constraint to greater food production – land laws that limit or prohibit farm land leasing arrangements. Food security policy in India has for many years favoured extensive government intervention²⁴.

Conclusion

We can say that food security problem in India is not serious if we success in the proper distribution policy. But problem is that, the government has failed to control and regulate food market in India. This problem becomes serious due to the unfair trade practice by private traders doing in drought situation. The problem of hunger is due to poor economic accessibility. It may be possible to make food security in India in good mannern if we doing the proper planning of food grain production and fair practices in food market. There is need of strong control over the food market in India. In developing countries like India, the root causes of food insecurity include, poverty, corruption, national policies that do not promote equal access to food for all, environmental degradation, barriers to trade, insufficient agricultural development, population growth, low levels of education, social and gender inequality, poor health status, cultural insensitivity, and natural disasters. If the government concentrate the problem specific it is possible by the existing majors, but there is need of implementation of that in proper manner and accurately. Public distribution system is very good way to overcome the problem of speculation by the private traders. Another way to food security is increase in fruit, milk and fish production, Fish is not only a vital food it is also a source of livelihood for millions of people around the globe. We can solve that problem by the increase in inland and sea fish production in India. The policy of mitigating nutritional deficiencies and food security by fisheries is a pragmatic move in India, considering the fact that sea has ample scope for continuous supply of protein rich food. We need to exploit the food from sea to counter the menace of malnutrition. India, with its vast coastline and seas can use science and technology to make full use of fisheries in ensuring food security to its vast populace. The

²⁴Ashok Gulati, Economic Times, June 15, 2009.

objectives of the Public Distribution System-PDS are good but it was failed to accomplish that objective due to the corruption. PDS is better way to tackle the problem of food speculation of private traders. If the government will succeed the in the motive of PDS the intensity of food insecurity problem will be reduced in future. However, the cruel reality is that despite this huge food production, a huge buffer stock and an extensive network of PDS, millions of people are food insecure and many even die of starvation. Food Insecurity and tragedy hit different parts of the country every year. The present food crisis is due to lack of proper distribution and the trading system impeding free flow of food. Even increase in agricultural productivity also one of the solution for this problem. This should be based on integrating inputs and outputs-the supply of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation, supported by credit alongside remunerative output prices. A second "green revolution" is essential to stimulate food production in many India. It is crucial to ensure that farm and trade policies of developed countries do not artificially reduce the prices of their food grains. This makes it virtually impossible for farmers from developing countries to compete both in their own domestic markets, due to cheap food imports, and also in the international market. The problem of food security comes mainly from the slow growth of purchasing power of the people in the rain-fed eco-systems. Efforts must be made to help them by developing drought resistant seeds, cost-effective dry-land farming techniques. A major challenge to food security comes from dietary diversification of the poor. If cereal pricing is left to the market forces, government playing the facilitating role, land will be released from rice and wheat cultivation to meet the growing demand for non-cereal crops such as oilseeds, fruits and vegetables in accordance with diet diversification. At the movement the problem is the problem of distribution of existing comfortable level of supply. However with increasing population combined with low agricultural productivity. Therefore we should do efforts to increase productivity and re-correct the distribution problems.

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