



**A STUDY ON FOOD SECURITY SYSTEM APPROACHES
AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA**

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ABSTRACT:

Food security as defined by FAO is the physical and economic access for all people all times to enough food for an active, healthy life with risk of losing such access and as such is directly connected with livelihood in the developing countries. First Millenium Development Goals states the target of “Halving hunger by 2015”. Sadly, the recent statistics for India present a very gloomy picture. India currently has the largest number of undernourished people in the world and this is in spite of the fact that it has made substantial progress in health determinants over the past decades and ranks second worldwide in farm output. Thus, this paper seeks to address A Study on Food Security System Approaches and Challenges in India

KEYWORDS: Food security, poor people, health, malnutrition, India .

INTRODUCTION:

The subject of improving food security to the people is an issue of great importance to the today's welfare state. Food is the most important need, as it is indispensable for the maintenance of human life. Despite impressive food production in recent decades, such that enough food is available to meet the basic needs of each and every person, complete food security has not been achieved. It is more imperative in case of India where millions of poor suffer from persistent hunger and malnutrition. The concept of food security has evolved over the last few decades.

The stages of food security may be visualized for a developing country like India:

Stage 1: The most basic need from the point of view of human survival is to make an adequate quantity of cereals available to all.

Stage 2: In the second stage, we may think of food security as the adequate availability of cereals and pulses.

Stage 3: In the third stage, food security should include cereals, pulses, milk and milk products.

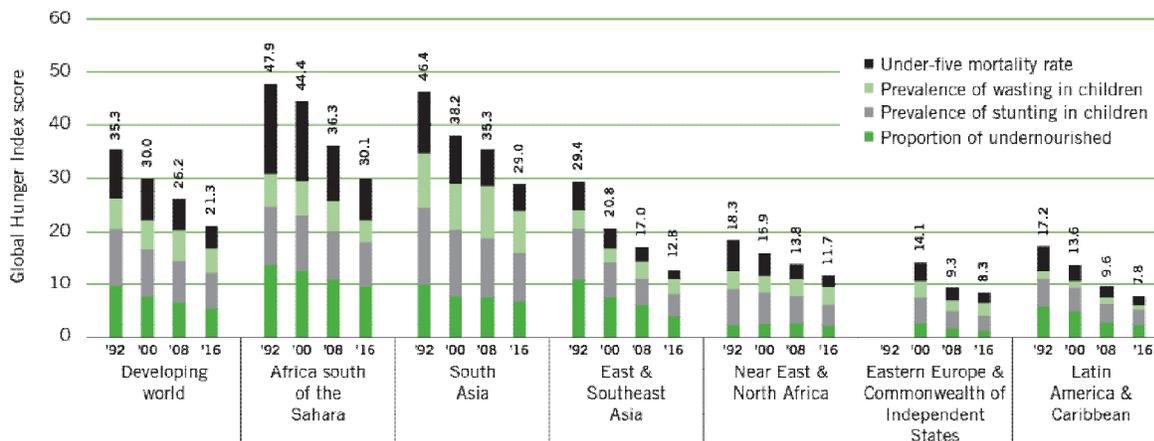
Stage 4: In the fourth stage, food security should include cereals, pulses, milk and milk products, vegetables and fruits, fish, eggs and meat.



Food insecurity can lead to lower cognitive ability, diminished work performance and substantial productivity losses. All of these can hamper the growth and development of national economy. India has made substantial progress in health determinants over the past decades. The critical indicators of health, including Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate, disease prevalence, and morbidity as well as mortality rates have shown consistent decline over the years. There has been an impressive economic progress with achievements in the domain of agriculture contributing significantly. Agriculture and allied sectors like forestry, logging and fishing accounted for 17.4% of the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016. However, the problem of chronic hunger and malnutrition seems to prevail on a large scale. India tops in hunger list with 194 million people, 2015. India is home to 194.6 million undernourished people, the highest in the world, according to the annual report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “Higher economic growth has not been fully translated into higher food consumption, let alone better diets overall growth”, says the report the state of Food Insecurity in the world.

FIGURE 2.1 DEVELOPING WORLD AND REGIONAL 1992, 2000, 2008, AND 2016 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SCORES, WITH CONTRIBUTION OF COMPONENTS



Source: Authors.

Note: See Appendix B for data sources. A 1992 regional score for Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States was not calculated because many countries in this region did not exist in their present borders.

