



FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY AND ENTITLEMENTS IN INDIA

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It has been a matter of universal concern in academia, social activists, CSOs international agencies, multilateral international institutions, donor and funding agencies and such other concerned people that in spite of phenomenal technological breakthroughs a considerable number of people in the world have to suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Present paper has discussed the situation of food security in India, the state entitlements created regarding food and nutritional security in the country. The constitution of India guarantees Right to life at the fundamental right. This right cannot be guaranteed without right to food and right to work. The most vulnerable in terms of food security have also been identified in the paper. The paper argues that governance is very critical for ensuring the food rights of the people.

Introduction

It has been a matter of great concerns that inspite of phenomenal technological breakthroughs a considerable number of people in the world have to suffer from hunger and malnutrition. It has also been considerable concern in India, on the fact that on one hand there has been massive stocks of food-grains in the government godowns rotting and the other hand hunger and malnutrition continue in the country. There has been no dearth of government programmes for tackling poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, malnutrition etc. but still hunger, malnutrition and starvation deaths continue to take place in our country. Thus, food security is very important and it is required to tackle the problem with utmost importance. World Food Summit (1996) has defined food security as "food security exists when all people, at all time, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life". The dimensions of food security are: food availability, food access, utilization and stability.

Food availability has increased in many countries. Several countries also depend on imports of food for survival. However, distribution is the problem and main challenges are access to food and undernutrition.

Access to Food and Undernutrition

The proportion of undernourishment is used for hunger and the proportion of children suffering from underweight is considered for undernutrition. The millennium Goals Report 2013 of UNDP provides the achievements at global level, regions and countries (UNDP, 2013).FAO's recent estimates reveal that 868 million people (12% of world population) are undernourished in terms of energy intake (FAO 2013). Majority of the undernourished (852 million) live in developing countries. It may be noted that the proportion undernourished people in the total population for developing regions has declined from 23.2% in 1990-92 to 14.9% in 2010-12 (UNDP, 2013). It shows that there have been achievements in terms

of reducing hunger. However, there are significant disparities across regions and countries. Progress in reducing hunger is faster in Eastern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean and Oceania has been too slow to meet the MDG target. In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, undernourished proportion was 18% and 27% respectively in 2010-12.

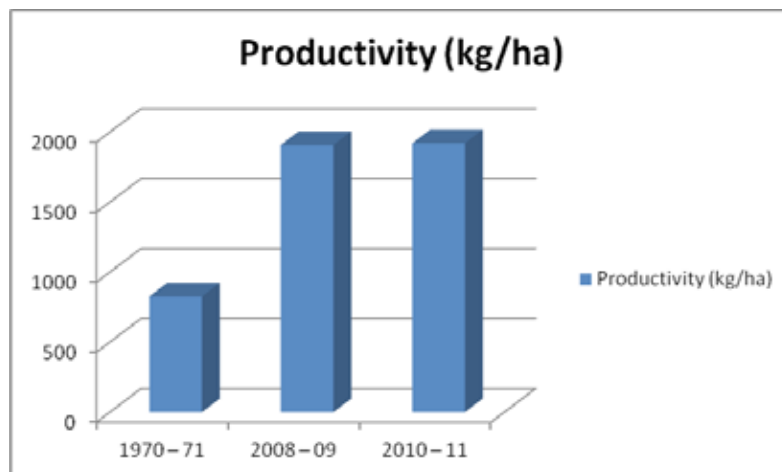
However, global burden of malnutrition is much higher with 26% of the world children are stunted, 2 billion suffering from one or more micronutrient deficiencies and 1.4 billion people suffering from overweight, of whom 500 million are obese (FAO, 2013). These are biggest challenges in the year to come.

At global level, an estimated 101 million children under age five were underweight in 2011 (around 16% of all children under five). The number of underweight children in 2011 declined by 36% from an estimated 159 million children in 1990. This rate of progress is not enough to meet the MDG target of halving proportion to half by 2015 (UNDP, 2013). The proportion of underweight children in 2011 was the highest in South Asia (31%) followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (21%). There were 57 million and 30 million underweight children in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa respectively.

