

9th Standard Social Science

Food Security in India

Food security refers to availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times. Food security depends, on the Public Distribution System (PDS) and government vigilance and time to time action, when this security is threatened.

Meaning Of Food Security

Food security means availability of adequate supply of basic foodstuffs at all times.

The 1995 World Food Summit declared, “Food security at the individual, household, regional, national and global levels 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”. The declaration further recognises that “poverty eradication is essential to improve access to food”.

Food security has the following dimensions

- Availability of Food It means food production within the country, food imports and the previous years stock stored in government granaries.
- Accessibility of Food It means food is within reach of every person.

- Affordability of Food It implies that an individual has enough money to buy sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet one's dietary needs.

The above dimensions conclude that food security is ensured in a country only if Enough food is available for all the persons.

- All persons have the capacity to buy food of acceptable quality.
- There is no barrier on access to food.

Necessity Of Food Security

Food security is needed in a country to ensure food at all times. It is needed to ensure that no person in a country dies of hunger.

Effect of Natural Calamity on Food Security

Most of the time, the poorest section of society might be food insecure. But persons above the poverty line might also be food insecure when the country faces a national disaster/calamity like earthquake, drought, flood, tsunami, widespread failure of crops causing famine, etc.-

The total production of foodgrains decreases due to a natural calamity. It creates a shortage of food in the affected areas. The price of the food products goes up due to this shortage. At high prices, some people cannot afford to buy food. If such calamity happens in a very wide area or is stretched over a longer time period, it may cause a situation of starvation. Massive starvation might take a turn of famine. Thus, natural calamity affects food security adversely.

Famine and Starvation

A famine is characterised by widespread deaths due to starvation and epidemics caused by forced use of impure water or decaying food and loss of body resistance due to weakening from starvation.

The most devastating famine in India was the famine of Bengal in 1943. Thirty lakh people died in it. The price of rice, the staple diet of the people in the region, increased sharply.

People Affected by Famine

No famine has occurred in India since independence. But today also, there are places like Kalahandi and Kashipur in Odisha where famine-like condition still prevails. Starvation deaths are also reported in Baran district of Rajasthan, Palamau in Jharkhand and many other remote areas.

Food Insecure People

Food and nutrition insecurity has affected the large section in India. But the most affected people in the rural areas are landless agricultural labourers, traditional artisans and petty self-employed workers. In urban areas the most affected are beggars and homeless people, casual labourers people employed in ill-paid occupations and construction migrant and other seasonal workers.

Further, many pregnant and nursing mothers and also children under the age of 5 years are food insecure people. The second National Health and Family

Survey (NHFS) conducted during 1998-99. estimated that approximately 11 crore women and children in India are food insecure.

Food Insecure Regions

Economically backward states with high level of poverty, tribal and remote areas, regions more prone to natural disasters (like Eastern and South-eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh) consist the largest number of food insecure people.

Hunger

Food insecurity also has an important aspect of hunger. To create food security, current hunger should be removed and the risk of future hunger should be reduced. Hunger has two dimensions i.e. chronic and seasonal.

National Health and Family Survey (NHFS) 1998-95 A large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India. Three rounds of the survey have been conducted since the first survey in 1992-93 and this was the second. The survey provided .essential data on health and family welfare needed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other agencies for policy and programme purposes as well as information on important emerging health and family welfare issues.

There are two types of hunger. These are as follows

(i) Chronic Hunger

It is a consequence of a diet regularly deficient in quantity and quality this is caused due to lack of income to buy food for survival. Chronic hunger has reduced in rural areas from 2.3% of households in 1983 to 0.7% in 1999 – 2000. In urban areas, it has reduced from 0.8% to 0.3% during the same period.

(ii) Seasonal Hunger

It is related to seasonal cycles of food growing and harvesting. It affects landless* agricultural labourers in rural areas the most. In urban areas, casual construction workers suffer from this during the time when they do not get work. The proportion of households experiencing seasonal hunger in rural areas has reduced significantly from 16.2% in 1983 to 2.6% in 1999-2000. In urban areas, it has reduced from 5.6% to only 0.6% during the reference period.