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “when all people at all times as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. 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. Food security is primarily a phenomenon relating to individuals, and is determined by three set of factors concerned with supply, access and guarantees to food. (Christopher)

In particular, the article posits that the recent promulgation of the World Summit on Food Security and Food Security legislation offers an opportunity to reconfigure its food distribution system and agricultural trade policy. These two issues pose the greatest and most immediate challenges for India. The more enduring challenge for India would be to sustain food production to ensure not only adequate quantities, but also to support dietary quality and diversity.

FOOD INSECURE GROUPS:

Prices of traditional food grains like wheat, corn and rice have been rising globally. According to FAO data on food prices, cereal price index increased from 121 in 2006 to 274 in June 2008. The major factor behind increasing prices of food grains is historic decline in the production of food grains all over the globe. The worst affected groups includes-

- Landless people
- Traditional artisans
- Traditional service providers
- Petty self-employed workers
- Homeless, beggars etc.
- Families employed in ill-paid occupations
- Casual labourers
- Migrants (as a result of natural disasters)

➤ Women and children

The causes of existing food insecurity can be better reviewed under three concepts namely: 'traditional concept' which include factors such as unavailability of food and poor purchasing capacity, 'socio-demographic concept' which includes illiteracy, unemployment, overcrowding, poor environmental conditions and gender bias; 'politico-developmental concept' comprising of factors such as lack of intersectoral coordination and political will, poorly monitored nutritional programmes and inadequate public food distribution system. If the Millennium Development Goals is to be achieved by 2015, efforts to improve food and nutrition security have to increase considerably. Priority to be assigned to agriculture and rural development along with promoting women empowerment, ensuring sustainable employment and improving environmental conditions (water, sanitation and hygiene). As the problem is multi-factoral, so the solution needs to be multi-sectoral.

1. Food Security Legislation:

The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programmes of the Government Of India. It includes the Midday meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Scheme and 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). 75% of rural population and 50% of the urban population are entitled for three years from enactment to 5 kilograms (11 lb) food grains per month at ₹3 (4.5¢ US), ₹2 (3.0¢ US), ₹1 (1.5¢ US) per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grains (millet), respectively. The eldest woman in the household, 18 years or above is the head of the household for the issuance of the ration card;

2. Net Availability of Cereals and Pulses:

India's population was steadily rising, production of food grains- cereals and pulses, especially cereals-rose equally. Net availability of cereals had gone up except in some years. But the Government had to import large quantity of cereals from other countries to increase the net availability of cereals in the country. Obviously, while moving towards food grains security, India has succeeded in terms of cereals, but has miserably failed to increase the production of pulses consistent with the needs of a growing population.

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT 1996:

The world food summit was held in Rome, Italy, 1996. "The Rome Declaration calls upon us to reduce by half the number of chronically undernourished people on earth by the year 2015".

The objective of the summit was to renew global commitment at the highest political level to eliminate hunger and malnutrition, and to achieve sustainable food security for all people. It has also set the political, conceptual and technical blueprint for an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries with the target of reducing by half the number of undernourished people by no later than the year 2015.

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT 2009:

The world summit on food security took place in Rome. The decision to convene the summit was taken by the council of the FAO in 2009.

On November 28th, 2001, Supreme Court came out with a significant 'Interim order' directing the state governments to implement fully 8 different centrally sponsored schemes on food security. These are

1) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS):

Under which destitute senior citizens receive a monthly pension of Rs.75.

2) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS):

This provides BPL households with an assistance of Rs.10,000 on the death of primary breadwinner.

3) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS):

This provides pregnant women in BPL households are given an amount of Rs. 500. This is provided to women above 19 years of age and is available only for the first two live births.

4) National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education/ Mid day meals Scheme:

This provides cooked meals or food grains to children attending the schools.

5) Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):

This provides a set of six services to children in the age group of 0-6 and pregnant and lactating mothers. The six services are immunization, supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, referral services, pre-school education and health and nutrition education.

6) Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY):

This provides food security to indigent families. Each identified family is provided 35kg food grains (Rice and Wheat) a month with high subsidized rates.

7) Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS):

This is a restructured form of the Public Distribution System (PDS). Under this, families categorized as BPL are provided food grains at a subsidized rate while those above poverty line (APL) are to pay the economic cost.

