

Food Security in India

What is Food Security ?

Food security refers to availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times. Food security largely depends on the Public Distribution System¹ and government's initiative and action to provide food to the poor.

Food security has following three dimensions

- (i) **Availability of Food** It means food production within the country, food imports and the previous years stock stored in government granaries².
- (ii) **Accessibility of Food** It means food is within reach of every person.
- (iii) **Affordability of Food** It means that an individual has enough money to buy sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet one's dietary needs.

The above dimensions conclude that food security is ensured in a country only if

- (i) Enough food is available for all the persons.
- (ii) All persons have the capacity to buy food of acceptable quality.
- (iii) There is no barrier on access to food.

The 1995 World Food Summit declared that 'food security at the individual, household, regional, national and global levels exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.' The declaration further recognises that 'poverty eradication is essential to improve access to food.'

Chapter Syllabus

- What is Food Security?
- Why Food Security?
- Who are food insecure?
- Food Security in India
- What is Buffer Stock?
- What is the Public Distribution System?
- Current Status of Public Distribution System

1 **Public Distribution System** A system in which the food procured by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) is distributed through government regulated ration shops among the poorer section of society.

2 **Granaries** A storehouse or stock of grains.

The buffer stock also helps to resolve the problem of food shortage during adverse weather conditions or during the period of calamity.

Public Distribution System (PDS)

The food procured by the FCI is distributed by the government among the poorer sections of the society. This system of food distribution is called the Public Distribution System (PDS).

PDS was strengthened in mid 1970s after the report of NSSO for high incidence of poverty. Three food intervention programmes were initiated then PDS, ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) in 1975 and Food For Work Programme (FFW) in 1977-78.

The FFW programme now comes under The National Food Security Act, 2013. This act provides for food and nutritional security and enables people to live a life with dignity. 75% of rural population and 50% of urban population are categorised as eligible households for food security.

Rationing

The PDS operates through rationing. The rationing system was introduced in India in 1940s during the Bengal famine. It was revived in 1960s prior to Green Revolution when the country was facing acute food shortage.

The objective of rationing is to provide essential items at prices lower than the market price (to poor people) which is called as *issue price*.

Ration shops are now present in most localities, villages, towns and cities. Ration shops are also known as *fair price shops*. There are 5.5 lakh ration shops in India. They keep stock of foodgrains, sugar and kerosene oil for cooking.

Types of Ration Cards

There are three kinds of Ration cards

- Antyodaya card for the poorest of the poor.
- BPL card for families below the poverty line.
- APL card for all others.

In mid-1970s, National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) reported the high incidence of poverty level. Due to this, important food intervention programmes like Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975) and Food For Work (FFW) (1977-78) programmes were introduced.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAPs) are initiated mostly in rural areas and are aimed to provide food security to the poor people. Employment generation programmes are also initiated under PAPs that ensure food security by raising the income of the poor.

Current Status of Public Distribution System

In the beginning, the PDS coverage was universal with no discrimination between the poor and non-poor.

In 1992, a **Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS)** was started in 1,700 blocks of the country to provide the benefit of PDS in remote and backward areas.

In 1997, a **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)** was introduced to target the 'poor in all areas' with a lower issue price for foodgrains for them compared to the price paid by non-poor people.

Further in year 2000, two special schemes **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** and **Annapurna Scheme (APS)** were launched.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)

- It was launched in December, 2000. It is for the poorest of the poor.
- Under this scheme, 1 crore of the poorest among the BPL families covered under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) were identified.
- Poor families were identified by the respective state rural development departments through a **Below Poverty Line (BPL)** survey.
- 25 kg of foodgrains were made available to each eligible family at a highly subsidised rate of 2 per kg for wheat and 3 per kg for rice. This quantity was increased from 25 kg to 35 kg from April 2002.
- This scheme has been further expanded twice by additional 50 lakh BPL families in June 2003 and in August 2004. Under AAY, 2 crore families has been covered.

Annapurna Scheme (APS)

- It was launched in the year 2000 for poor senior citizens.
- It provides 10 kg of foodgrains free of cost per month to senior citizens who are not receiving any pension or have any other source of income or having a family to support them.

Problems with PDS

Despite overflowing granaries and piling of food grains in FCI, poor people face hunger as distribution system is not proper. Food grains either rot or eaten away by rats. This adds to wastage and deterioration in grain quality.

The storage of massive food stocks is responsible for high carrying costs and maintenance cost. With the introduction of TPDS, three levels of prices are fixed for three different income groups.

The food prices in ration shops for APL groups is quite closer to market price. Due to this, they do not have incentive to buy from ration shops which has resulted in massive piling of foodgrains.

The National Food Security Act 2013

This act provides for food and nutritional security to all citizens and enables people to live a life with self dignity. Under this Act, 75% of rural and 50% of urban population have been categorised as eligible households for food security.