Regarding stunting in children, there has been 35% decline from 1999 to 2011 (from 253 million to 165 million children). Two thirds of stunted children are in South Asia (41% of global) and Sub-Saharan Africa (31% of global).

Food Insecurity in India

There has been general concern in India regarding food insecurity. One of the important studies was conducted by NSSO (2001). This study has presented data on perception of Indian households with regard to the availability of enough food everyday during last year based on the results of NSSO 55th round (July 1999 – June 2000).



India has been largely self-sufficient in food grain production at macro level. From a food-grain production level of 51 million tones in 1950-51, the production has increased to 269 million tones in 2012-13. There has been hardly any import of food-grains after mid – 70s except occasionally. However rate of growth of food-grain production has de-accelerated

(1.2% from earlier 2.11%) since 1990s, and is lower than population growth, i.e. 1.8% per annum. Food-grains productivity can be observed from the table given below:

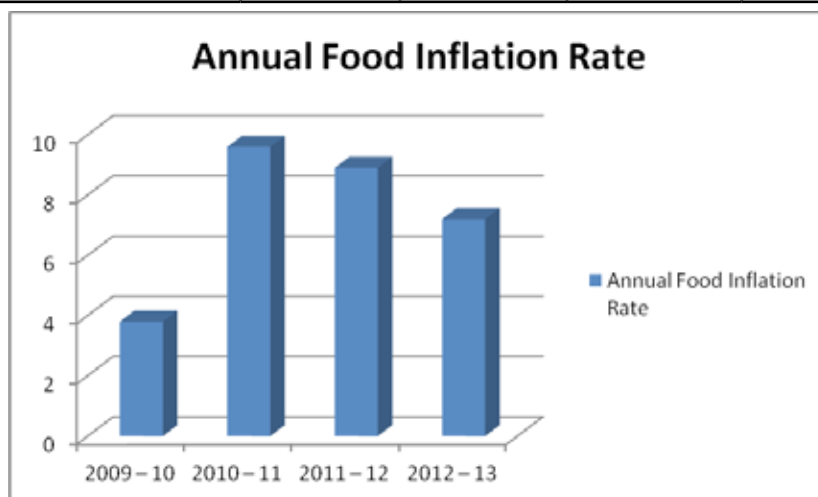
Table – 1: Decadal Food-grain Productivity in India

| S.No | Year | Productivity (kg/ha) |
|------|-----------|----------------------|
| 1 | 1970 – 71 | 827 |
| 2 | 2008 – 09 | 1909 |
| 3 | 2010 – 11 | 1921 |

Apart from the declining net availability of food grains there has been high level of food inflation in recent year. The inflation rate in recent years has been presented in the table below:

Table – 3: Food Inflation in India (Annual Rate in %)

| Year | 2009 – 10 | 2010 – 11 | 2011 – 12 | 2012 – 13 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Annual Food Inflation Rate | 3.8 | 9.6 | 8.9 | 7.2 |



Demand for Food and Food Insufficiency

India's population at present is 1.22 billion. It is expected to rise to 1.6 billion by the years 2050. India has been more or less self – sufficient in food with current low levels of income and high levels of poverty official measurement of poverty are around 25 – 30%, but measures more nuanced about levels of living and living conditions will still put poverty level between 30 & 40%. With income growth and decline of poverty direct and indirect requirement of food-grains will rise significantly. Malnutrition in India is put around 40 – 46 percent. Malnutrition may not be entirely due to non – availability of food. A large part of malnutrition may be explained by sanitation and health environment. However, still to a large extent the availability of food matters. Projection for future indicates that if the population of India stabilizes at around 1.6 to 1.7 billion by 2050; demand for food in the country would be about 450 million tones of food-grains annually.

