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FOOD SECURITY POLICY IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 aims to 'end hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round for all people, especially those in poor and vulnerable situations, including children'. Food security is a public health priority and integral to achieving food security. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), consumption of contaminated food kills about half a million people every year. Children under the age of five are most affected by food-borne illness, with 125,000 deaths each year. This research paper examines India's efforts to achieve food security. It finds the problem, from the inadequate production of food grains during colonial times, to the challenges of procurement, storage, and distribution of cereals in post-independence India. The establishment of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and its role in the targeted PDS and the National Food Security Act are outlined. The role of the Food Corporation of India and the efforts to improve it, are discussed. India now has the world's biggest population of malnourished people, at roughly 195 million. In India, about 47 million children, or 4 out of 10 youngsters, do not reach their full human potential due to chronic malnutrition or stunting. India's agricultural production is quite poor. India was placed 103rd out of 119 qualified nations in the 2018 Global Hunger Index. There are many causes of food insecurity in India. In this research paper discusses measures to remove food insecurity in India by the policies. Finally, the results of this study suggest some policy prescriptions for a stable food security system in the long run.

Keywords: Food security, PDS, challenges, measures.

Introduction:

The problem of food security in India has a long history. Food security has been a major goal of development policy in India since independence. Till 1970s assurance of food availability and price stability were the main agenda for development in India. Achievement of self-sufficient was a priority in policy. As a result, we got 'Green Revolution', land reform, many financial institutions for improving the conditions of agriculture in India. India has achieved self-sufficiency in food grains in 1970s and has sustained it since then. But recently food and Agriculture Organization reported that more than 20% of Indians remains chronically undernourished. So, the problem of food security persists in India. In the new millennium the issue of food security has been a global agendum. Alleviation of poverty and hunger is one of the important goals of the Millennium Development Goals. In 2009 the value of hunger index for India was 0.23 which was calculated based on three indicators – percentage of under nourished people to the total population, prevalence of underweight children under age five years and infant mortality rate. It indicates that the problem of food security in India is serious in recent time. According to the Economic Survey (2018-19), India must take major steps to enhance its food security because of supply limits, water scarcity, limited landholdings, low per capita GDP, and insufficient irrigation. Food security, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), occurs when all people have physical and economic access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food to always suit their dietary needs and food choices for an active and healthy life. The components of food security are outlined below in order of importance and close relationship. This paper has tried to focus a glimpse of the issues of food security in India across.



Objective of the study:

- I) To understand and access the situation of food security in India.
- II) To study the causes and measures for food security in India.

Food Security in India:

Since independence, India has been vulnerable to various food security shocks, including initial haste to industrialize while disregarding agriculture, two consecutive droughts in the mid-1960s, and reliance on US food aid. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the country had a Green Revolution, which enabled it to overcome productivity stagnation and greatly increase food grain output. Despite its success, the Green Revolution has been criticized for focusing on only two kinds of cereal: wheat and rice; being limited to a few resource-rich regions in the northwestern and southern parts of the country that benefited mostly wealthy farmers; and putting undue stress on the ecology of these regions, particularly soil and water. The White Revolution, which began in the 1970s and 1980s with Operation Flood, followed the Green Revolution. India has become the world's largest producer of milk because of this national project, which has transformed liquid milk production and marketing. According to all the above discussion, even though food security in India is seen to this extent, it is still largely victimized.

Why Food Security is Needed in India?

India now has the world's biggest population of hungry people, at roughly 195 million. In India, about 47 million children, or 4 out of 10 youngsters, do not reach their full human potential due to chronic malnutrition or stunting. India's agricultural production is quite poor. According to World Bank estimates, India's cereal production is 2,992 kg per hectare, compared to 7,318.4 kg per hectare in North America. The food basket is migrating away from grains and toward high-value agricultural commodities such as fish, eggs, milk, and meat. According to the FAO's "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2018" report, India's population is undernourished by 14.8 percent. In addition, 51.4 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 are anemic. According to the research, 38.4% of children under the age of five in India are stunted (their height is too short for their age), while 21% are wasting (their weight is too low for their height). The Global Food Security Index (GFSI) ranks India 76th out of 113 nations in 2018, based on four criteria: cost, availability, quality, and safety. India was placed 103rd out of 119 qualified nations in the 2018 Global Hunger Index.

Public Distribution System:

Food obtained by the FCI is distributed among the poor sections of society in a controlled way through ration shops. This system is known as the Public Distribution System. The ration or fair price shops sell food grains and other essential commodities to the poor people at prices lower than the market price. Regulated shops which distribute the food grains procured by the government at a lower price than the market price is known as fair price shops or ration shops. It provides employment to many people and supplies food grains at subsidized rates to poor people. The Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced in 1992 in 1700 blocks in the country. The scheme aimed at the provision of food grains in the remote and backward areas of the country. The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was launched in 1997 with the policy of providing food grains to all the poor sections of people in different areas. Under this system, a different price policy was adopted for poor and non-poor people. The Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) was introduced in 2000. About ten million of the poorest people were identified and highly subsidized food grains were provided to them at highly subsidized prices. The Annapurna Scheme (APS) was introduced in 2000 for the poorest of poor and deprived senior citizens. Through this scheme, it was decided to provide 10 kg of food grains to



poor families per month free of cost. All the schemes are very useful for providing quality food to the poor people.

