



Food security in India: Issues and challenges

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Abstract

World development report (1986) defined food security as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active life. Food security is a major challenge for the humanity and especially for country like India to ensure food security along with eradication of poverty is one of the major challenges before India due to the large size of the population. Indian planner right from independence realized the need to attain sufficiently in food grains as one of the key objective of planning. The purpose of this paper is to study the present scenario of food security in India and its challenges. Secondary data has been used for this purpose.

Keywords: food security, challenge, issue.

Introduction

Food security is one of the major challenge confronting the humanity today. Food security in the UNDP original concept of human security has been considered as one of the important factor along with economic, health, environmental, personal and political security staatz (1990) defined food security as “the ability to assure, on a long term basis, that the food system provides the total population access to a timely, reliable and nutritionally adequate supply of food.” Food

sufficiency was a distant dream for independent India. India suffered severe droughts during 1965 and 1966 and there was misery to be dependent on foreign aid for food. Green revolution policy led to the increase in production of food grain in India and dispensed with food grains imports altogether. India achieved self-sufficiency in food grains production by the year 1976 and also India imports of cereals remained negligible.

Table 1: Per capita net availability per day (gram)

Year	Population	Net Production	Net availability	Pulses	total
1950-51	363	40.1	44.3	60.7	394.9
1960-61	442	60.9	64.6	69.0	468.7
1970-71	551	84.5	84.0	51.2	468.8
1980-81	689	104.1	104.8	37.5	454.8
1990-91	852	141.9	145.7	41.6	510.1
2000-01	1033	162.5	145.6	30.0	416.2
2005-06	1103	162.1	157.4	31.5	422.4

1950 to 2001

Data reveals that from dependence on Imports in 1950-51, India's export of cereals was 4.5 million tons during 2000-01. But the availability of pulses has declined from 61 grams per capita to 31 grams per capita. Though India succeeded in terms of production but failed in the production of pulses.

Food security schemes in India

In 1960, Public Distribution system (PDS) started to act a price support programme for the consumers. The aim of PDS was to make available necessary food items to households at controlled price. It acted as support systems for people against private trader exploitations. The commodities such as rice, wheat, sugar, edible oil and were supplied to masses at controlled prices. With the network of fair prices shops. PDS in India was the largest distribution network of its kind in the world. It 1997, It was named targeted public distribution system (TPDS) with the aim of providing 10 kg food grains

per month to BPL families. In April 2000 its target was in covered to 20 kg and in July 2001 to 25kg respectively. In April 2002, govt. of India has decided to provide 35 kg food grains per month to per month to per family under the various categories i.e. BPL, APAL and antoday. After the various changes in PDS system and discussion on its success and failure, Govt. of India enacted National food security act 2013.

Present status of food security in India

India's performance is poor in terms of nourishment status of the population. As per the report of AFO 237% people were suffering from malnourishment in India in the year 1991 and in year 2011 this figure is 15.6% with a decline of 34% while the developing world during the same period has reached from 23.3% to 14% with the decline rate of 39.4% during the same period and decline rate of china is 51%. To overcome this challenge and eliminate the problem of food scarcity govt. of

India enacted the National food security act 2013 on 12 Sept, 2013. The salient feature of this act one as under. The aim of this act is to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's 1.2 billion people.

1. Coverage and entitlement under targeted public distribution system: 75% of rural population and 50% of urban population to be covered under TPDS with uniform entitlement of 5kg per person per month.
2. **Subsidised prices under TPDS and their revision**
Food grains under TPDS will be made available at subsidised prices of R 3/2/1 per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grain.
3. Identification of households to be covered under this act is to be determined by the state governments.
4. **Nutritional support to women and child**
Pregnant women and lactating mothers and children in the age group of months to 14 years will be entitled to meals as per prescribed nutritional norms. Pregnant women will also be entitled to receive maternally benefit of not less than Rs. 6000.
5. It has grievance redressal mechanism at the district and State level.

Major challenges in food security

1. Hunger and malnourishment

Though food grains production has increased significantly in world in recent years, still as per the FAO report more than one tenth population of the world is facing hunger. In India lakhs of children dies because of malnourishment. More than 40% children in India suffering from malnourishment.

2. Decrease in agricultural Area

Post impendence India's agricultural area has decreased at very alarming rate. Due to the urbanisation and industrialization the cultivated area has reduced significantly. Per capita land availability was 0.46 hectare in 1951 has reached to 0.14 in the year 2011. To meet the increasing demand per Unit productivity of food grains are need to be increased.

3. Climate change

Climate change is another major challenge as it has impact on production of food grains in the country. Due to climate change many unusual things are happening around the world. The heavy rain fall, extreme temperature, melting glaciers has it influence in the form of drought or floods and this effect agricultural production.

4. Fertility of soil

Extensive use of agriculture land has led to the decrease in the quality of soil. Excessive use of insecticides, pesticides and fertilizers for the increase of production has affected the soil health adversely. Land and water has become contaminated. This has a series of ill impacts on human, bio diversity and ecology of farm lands.

Storage problems

Storage, distribution and packaging of food grains production

is also a major challenge. Almost one third of the food grains productions are wasted due to the lack of these facilities. This led to the hunger and rise in the prices of food grains. These wastes also cause pollutions. To fight hunger we must overcame these problems at the earliest.

Food Processing issues

India share in processed food market is negligible in comparison to the productions of food grains. Processing of food grains, fruits and vegetables and milk and other dairy products is a major issue being faced by Indian producers.

Other Issues

State of irrigation facilities is not very encouraging in India. Indian agriculture is dependent on monsoon. Excessive use of underground water has reached at an alarming low in many parts of country. Excessive and exploitive use of rivers and water bodies has polluted them badly. Wild animal has become a major problem for farmers in many areas such as, monkey in Himachal, Nilgai in Haryana, U.P. and Punjab, and elephants in Bangal and Assam has become threats to crops. Adulteration in food items is also a major issue. It costs human health and has social and economic adverse also.

Conclusion

Huge size of population, decreasing cultivated area, climate change, lack of capital and technological investment, problems of storage and distribution, excessive use of land and water resources and mindless use of fertilizer and pesticides has led to a situation where proper food is still a distant dream for many Indians. Although food grains production has increased significantly in India in post green revolution era, still it has posed many difficult questions. For sufficient and constant supply of quality food grains for our population we need to overcome many challenges. Farmers must be empowered by the means of subsidized fuel, fertilizes, seed and irrigation. Capital and technological investment are required to overcome the problems of climate change, storage and distribution and processing. Crop diversification, bio fertilizes and innovative production techniques can be answer to the many agricultural problems. Food security act must be implicated in its spirit so that every human being can have proper food in his bowl.

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