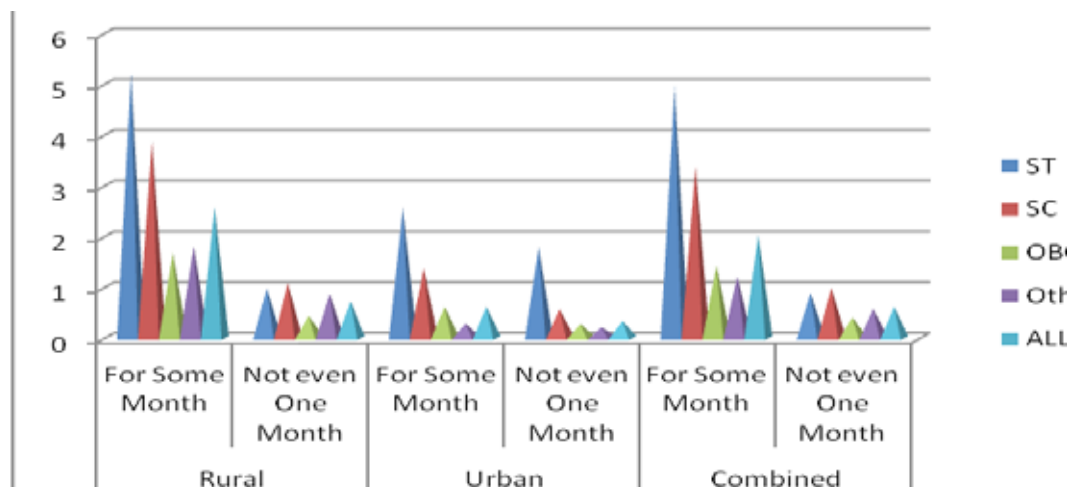
During the nineties especially after the new economic policy was initiated in India, the public investment on agriculture, which gives core security to the poor has decreased considerably. It is worth mentioning here that although food grain production in India has gone up 1990s, the growth rate in availability of food grains per capita has come down to (-) 0.28% per annum in the same period. This should be compared to a growth rate in per capita availability of (+) 1.20% per annum during 1980s. Besides, the stocks of food-grains have plummeted due to frequent monsoon failures in last few years. Further, the food consumption of the poor in India has gone down in the last 10 years (and is 21% below as compared to per capita consumption of the top 10%).

The incidence of hunger has declined but the number of people at hunger and malnutrition level continues to be very high. According to National Sample Survey, people who did not have two square meals in a day in India constituted 19 percent of total rural population in 1983 and were reduced to 7 percent in 1993. During 1999-00, the percentage further has been reduced around 3.5%.

Table – 4: Food Insufficiency in India by Social Groups

| Social Group | Rural | | Urban | | Combined | |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| | For Some Month | Not even One Month | For Some Month | Not even One Month | For Some Month | Not even One Month |
| ST | 5.24 | 0.98 | 2.57 | 1.79 | 4.96 | 0.89 |
| SC | 3.88 | 1.09 | 1.38 | 0.57 | 3.39 | 0.99 |
| OBC | 1.68 | 0.44 | 0.62 | 0.28 | 1.43 | 0.41 |
| Others | 1.82 | 0.88 | 0.29 | 0.22 | 1.22 | 0.58 |
| ALL | 2.58 | 0.73 | 0.62 | 0.34 | 2.04 | 0.62 |

Source: NSSO



It can be observed from the table that, in rural areas, the percentage of households where all the members got enough food everyday throughout the year rose from 81.1% to 96.8% during the period 1983 to 2000, where as in urban areas, the percentage of households getting enough food everyday throughout the year increased from 93.3% to 98.6% over 1983 – 2000.

The over all, the perception of the people in the country was that they were in general getting enough food every day. The percentage of such households was above 96% for both rural and urban areas. Among all 'household types' in rural areas, the 'agricultural labor' households reported the highest proportion of 'not getting enough food'. The household belonging to the type 'self – employed in agriculture' showed the lowest percentage of 'not getting enough food' everyday.

The percentage of households not getting enough food everyday was the highest for the ST households followed by SC households in both rural and urban areas. As expected, the proportion of households getting enough food everyday was higher for the lower MPCE classes and lower for the higher MPCE classes in both rural and urban areas.

