

The food security of india



Food Security as described in World Food Summit, Rome 1996, Food Security exists, when all people, at all time have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life. India uptill now has faced 14 famines in its history and among them the Bengal Famine of 1943 was the worst. Food availability and agriculture in India has been largely related to the vagaries of monsoon. In the past concentrated efforts were made to achieve food security by increasing food grain production. The Green Revolution was a step towards attaining Food Security.

For maintaining a satisfactory level of operational and buffer stock of food grains and to ensure national food security, The Food Corporation of India (FCI henceforth) was set up under the Food Corporation Act 1964. It ensured effective price support operation for safeguarding the interest of the farmers. Another important work that FCI does is managing the Public Distribution System. FCI maintains food security in the country through its four Zonal Offices- North Zone, South Zone, East Zone and West Zone and their respective regional offices. FCI has also established a comprehensive and a structured training mechanism in accordance with its organisational goals known as the Institute of Food Security. The flagship activity of the institute has been to conduct short-term training programmes on various subjects related to Food Security, Managerial Skills, Computer skills and on operations of FCI.

Food Security as we have mentioned above exists when all people have access to have food and there is a minimum level of nutrition that is

maintained. There are four main dimensions of food security that can be identified:

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Physical Availability of food- It is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade or in short we refer to the supply side of food availability.

Economic and Physical access to food- Access to food depends on income, expenditure, market and prevailing prices in the market. Availability of food grains in the country does not ensure availability to every individual.

Food utilization- Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals along with good biological utilization of food consumed determines the nutritional status of individuals.

Stability of other three dimensions over time - Adverse weather conditions, political conditions and economic factors have an impact over food security.

In spite of constant efforts by the government and FCI's repeated efforts India has failed to feed the teeming millions. Food availability in the country is poor and there still remain a huge amount people who strive to get two squares of meal a day. Innovative strategic interventions are the needs of the hour and they have to be implemented to ensure food availability, food access and utilization. Freedom from hunger is not only a basic right but it is also essential for the enjoyment of all other rights. There has to be much stress on community farming. Through research and development it has to be aimed to reduce cost of production. New technology has to be introduced

so as to achieve high production and better yield. It has been rightly mentioned in our five year plans that the time has come to introduce a Second Green Revolution. A revolution of such a great intensity is required to overcome these ailments. Expanding utilization of food facilities and encouraging private sector investments can be another possibility towards achieving this goal.

Over the years India has miserably failed to achieve food security. The number of people without enough food to eat on a regular basis remains stubbornly high through the ages. In India about 29 % of the 872. 9 million people are malnourished. There have been various reasons contributing to this. One of major reasons is that Indian agriculture has been highly dependent on the vagaries of monsoon. Rainfall has been constantly irregular in India and moreover the recent changes in the climatic conditions all over the world have contributed to the problem of unavailability of food. In spite of Government's repeated efforts to maintain Food Security and availability, it has been highly subject to the irregularities of agricultural production. It is said that India attained national food self-sufficiency 35 years ago yet about 35% of its population remains food insecure. We look into the close interlink between food security and agriculture.

In the past three decades the South Asian countries have made considerable advancement in food production which was elicited by the Green Revolution. Green Revolution was introduced in 1960s and they brought in the use of High Yielding Variety (HYV) of seeds. It brought about a revolutionary boost in production. Now there was a huge expansion in the crop yield which contributed to the country's growth. But agriculture was highly decelerated

in the country and more focus was laid on industrialisation. Thus the wave of green revolution did not reach all parts of the country and its full effect was not realised. It remained regional and only affected the rich farmers. Also in the 1960s India experienced two major droughts and there was a severe food shortage. There was not sufficient food for all. Also we can say that green revolution was successful to some extent but the aim of self sufficiency and food security still seem like a distant dream.

In India climate plays a major role in agriculture. Agriculture even to this day is highly dependent on the vagaries of monsoon. Climatic change will affect food security through its impacts on all components of national and local food production system. There has been a rising trend in the temperatures all over the world. This has contributed to a fall in rainfall drastically. Another aspect of climatic change is that of extreme weather events like cyclone which has made agriculture losses higher and has affected total production. Climatic changes as seawater incursion and unusual flooding are effecting greatly as well. Changes in temperature and precipitation influence water run-off and erosion affecting soil organic carbon and nitrogen content and salinity in the soil. Thus the changing weather condition all over the world has had its toll on agriculture. The new climatic conditions are more likely to have negative impacts such as a rise in the spread of diseases and pests, which will reduce yields. Rainfall trends have changed and decrease in rainfall has led to a fall in production. Rising temperature, changing precipitation patterns and an increasing frequency of extreme weather events are expected to be the reasons for reducing regional water availability. In a country like India where there is lack of irrigation facilities

and agriculture is completely dependent on rainfall, irregular rainfall directly affect the total crop production. Unavailability of sufficient water is also another reason for crop failure. Grain output has been stagnating for over a decade and there is a growing gap between supply and demand. A decrease in production leads to poor availability and thus food security of the country is poor. The crisis has been building up for some time. The food grains yields of Indian farmers are not going up. Thus we come to the conclusion that climate change will reduce crop yield in the tropical country like India. The regional inequality in food production resulting from climate change will have a very great implication on the food security of the country.

Another problem is that of lack of proper mechanization in agriculture. Indian farmers are mostly too poor to implement the modern techniques or machinery in their farms. The small and marginal farmers generally sell their produce. Now transporting and storage of food grains too holds huge importance in a country like India where the condition of infrastructure is very poor. The Food Corporation of India has been entrusted with the job of maintaining a buffer stock. A buffer stock is necessary so as to ensure food security during bad agricultural years or crop failures. But due to lack of infrastructure every year there is a considerable amount of food grains that is wasted.

Quantity of food grains damaged in India :

YEAR

QUANTITY(lakh MTs)

2004-2005

<https://assignbuster.com/the-food-security-of-india/>

0. 97

2005-2006

0. 95

2006-2007

0. 25

2007-2008

0. 34

2008-2009

0. 03

2009-2010

0. 03

AVERAGE

0. 58

Source: Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2779, dated 27. 04. 2007. &

Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3065, dated 08. 12. 2009

The above table shows the amount of food which is wasted from 2004-2010.

In a country like India where agricultural production is not enough and people do not get two squares of meal a day, these datas are shocking. This

has lead to a fall in food security because there has been a deficiency of food grains.

Another important factor in this context is that of land use. Due to rapid industrialisation in building roads, houses and factories, private entrepreneurs are taking away the fertile lands for non-agricultural purposes. The supply of land in nature is fixed and as more and more land is used for non-agricultural practises it has been seen that the land for agricultural purpose is decreasing. People look at the comparative advantage of industrialisation over agriculture. But they fail to realise that in a way they are decreasing their food-grain production. This has lead to a disparity between the demand and supply of food grains and thus instability in food security.

The food policy of India took up two objectives – one is to create a food surplus economy and next is to provide food grains at subsidised rates. Our Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had implemented a seed-water-fertilizer policy commonly called the ‘ Green Revolution’ in order to attain self-sufficiency and to attain food security.

It is time we had a revolution of such an intensity to revive our strategies to attain food security. In a country as huge as India where population grows at about 8 % and where a large chunk of the population is malnourished and under-weight it becomes necessary to attain food security. The supply chain between the farmers and the consumers should be shortened. Farmer friendly marketing processes should be introduced. And most important a

second revolution is necessary to bring about stability in the Food Security in the country.