Malpractices in PDS

PDS has become ineffective in many regions of the country because dealers running the ration shops are indulged in malpractices. These malpractices include

- Diverting the grains to open market to get better margin.
- Selling poor quality grains at ration shops.
- Irregular opening of the shops.

All this leads to greater piling of food grains in FCI and mouldy stocks in ration shops.

Other Problems

Some states producing surplus wheat and rice, like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh (western), Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal (to some extent) put pressure on the government to raise the MSP.

This increase the cost of procuring food grains by the government. For this, freezing of MSP is suggested as a measure.

Increase in MSP of wheat and rice have induced farmers to divert their production to these two grains only. Thus, ignoring the production of coarse grains which is staple food of the poor.

The intensive utilisation of water in rice cultivation has led to problems of environmental degradation and fall in the water table thus threatening the agricultural development in the states producing surplus foodgrains.

Role of Cooperatives in Food Security

The role played by cooperatives in food security of India is important especially in the Southern and Western parts of the country.

The cooperative societies set-up shops to sell low priced goods to poor people. For example, out of all fair price shops running in Tamil Nadu, around 94% are being run by the cooperatives.

The examples shown below are success stories of cooperatives in order to contribute in food security of India.

- In Delhi, Mother Dairy is making progress in provision of milk and vegetables to the consumers at controlled rate decided by Government of Delhi.
- Amul is another success story of cooperatives in milk and milk products from Gujarat. It has brought about the White Revolution in the country.
- In Maharashtra, Academy of Development Science (ADS) has facilitated a network of NGOs for setting up grain banks in different regions. ADS organises training and capacity building programmes on food security for NGOs. The ADS Grain Bank programme is acknowledged as a successful and innovative food security intervention.

Check Point 02

- Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced in _____.
- Food grains in buffer stock is procured by government through _____.
- Which scheme was introduced to target the foodgrain distribution to 'Poor in all areas'?
- In which state, more than 90% of fair price shops are run by the cooperatives?
- Amul has brought in an era of _____ revolution in India.

SUMMARY

- The availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times is called **food security**.
- The food security in India is depended on the **Public Distribution System (PDS)** and various other programmes launched by the government.
- Food security of a nation is ensured if all of its people have enough nutritious food available (**availability**), all person having the capacity to buy food (**affordability**) and there is no barrier on access to food (**accessibility**).
- The poor section of society face the problem of food insecurity but other people may also face food insecurity during natural disasters and calamities like earthquake, drought, flood, etc.
- If natural calamities happens in a widespread area or continues over a longer period then it leads to **starvation** and **famine** like Bengal famine of 1943.
- Landless labourers, traditional artisans, petty self employed workers and destitutes including beggars are worst affected groups from food insecurity and lack of nutritional food in rural areas.
- In urban areas, casual labourers, workers engaged in ill-paid occupations and seasonal activities are paid low wages and hence suffer from food insecurity.
- SCs, STs, OBCs (lower caste among them), certain sections of women, people living in tribal and remote areas and regions more prone to natural disaster face the risk of food insecurity.
- **Hunger** is an aspect indicating food insecurity. Hunger can be **chronic** or **seasonal**.
- The **chronic hunger** is the consequence of a diet regularly deficient in quantity and quality due to low income.
- The **seasonal hunger** is the consequence of seasonal nature of employment like agriculture where people earn only for a few months in an year.
- To eliminate food insecurity, India aims to achieve **self sufficiency** in production of food grains. **Green Revolution** is a step towards it.
- To ensure food security, government created **Buffer Stocks** in which food grains (rice and wheat) is procured by Food Corporation of India from states producing surplus food grains like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.
- The FCI procures food grains from farmers at a pre-announced price known as (MSP) Minimum Support Price.
- The purchased food grains are then distributed through the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.
- Under PDS, government sells essential items at **Ration shops** (also known as Fair Price shops). The price at which poor people can buy food grains from these shops is much lower than the market price and is known as **Issue Price**.
- Ration shops sell food grains at three different prices for three different category of ration card holders-APL, BPL, AAY.
- Stock piling mismanagement and malpractices are some of the problems faced by PDS and Buffer stocks.
- To ensure food security, Poverty Alleviation Programmes are also operational that aims to improve income of the people.
- Various cooperatives, NGOs also work to provide essential items at reasonable rates for the poor. Mother Dairy, Amul, Grain banks are some of them.

NCERT FOLDER

Intext Questions

Let's Discuss On Page 43

- 1 Consider the following table
Production of Rice in the Province of Bengal

Year	Production (Lakh tonnes)	Imports (Lakh tonnes)	Exports (Lakh tonnes)	Total Availability (Lakh tonnes)
1938	85	—	—	85
1939	79	04	—	83
1940	82	03	—	85
1941	68	02	—	70
1942	93	—	01	92

Now answer the questions that follow

- (a) Some people say that the famine happened because the production was low. Study the table and find out if this is true with the statement.

- (b) Which year showed the lowest availability?

Ans. (a) No, I do not agree with the statement. The famine happened because the production was low in 1941 and 1942.