The percentage of rural households not having enough food everyday was the highest in West Bengal followed by Orissa and Assam, and it happened to be lowest in states like Punjab and Rajasthan. In rural areas a good proportion of households reported inadequacy of food during the month from June to Sep. In spite of the improvement in the food security scenario, it is important to note here that 32 million people suffer from hunger in the country. Thus, there is a need to scale up all the above relating to food availability, access and undernutrition.

Food Security in India

Indian experience on food and nutrition security provides challenges and opportunities at global level. This is because 55 million out of 102 million underweight children under five in the world live in India (54% of global total) (UNICEF, 2013). Similarly, 62 million out of 166 million stunted children of the world are from India (37%). In other words, one out of two underweight children and two out of five stunted children are in India. The percentage India's under five children suffering from underweight is 43% as compared to Sub – Saharan Africa. In other words, India's percentage of undernutrition children is two times to that of Sub – Saharan Africa. So in India regarding food and nutrition security is crucial for success at global level.

The projection show that availability of food grains in India is not a problem. However, supply is inadequate in non – cereals such as pulses, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, meat etc. India has been also suffering from high food inflation in the last five years ranging from 10% to 20%. Stability is also concern with high output and price fluctuations. As a whole, the country may be food grain secure at national level, but widespread food insecurity at household level exists (access problem). Much more problem is malnutrition particularly among women and children. Still 40% and 45% of children suffer from underweight and stunting respectively. Food and nutrition insecurity varies significantly across states. For

example, percentage of underweight children was above 50% in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand while it was below 30% in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

There are three aspect of food security

1. Availability enough production the first indicator of food security is taken as having enough production of cereals, pulses and other nutritional products for feeding the population in the country.
2. Accessibility enough resources and entitlements with households.
3. Absorption which determined by health status, consumption micro nutrients in the food and safe drinking water which enhance the absorption and utilization of the food consumed by the body.

Food Insecure Households and Areas

The majority of the food insecure households inhabits in the drought prone and flood prone areas of the country and the areas primarily dominated by tribes and Dalits these areas have been bereft of development and lack basic infrastructure. The most food insecure households can be characterized as follows

- o Primitive tribal group and tribes in possession of very poor quality of land mainly upland, their growth of population is very low, face continued decline in means of their livelihood.
- o Dalits in possession of very small amount of land, low level of education
- o Artisan group like weavers lost their traditional means of livelihoods
- o Displaced from developments projects getting poor compensation/ rehabilitation
- o Urban tribal whose land and common property has been illegally alienated
- o The retrenched and idle labor of the sick and closed industries, tea garden etc.

Food Accessibility and Availability

Household food accessibility can come due to three main entitlement and even partial failures of these results into food insecurity

Food production

Food exchange entitlements

Entitlements provided by the state

Food Security Entitlements

1. Own Production

The first crucial food security / core security entitlement happens to be from own production but the majority of the food insecure households have a number of constraints in having enough production. Some of the constraints are listed below

- o Majority of food insecure farmers small and marginal with poor productivity of land

- o Very low area under assured irrigation
- o Low cropping intensity
- o Erratic monsoon
- o Soil degradation, deficiency of macro nutrients, acidity
- o Ownership of poor quality uplands very small fertile land
- o Poor access to institutional credit & lack of education

2. Exchange Entitlements

The other entitlement on food is created by exchanging the produce or the working for wages and transforming them into food entitlements. However, for the poorer families the situation is adverse.

3. State Entitlements

The most important source is the entitlements created by the state in India which is very crucial for the food insecure households both in the chronically and in phases of emergency. The Government of India has made provisions for subsidized ration, direct food and nutritional access to the vulnerable, pension and insurance and employment generated food for work programmes and special area programmes. These programmes provide a) Subsidized food and supplementary feeding, b) Income support and c) Employment.