Major Challenges to Food Security: Some people face food insecurity and the effects this can have on them, and their families is the first step in helping to mitigate the damage that food insecurity can cause.

Climate change: The number of hungry people in the world rose between 2015 and 2018 by nearly 40 million people, with the greatest rise coming in drought-affected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. An increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters has devastated some regions, destroyed crop yields, and limited the quantity and quality of food available to communities.

Dispute: dispute or Conflict stands out as the single biggest factor driving global hunger today. Over 60% of those who are food insecure are living in conflict zones. Conflict forces people to flee from their homes, often leaving behind their only means to a livelihood. Conflict also divides communities and can cause farmers to abandon any long-term agricultural strategies for fear that they will never reap the benefits if they are forced to flee.

Population Growth: According to the UN, the global population will be nearly 10 billion people by 2050. As the population continues to grow, it is necessary that food production and food accessibility grow to match it. Unfortunately, we have already seen in countries that have experienced population booms that resources needed for food production (water supply, croplands) can become scarce when divided, causing food insecurity.

Access to remote regions is limited: Tribal tribes have experienced substantial economic backwardness because of living in remote, harsh terrains and practicing subsistence farming. **Growing rural-to-urban migration:** as well as a significant informal sector, has resulted in the unplanned rise of slums that lack basic health and hygiene amenities, inadequate housing, and increased food insecurity.

Poverty, a lack of education, and gender inequality: All these factors have negative impact on food security, so it is not easy for a developing country like India to achieve sufficient food security.

Non-ownership of a below-poverty line: (BPL) status excludes deserving beneficiaries of the subsidy, as the threshold for determining a household's BPL status is arbitrary and varies from state to state.

Biofuels: As the bio-fuel industry has grown, the amount of land utilized to grow food crops has decreased. Food may be used as a weapon in conflict, with foes cutting off the food supply to gain ground. Crops might be damaged as well during a fight.

Measures to food security:

Education and literacy: Role of education in improving farm efficiency and technology adoption has been well established. As agriculture transformed from subsistence to commercial level, farmers seek information on a wide range of issues to acquire knowledge or upgrade their skills and entrepreneurial ability.

Crop diversification: Food availability is a necessary condition for food security. India is self-sufficient in cereals but has deficit in pulses and oilseeds. Due to changes in consumption patterns, demand for fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, poultry, and fishery products has been increasing. **Tackling climate**

change: Food security in India can be achieved by paying higher attention to issues such as climate change, limiting global warming, including the promotion of climate-smart agricultural production systems and land use policies at a scale to help adapt and mitigate ill effects of climate change.

Integrated water management: India needs to produce more crop per unit of land and water resources. Improved management of irrigation water is essential in enhancing production and productivity, food security and poverty alleviation. Agriculture is the biggest user of water accounting for over 80 percent of the water withdrawals. There are pressures for diverting water from agriculture to other sectors. It has been projected that availability of water for agriculture use in India may be reduced by 21 percent by



2020, resulting in drop of yields, especially rice, leading to price rise and threat to food security of the poor.

Integrated nutrient management: Attention needs to be given to balanced use of nutrients. Phosphorus deficiency is the most widespread soil fertility problem in both irrigated and non-irrigated rainfed areas. To improve the efficiency of fertilizer-use, what really needed is enhanced location-specific research on efficient fertilizer practices, improvement in soil testing services, development of improved fertilizer supply and distribution systems and development of physical and institutional infrastructure.

Improved varieties: In several regions, farmers are not able to get information about the availability of new and improved varieties and some are not having access to quality seeds of these varieties, resulting in lesser yields. This situation must be corrected by developing a national-level network to monitor and coordinate the activities with the various State government functionaries working around crop production.

Improved technology adoption: Adoption of technologies like integrated nutrient management, integrated pest management and integrated weed management need to be made available for adoption to ensure higher production and sustainability of production base.

Awareness on population growth: The awareness of the pressures of increasing population growth and consumption patterns on ecosystem functioning should be created to sensitize farmers on adoption of sustainable crop cultivation and management practices.

Focus on small farmers: Increase in food production in the country does not necessarily ensure food security, if the poor do not have the buying power. Therefore, participation of small farmers in food production is essential to achieve food security. Most of them being illiterate and having failed earlier either in adopting new technologies or repaying the loan provided under various development schemes.

Agricultural research education: The agricultural education in India is facing one of the biggest challenges. It must identify its role in equipping the human resources for enhanced agricultural productivity and sustainable use of natural resources. Agricultural colleges and universities were initially assigned to disseminate scientific knowledge and skills to the farming community and to train them to use such skills for better output.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, food security is a multi-dimensional topic. The food security for all citizens of the nation should be one of the essential rights. The development of the nation can be assessed based on the quantity and quality food available to every individual citizen at every time periods. Food must not only meet our macro- and micronutrient needs, but it also must not cause disease in those who consume it. The measures to food security also further increasing the quality of life of farmers and helps generally in the reduction of farmers suicides across the globe and Indian especially.

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