Note Malnutrition is a condition that results from eating a diet in which certain nutrients are lacking or in wrong proportions.

Measures for Self-Sufficiency in Foodgrains.

India is aiming at self-sufficiency in foodgrains since independence. India has adopted all measures to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains. The ' Green

Revolution during the late 1960s and early 1970s helped significantly to achieve this, although the success varied from region to region.

During this period, High Yielding Varieties (HYVs) of wheat and rice were introduced in many states. The highest rate of growth was achieved in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, where foodgrain production jumped from 7.23 million tonnes in 1964-65 to reach an all-time high of 78.9 million tonnes in 2012-13.

Production of foodgrains in Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Assam, Tamil Nadu has dropped. West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, on the other hand, recorded significant increases in rice yield in 2012-13. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, officially recorded the impressive progress of the Green Revolution in agriculture by releasing a special stamp entitled 'Wheat Revolution' in July 1968.

Food Corporation of India (FCI) This was set-up under the Food Corporation's Act 1964, in order to support operations for safeguarding the farmers, distribution of foodgrains throughout the country through PDS and maintaining satisfactory level of operational and buffer stocks.

Minimum Support Price (MSP) This is the price at which the government (through the Food Corporation of India) purchases crops from the farmers. Presently, there are 27 crops being purchased with such prices including varieties of cereals, pulses, oilseeds, fibre crops and others.

Food Security In India

The Green Revolution was started in early 70s. Since then, our country has avoided famine even during adverse weather conditions. India has become self-sufficient in foodgrains during the last 30 years due to the variety of crops grown. Foodgrains availability even in adverse conditions has been ensured by the government through a food security system consisting of maintaining a buffer stock of foodgrains, alongwith a Public Distribution System (PDS) for foodgrains and other essential items.

Buffer Stock

It is the stock of foodgrains (wheat and rice) procured by the government. Government purchases wheat and rice from farmers through the Food Corporation of India (FCI) states having surplus production. The farmers are paid a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops. The MSP is announced at the beginning of the sowing season to give an incentive to the farmers to grow more. These purchased foodgrains are stored in granaries as a buffer stock. This stock is maintained to distribute foodgrains through the PDS in the areas of the country where production is less. It is provided, to the poorer sections of society at subsidised prices, i.e. lower than the market price which is known as the issue price. The buffer stock also helps to resolve the problem of food shortage due to a calamity or in adverse weather conditions.

Programmes For Food Security In India

In mid-1970s, National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) reported the high

incidence of poverty level. Due to this, three important food intervention programmes were introduced.

They are

- Public Distribution System (PDS) for foodgrains
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
- Food-For Work (FfW) programme.

Public Distribution System (PDS) Through government regulated ration shops, the food procured by the FCI is distributed among the poorer sections of the society. This is called the Public Distribution System (PDS). Ration shops are now present in most localities, villages, towns and cities. There are about 5.5 lakh ration shops all over the country. Ration shops are also known as fair price shops. They keep stock of foodgrains, sugar, kerosene oil for cooking. These items are sold to people at a price lower than the market price. Any family with a ration card can buy a stipulated amount of these items (e.g. 35 kg of grains, 5 litres of kerosene, 5 kg of sugar, etc) every month from the nearby ration shop. The ration cards are of three kinds, colour-coded for easy recognition

- Antyodaya card for the poorest of the poor.
- BPL card for families below the poverty line.
- APL card for all others.

Rationing

It is a term given to government controlled distribution of resources and scarce goods or services. It restricts how much people are allowed to buy or consume at a particular time within a particular period. Rationing in India was introduced in 1940s against the backdrop of the Bengal famine. Later, it was revived in the wake of an acute food shortage during 1960s prior to the Green Revolution.