Food and Nutritional Entitlements

a) Targeted Public Distribution Scheme (TPDS)

TPDS was introduced in June, 1997 for the BPL families, the entitlements is 25 kg per family per month w. e. f. July, 2001 at Rs. 4.15 per kg for wheat and Rs. 5.65 per kg for rice. The APL families also entitled for grain at the discounted rate of 70% of the economic cost.

b) Antodaya & Annapurna

Antodaya the poorest of the poor have entitlement of 35 kg of grains in total wheat at Rs. 2 per kg and rice at Rs. 3 per kg.

Annapurna free 10 kg of grains to aged who have no one to care / no means of sustenance. The scheme was introduced in 2000-01

c) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)

National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) was introduced as a 100 percent Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995. Under this scheme about 60 lakh old people get monthly pension ranging from 100 to 250 Rs. per month. This is for the aged who have none to look after them.

d) Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) was launched in 1975. It is a nation-wide programme for the overall development of children below 6 years, for the

expectant and nursing mothers and adolescent girls. It provides a package of 6 services viz. supplementary feeding, immunization, health check-ups, referral services, pre-school education and health and nutrition education for its beneficiaries.

e) Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM)

The mid-day meal scheme was launched with two basic objectives to lower the widespread incidence of malnutrition primarily among children of poor families and to increase their access to education.

f) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS)

A cash support of Rs. 500 to pregnant women of BPL families for first two deliveries.

g) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)

A cash grant of Rs. 10,000/- to a family who lose their breadwinners.

Governance & Food Security

Currently there has been a general acceptance of the fact that governance is very important for economic development as well as transferring gain to the poorest of the poor. Governance has three important pillars namely legislature, executive and judiciary. For delivering the goods to the people especially to the poorest of the poor who are not only powerless but marginalized. Good and responsive governance is very critical.

For both meeting the immediate hunger and nutritional challenges as well as providing a base for sustainable food security for the future population. In India, a large number of programmes and scheme have been started with a view to ameliorating the situation of the poor and improving the food security and overall development. For sustainable food security it is important that the poor have voice which includes the guarantee of right to food, right to employment, right to access and control of livelihood resources as well right to education and health. Naxalism resulting primarily out of long exploitative nature of the political and economic systems has also put people primarily in the forested regions in the cross fire of government oppression and naxals affecting the livelihoods of the people in the process. The government's effectiveness, delivery mechanisms, quality of administration, pro poor commitment and their effective voice and control of corruption are particularly important. There has been general acceptance now that the programmes in India especially in the most poor regions have been very inefficiently implemented and the Governance has been very in terms all the indicators of governance. This has been true for all the three wings. Political governance and the quality of legislature especially the concern for the poor has declined considerably. The performance of the executive is dismal.

Food Security and Nutritional Issues

The food security and the nutritional issues in India has important components such as per capita calorie intake, public distribution system and cash transfer, total factor productivity and even the food security Act 2013 which affects the food security in India, these factors are important and required to be addressed

Per Capita Calorie Intake

India's average per capita calories intake has declined by over 7 percent since 1993-94. Rural calorie intake per capita per day has been 2153 kilo calorie during 1993-94 (50th round). By 2009-10 it decline to 2020. Rural protein intake has 60.2 gram per capita per day in 1993-94. It has decline to 55gram per capita per day by 2009-10. So also has been the situation in urban India.

As we move over, NPCE decile classes, we observe that daily per capita calories intake, protein intake and fat intake increases systematically as we move from lower decile classes to higher decile classes. Thus, during 2009-10, in rural India (NSSO 66th round) the average daily calorie intake had been 1531 k. cal. Per capita for the first decile class (upper and value of MPCE being Rs. 479) and it was found to increase monotonically as one moves to the higher decile classes, the highest decile class (upper value of MPCE Rs. 3136) intake of energy being 2643 kilo cal. Per capita per day. This indicates that households of lower classes consume less because they cannot afford to consume more. The lack of affordability has an impact on average daily nutritional intake in both rural and urban India. Where there is a systematic decline in nutritional intake in lower decile classes over the successive NSSO quinquennial surveys on Household Consumption Expenditure

This is also reflected indirectly in NFHS data. NFHS 3 household survey (carried out from Nov 2005 to May 2006 (first round) and from April to August 2006 (second round) covering 109041 households) reported that micro nutrient intake among the children had been poor across the provinces of India (Table 10.15, NFHS3). Prevalence of Anemia in children was very high (Table 10.12, NFHS3) and mother's anemia status had also been alarmingly high. This indirectly provides evidence in favour of the argument that the case of food security is grounded on strong empirical evidences. India needs universal food security.