8) Annapoorna Scheme:

This was introduced in 2000 to provide food security to elderly citizen who have no income of their own and no one to take care of them. Under this scheme, 10kg of food grains (Rice or Wheat) per month are provided free of cost to all indigent senior citizens who are eligible for old age pension but are presently not receiving it.

A part from these 8 schemes there were 7 more government schemes directed towards Food Security. Those are-

> National Food For Work Programme (NFFWP):

Food grains are provided to the states free of cost under this programme. The transportation cost, handling charges, and taxes

On food grains will, however, be the responsibility of the states.

> Village Gramin Bank Scheme:

The scheme aims to help marginalized food insecure households who do not have sufficient resources to purchase rations during lean season or natural calamities.

> Essential Commodities Act-1955:

The Essential Commodities Act gives consumers protection against irrational spikes in oil prices of essential commodities.

> National Food Security Mission (NFSM), 2007:

The National Food Security Mission is to operationalise the resolution of National Development Council (NDC) and enhance the production of rice, wheat and pulses.

> Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY):

The scheme was launched to incentivize the states to provide additional resources in their state plans over and above their baseline expenditure to bridge gaps.

> Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar yojana (SGRY):

The programme is self-targeting in nature and aims to provide employment and food to people in rural areas who lived below the poverty line.

> Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial years to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Major issues in Achieving Food Security in India:**1) Price Rise Issue:**

Underlying causes for the rise in food prices and financial crisis are different but they are interconnected through their implications on financial stability, food security and political security (Braun, 2008).

2) Production and Agrarian Issues:

- Limited exposure of domestic agriculture to international competition.
- Steeper decline in per capita land availability

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- Farming is becoming a non-viable activity and scope for increase in net-sown areas is limited
 - Increase in land degradation in the form of depletion of fertility, erosion and water logging.
 - Decrease in the surface irrigation expansion rate and in ground water table.
 - Disparities in productivity across regions and crops, between rainfed and irrigated areas.

3) Consumption Issues:

- Percentage of population consuming less than 1890calorie per day as food insecure (Report on the state of Food Insecurity in Rural India, 2008).
- Nutrition among children and women are very poor.
- Due to low incomes, the rural poor people are unable to consume the adequate amount of cereals.
- The adequate income earners also suffer malnutrition due to lack of awareness about nutritious food and feeding practices.

4) Climate Change:

Climate change is the major threat to Indian agriculture. The global warming leads to unfavorable temperature causing vector-born diseases to crops. This may lead to lower fertility, untimely rainfall and low productivity.

5) Other Issues:

- Food Wastage: sending huge money in marriage ceremonies and other functions.
- No proper storage/ warehousing facilities available.
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SUGGESTIONS FOR ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY:

- 1) Greater public investment in research, expansion and development of rural infrastructure including roads, storage capacity and organizes markets, improved farmer education, effective involvement of the private sector to provide technology, investment and organizational enterprise for commercialization and modification of land regulations to achieve greater production efficiency.
- 2) The investment and development in agro-based industry, poultry farming, horticultural development etc should be increased.
- 3) Nutrition education and awareness should be strongly promoted among common man.
- 4) All policies and programmes cannot address the problem of food security but in the long run, the solution is to ensure employment opportunities for all citizens so that they acquire the purchasing power to meet their nutritional requirements. Thus, employment (or) livelihood security becomes an essential and inseparable component of a comprehensive strategy for national food security and must be considered as one of the nation's highest priorities.
- 5) There should be agricultural development and increase in agricultural productivity which would benefit the poor in terms of wages and employment.
- 6) To tackle the problem of food security a comprehensive and coordinated national effort is required.
- 7) In view of increasing demand in future there is need to raise level of food production of oil seeds through cost reducing technological change, while research and development efforts need special emphasis (Chand, Jha and Mittal, 2004).
- 8) The gap in supply and demand for pulses, edible oil and sugar is expected to be negative in future. This implies that in the years to come, the country will have to rely on imports of these food items to meet the domestic requirement. Thus, we need to have necessary policy initiative to increase the supply in future.

CONCLUSION:

The government should promote domestic production to meet the demands of the growing population as also to reduce under-nutrition among quite a large section of the population. The Public Distribution System should be more effective in order to reach the right people who are in crisis. Maintaining of buffer stocks so as to take care of natural calamities resulting in temporary shortages of food and to act as a countervailing mechanism against traders and businessmen who try to push up prices, especially during periods of shortages of food.

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