Current Status of Public Distribution System

In the beginning, the PDS coverage was universal with no discrimination between the poor and non-poor. In 1992, a Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was started in 1,700 blocks of the country to provide the benefits of PDS in remote and backward areas. In 1997, a Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced to target the 'poor in all areas', with a lower issue price for foodgrains for them compared to the price paid by non-poor people. Further in year 2000, two special schemes Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Annapura Scheme (APS) were launched.

(i) Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) for the 'poorest of poor'. AAY was launched in December 2000. Under the scheme, 1 crore of the poorest among the BPL families covered under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) were identified.

Poor families were identified by the respective state rural development departments through a Below Poverty, Line (BPL) survey. 25 kg of foodgrains were made available to each eligible family at a highly subsidised+ rate of Rs.

2 per kg for wheat and ? 3 per kg for rice. This quantity was increased from 25 kg to 35 kg from April 2002.

(ii) Annapurna Scheme (APS) for the 'indigent senior citizen'. It provides 10 kg of foodgrains free of cost per month to senior citizens who are not receiving any pension or have any other source of income or having a family to support them, i.e. they are destitute.

Following are some remarkable achievements of PDS

- PDS has helped government to stabilise foodgrain prices, so that it is available to consumers at affordable rates.
- It has helped in avoiding widespread hunger and famine by supplying food from surplus regions to deficit ones.
- It also helped in increasing foodgrain production, besides providing income security to farmers in some areas.

Criticisms of PDS

The implementation of the PDS still needs to be improved, because of the following reasons

- Buffer stocks are much higher than the rules.
- In some FCI godowns, grains are getting damaged or eaten by rats and still instances of hunger are prevalent.
- High level of buffer stock of 65.3 million tonnes of wheat and rice in 2014 was much more than the minimum level of buffer norms. The

excess stock of foodgrains bought from farmers at high , prices leads to high carrying costs for the government, besides leading to deterioration and wastage.

- The pressure exerted by leading foodgrain producing states to increase the buying cost has increased MSP. The rising' MSP has increased the maintenance cost of procured foodgrains, storage cost and transportation cost.
- The buying of foodgrains is concentrated in a few prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana Western Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and to a lesser extent in West Bengal.
- The high MSPs have made farmers to cultivate wheat and rice more resulting in depletion of the water table, as they require more water to grow. This has also led to soil degradation, endangering future sustainability of agricultural development in the regions where these are grown.

Malpractices in PDS

PDS has also become ineffective in many regions of the country because dealers running the ration shops are indulged in malpractices

The malpractices indulged into by the dealers include

- Diverting the grains to open market to get a better margin.
- Selling poor quality grains at ration shops.
- Irregular opening of the shops and so on.

The malpractices have resulted in consumers of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha buying much less foodgrains than the national average from the ration shops. In the Southern states, where the shops are run by cooperatives, the consumers purchase much more than the national average.

Since the introduction of Targeted Distribution System (TPDS), with three levels of prices for three different income level families, the Above Poverty Line (APL) families do not have much incentive to buy foodgrains from the ration shops. The prices for these families are not significantly lower than market prices.

Subsidy

It is a payment that a government makes to a producer to supplement the market price of a commodity. Subsidy helps in keeping consumer prices low while maintaining a higher income for domestic producers.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

In 1975, it was introduced on an experimental basis. Its aim is to provide children upto 6 years of age supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health, check-up, referral services, pre-school non-formal education as well as nutrition and health education for their mothers.

Food-For-Work (FFW) Programme

The main objective of the Food for Work Programme is generation of supplementary wage employment. It is open to all rural people who are in need of unskilled work wage employment.

National Food For Work Programme

National Food for Work Programme was launched on 14th November, 2004 in 150 most backward districts of the country with the objective of intensifying the generation of supplementary wage employment. The programme is open to all rural poor who are in need of wage employment and desire to do manual unskilled work. It is implemented as a 100% centrally sponsored scheme and the foodgrains are provided to the states free of cost. The Collector is the nodal officer at the district level and has the overall responsibility of planning, implementation, coordination, monitoring and supervision. The programme from 2005 has since been subsumed in NREGA.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAPs)

Over the last few years, several other Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAPs), were launched mostly in rural areas. Some of – them have also been restructured.

