

Class: IX
Subject: Social Science (087) - Economics
Chapter: 4 Food Security in India
Notes

Overview

Food security means availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times. Food security depends on the Public Distribution System (PDS) and government vigilance and action at times, when this security is threatened.

What is food security?

Food security has the following dimensions

- (a) availability of food
- (b) accessibility of food
- (c) affordability of food

Food security is ensured in a country only if

- (1) enough food is available for all the persons
- (2) all persons have the capacity to buy food of acceptable quality
- (3) there is no barrier on access to food.

Why food security?

- During natural calamity such as drought, production of food grains get decreased, creating a shortage of food in the affected areas.
- The prices get increased due to shortage of food. People cannot afford to buy food and if such a calamity, it might cause a situation of starvation.
- Massive starvation might take a turn into a famine.
- A **Famine** is characterised by widespread deaths due to starvation and epidemics caused by forced use of contaminated water or decaying food and loss of body resistance due to weakening from starvation.

Who are food-insecure?

- People having little or no land, traditional artisans, providers of traditional services, petty self-employed workers and destitute including beggars are the worst affected groups.
- In the urban areas, the food-insecure families are those who are generally employed in ill-paid occupations and the casual labour market.
- These workers are largely engaged in seasonal activities and are paid very low wages.
- The social composition along with the inability to buy food also plays a role in food insecurity.
- People of SC, ST and OBC communities who have either poor land-base or very low land productivity are prone to food insecurity.
- People affected by natural disasters, who migrate to other areas in search of work, are among the most food-insecure people.
- A large proportion of pregnant and nursing mothers and children under the age of 5 years constitute an important segment of the food insecure population.

Hunger:

- Another aspect of food insecurity is hunger, which is not just an expression of poverty, it brings about poverty.
- Hunger has chronic and seasonal dimensions.
- Chronic hunger is a consequence of diets persistently inadequate in terms of quantity and/or quality.
- Seasonal hunger is related to cycles of food growing and harvesting.

Since Independence, India has been aiming at self-sufficiency in food grains. After Independence, Indian policymakers adopted all measures to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains. In the field of agriculture, India adopted a new strategy, which resulted in the '**Green Revolution**'.

Food Security in India

Since the Green Revolution, the country has avoided famine even during adverse weather conditions. India has become self-sufficient in food grains during the last 30 years because of a variety of crops grown all over the country. The availability of food grains has been ensured with a carefully designed food security system by the government. This system has two components: (a) buffer stock, and (b) public distribution system.

What is Buffer stock?

Buffer Stock is the stock of food grains, namely wheat and rice, procured by the government through the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)**. The stock of wheat and rice are purchased by the FCI from the farmers where there is surplus production. The farmers are paid a pre announced price for their crops, called **Minimum Support Price (MSP)**. Every year, the MSP is declared by the government before the sowing season to provide incentives to farmers for raising the production of these crops.

Buffer Stock is created to distribute foodgrains in the deficit areas and among the poorer section of the society at a price lower than the market price also known as **Issue Price**.

What is the Public Distribution System?

FCI distributes the food procured from the farmer through government-regulated ration shops. It is called the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**. Ration shops also, known as **Fair Price Shops**, keep stock of foodgrains, sugar, and kerosene for cooking. **Rationing** in India was introduced during the 1940s against the backdrop of the Bengal famine. In the mid-1970s, three important food intervention programmes were introduced:

1. Public Distribution System (PDS) for food grains
2. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
3. Food-for-Work (FFW).

At present, there are several Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAPs), mostly in rural areas, which have an explicit food component also. Employment programmes greatly contribute to food security by increasing the income of the poor.

Current Status of Public the Distribution System

- Public Distribution System (PDS) is the most important step taken by the Government of India towards ensuring food security.
- In 1992, Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced in the country.

- From June 1997, Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced to adopt the principle of targeting the 'poor in all areas'.
- In 2000, two special schemes were launched Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Annapurna Scheme (APS).
- High level of buffer stocks of foodgrains is very undesirable and wasteful.
- In states such as Punjab, Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh mainly two crops— wheat and rice— are grown.
- The intensive utilisation of water in the cultivation of rice has also led to environmental degradation and fall in the water level, threatening the sustainability of the agricultural development in these states.
- PDS dealers started malpractice like diverting the grains to open market to get better margin, selling poor quality grains at ration shops, irregular opening of the shops, etc.

Role of cooperatives in food security

- In India, the cooperatives are also playing an important role in food security especially in the southern and western parts of the country.
- The cooperative societies set up shops to sell low priced goods to poor people.
- Some of the examples of cooperative societies are Mother Dairy in Delhi, Amul from Gujarat, Academy of Development Science (ADS) in Maharashtra.