Food Security Act 2013 and Its Limitations

The Act ensures food security for the 'priority households' only (Section-2). The term 'priority households', as given in section – 10, read with section – 9, implies that the number of priority households may be decided by the central government from time to time. In other words the coverage need not be universal under the present Act, thus leaving the possibility of exclusion from the states sponsored food security programme. In fact, Section -3 (2) of the Act states the entitlement at the subsidized price 'shall extend up to 75 percent of the rural population and up to 50 percent of the urban population'. The basic limitation of the Act is that it is just an extension of the targeted PDS programme which was in vogue in India since a long time.

As of now, the cut off and the entitlement to subsidized food have been decided in such way that 62 percent of the BPL households (Tendulkar's Revised Estimate) is likely to get a worse deal under the new dispensation, 71 percent of the APL households will gain and 38 percent of the BPL households covered under Antadaya Anna Yojana Scheme will remain unaffected under the new dispensation.

PDS and Cash Transfer

Access to PDS appears to add to calorie intake for the members of the households because calorie elasticity of PDS transfer is twice as large as compared to additional out of pocket expenditure equal to cash equivalent of PDS transfer (Himansu, Avijit Sen, EPW, Nov 16, 2013).

Cost of health, education, fuel, transport is fast increasing and therefore there is an adverse substitution effect on food expenditure due to enhance expenditure on these items. With additional cash in hand, the price effect (income effect + substitution effect) will work against expenditure on food. Cash transfer is therefore likely to reduce calorie intake. Inefficiency of PDS is a problem but strengthening the PDS and not dismantling it is the answer as evidenced by Chhattisgarh experience.

Theft from PDS allocation is an issue but as the NSSO 66th Round data indicate, the mid-day meal intake data on food nearly balances the amount of PDS transfer for MDM in government records. It seems that a participatory form of PDS administration (as in case of Mid-day Meal Programme) would reduce the leakage further.

Financing PDS

Anticipated total cost for implementing the revised PDS programme is not likely to exceed Rupees 132000 crore which is about 10 percent of the central budget. Given the present budgetary commitment on food subsidy, the additional requirement seems to be marginal in nature. However, it is often stated that the programme of food security would very costly because there are several hidden cost elements which are not being taken care of. It seems that such an argument is based on some exaggeration in the required capital cost component.

Total Factor Productivity and Food Security

The programme of a state- sponsored food security is based on a notion of misplaced priority of the state. The priority should be on reforming the economy further so that the investment on crop productivity increases. With acceleration in private investment, jobs will be created and the issue of food security will be taken care of by the enhanced income of the people. The point that remains under-focused in this line of arguments is that private investment will not accelerate unless India is expected to achieve competitive efficiency in the globalised market. One may point out that India cannot achieve competitive efficiency in the globalised market unless the total factor productivity improves in India. This is possible only with massive investment in human capital in the form of education and public health; the prerequisite of which is universal access to food. In the first place for the rising demand for a diversified food basket it is essential that there should be changes and diversification of cropping pattern. For a country as large as India a certain degree of self sufficient, but alternative production pattern has been a less focused area in our policy and research.

In India, a large number of programmes and schemes have been started with a view to ameliorating the situation of the poor and improving the food security and overall

development. For sustainable food security it is important that the poor have voice which includes the guarantee of right to food, right to employment, right to access and control of livelihood resources as well right to education and health. The government's effectiveness, delivery mechanisms, quality of administration, pro poor commitment will provide a base for sustainable food security of the future population.

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