Some of these programmes have explicit food components. Others are employment programmes, which improve food security by increasing the income of the poor. For example, Rural Wage Employment Programme,

Employment Guarantee Scheme, Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana and Mid-day-Meal.

Role Of Cooperatives In Food Security

The role played by cooperatives in food security of India is important especially in the Southern and Western parts of the country. The cooperative societies set-up shops to sell low priced goods to poor people. For example, out of all fair price shops running in Tamil Nadu, around 94% are being run by the cooperatives.

The examples shown below are success stories of cooperatives in order to contribute in food security of India

In Delhi, Mother Dairy is making progress in the provision of milk and vegetables to the consumers at a controlled rate decided by the Government of Delhi.

Amul is another success story of cooperatives in milk and milk products from Gujarat. It has brought about the White Revolution in the country.

In Maharashtra, Academy of Development Science (ADS) has facilitated a network of NGOs for setting up grain banks in different regions. ADS organises training and capacity building programmes on food security for NGOs. The ADS Grain Bank programme is acknowledged as a successful and innovative food security intervention.

Summary

The availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times is called food security.

When there is problems in food production or distribution, poor household has to suffer the most.

The food, security in India depends on the Public Distribution System (PDS) and vigilant and timely action of the government.

Food is an essential item for the survival of human being.

Food security of a nation is ensured if all of its citizens have enough nutritious food available (availability), all person having the capacity to buy food (affordat>i|it^ and there is no barrier on access to food (accessibility).

The poorest strata of society are mostly food insecure and the better off might face food insecurity during national disaster and calamity.

During natural calamity there is decrease in foodgrain production, which causes shortage of foodgrain. The increased price ultimately leads to starvation and famine.

Epidemics during famine is caused by forced use of contaminated water or decaying food and loss of body resistance due to weakening from starvation.

Landless people, traditional artisans, petty self employed workers and destitutes including beggars are worst affected groups from food and nutrition insecurity.

Workers of ill-paid occupations and casual labourer are the most food insecure people in urban areas.

Agriculture is seasonal and low paying activity.

Besides the inability to buy food, the social composition (like SCs, STs, OBCs etc) also has role in food insecurity.

Economically backward states, with high incidence of poverty, tribal and rural areas, regions prone to natural disaster has largest number of food insecure people.

For example, Bihar, Jharkhand, Eastern UP, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra etc.

Poverty and hunger are two dimensions of food insecurity.

Hunger can be chronic or seasonal.

The chronic hunger is the consequence of a diet regularly deficient in quantity and quality due to lack of income.

The seasonal hunger is the consequence of seasonal nature of food production and harvesting which affects landless agricultural labourers the most.

Through Green Revolution, India attained self sufficiency in foodgrain production.

The food security system of government consist of component of buffer stock and public distribution system.

Buffer stock is the stock of foodgrains (wheat and Rice) procured by government (through FCI) from surplus producing state for distribution (through PDS) to deficit states and the poorest section of society.

The pre-announced price, paid by government to farmers is called Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The price at which foodgrains is distributed to poorer section of people is called issue price. It is lower than market price.

The system of distribution of food procured by the FCI among the poorer section of society is called the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Ration shops (also known as fair price shops), keep stocks of foodgrains, sugar, kerosene etc to be sold to people at a price lower than market price.

In addition to PDS, the other poverty alleviation programme comprising component of food security are : Integrated Child Development Service

(ICDS); Food For Work (FFW), mid day meals, Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) etc.

Various cooperatives, NGOs are also working intensively along with government to ensure food security of India.

Mother Dairy, Amul, Grain banks are regarded as successful and innovation food security intervention.

