

# Impact of Covid 19 on Food Security and Public Distribution System

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**Abstract:-** Corona Virus has been affected almost all countries of the world. Population of the entire world has been faced the problem of food insecurity. The supply chains and public distribution system were affected during lockdown period. The government of India announced lockdown on 25th March and it was continued up to 17th may 2020. Lock down means no pay and no work in rural and urban wage earners. Workers in rural and urban areas are not in a position to buy food for their livelihood. So it is the responsibility of the government to distribute food through effective public distribution system along with food security. In this paper an attempt is made to analyse the impact of COVID19 on food security and public distribution system and how far the government of India policies satisfies to overcome the present pandemic.

**Keywords:-** Food Security, Public Distribution System, Policy Frame Work, Impact, Challenge.

## I. INTRODUCTION

COVID19 has been affected almost 180 countries in the world. Entire world has faced recession due to this pandemic. Due to national lock down, travel restrictions and boarder closers, the producers and consumers have been faced serious disruptions in supply chains and logistics. According to the United Nations report COVID19 pandemic could cut the global investment by 40 percent. Many households experienced reduction in their purchasing power. Global economic growth is seen falling to -3 percent for the whole year, compared to an already weak 2.9 percent in 2019. Rural economy suffered silently because of predominance of agriculture. The Government of India announced lock down on 25th march and it was continued up to 17th may 2020. Lockdown means no work for the daily wage earners, small and marginal farmers, and other economically poor people in rural areas. Life has become horrible to the rural and urban poor.

COVID19 pandemic is unique. Many business operations were shut down, leaving people without work, is an integral part of work to flatten the curve of disease progression. Workers in rural sector missed their daily wage earnings and they are not in a position to buy food for their livelihood. As a result India witnessed large scale reverse migration. In this paper an attempt is made to analyse food security and public distribution system during COVID19 period.

### ➤ Objectives of the study:

1. Identifying the challenges of food security during COVID19 period.
2. Analysing the impact of COVID19 on food security.
3. Analysing the government of India policies in maintaining food security and public distribution system during COVID19 period.

## II. FOOD SECURITY

Agriculture is the livelihood of Indian Economy and more 50 percent of people depend on agriculture and they contribute 18 percent of GDP. One of the challenges of Corona virus is ability of food sector to effectively cope with the crisis. There are many challenges associated with agriculture in India. The COVID 19 pandemic explored some critical areas that has to be addressed and hence more investment.

### ➤ Challenges to food security under COVID19:

- Technology used in agriculture in India is labour intensive. There is a demand for more labour during rabbi and Kharif season. Due to lock down many workers are migrated from their work place to hometowns. So there is a shortage of labour in agriculture sector and affects production. This has to be addressed properly. Central government has exempted agriculture from lock down but this has not followed properly by the state governments. Long term solution to this problem is implementation of mechanisation in agricultural sector.
- Food security is needed not only in production but also in distribution. The lockdown has affected the timely delivery of harvested crop and transport of seeds and fertilisers to the kharif season. As a result the farmers are dreading their perishable crops rotting away.
- It is important to note that farmers are the warriors who are bearing the risk of COVID19 and giving food to the citizens. It is equally important to provide health coverage to farmers.

### ➤ Impact of food security:

The people's access to food has severely hampered by the loss of livelihood induced by the pandemic. Few middle and upper middle class people survived with their savings where as poor people suffered and borrowed money from their neighbours and friends.

➤ *The high share of food expenditure:*

- The average share of food expenditure increased in India during COVID 19.
- The average total spending on food increases to 42 percent in urban areas and rises to 54 percent in rural India.

➤ *Suffered with hunger:*

- No work no pay leads to hunger and affected the lives and livelihood of the people.
- United nations estimates explains , as a result of economic recession due to pandemic, 80 to 125 million people suffered with hunger in 2020.
- COVID19 has triggered hunger and undernourishment.
- This is an addition to the 690 million people who are suffering with hunger now.

➤ *Undernourishment:*

- Along with extreme hunger people are also suffering with under nourishment.
- Lock down leads to extreme poverty and people are unable to consume healthy food for their healthy and normal life.
- This will have long term implications if it continues a long period of time.

➤ *Poverty:*

- World Bank reported that pandemic has pushed 100 million people into poverty.
- Unemployment to agricultural workers, industrial workers, construction workers, daily wage earners has pushed them in to poverty and threatens food security.

➤ *Recession:*

- World economies suffered unexpected recession due to pandemic. So Governments are not in a position to run their welfare schemes for the poor. Moreover they have to spend more on health care.

➤ *Social divisions:*

- World has experienced inequalities after COVID19
- Rich people are able to enjoy due to their wealth accumulation.
- Many people are thrown out of work not in a position to feed their families due to unemployment.

### III. MEASURES TO RECTIFY THIS PROBLEM

➤ *Strong government:*

- These problems will require new ideas and more robust political will.
- The government should take direct responsibility of poor people who are vulnerable and marginalised.

➤ *Market Structure:*

- Identifying new market channels like e-commerce which will provide more avenues to the farmers to sell their products. This is an incentive to the farmers inc case of less demand.

- To maintain health, hygiene, quality and food safety relocate the markets to larger premises and ensure appropriate infrastructure.

➤ *Efficiency:*

- Efficiency should be increased to improve the quality of the products that are available.
- Developing cold storage facilities and warehousing is very important to the farmer. It is important to Develop collection centres closure to the producers and improving transport facilities
- Allow local markets to open and maintain physical distancing within and outside markets.

➤ *Inclusive finance:*

- Inclusive finance is essential to strengthen and expand rural supply chains.
- Banking, government and other financial institutions must be available to provide institutional finance to the rural poor.

➤ *Innovation:*

- Farmers should be given encouragement in innovation and entrepreneurial activities .
- Mechanisation should be introduced in agriculture through cooperative societies or contract farming.
- To do this farmers desperately need financial resources , technology and innovation.

They also need institutional support to use this technology and innovation.

➤ *Government of India measures:*

- To prevent the situation arise after COVID19 both the central and state governments have taken certain immediate measures to protect human lives and livelihood.
- To address food security challenges recently the government announced its plan for the 'one nation, one ration card' scheme to the poorer sections of the society including the migrants. This scheme is expected to benefit 67 crore people in India by August 2020. The government has announced this program based on work done through Public Distribution System.
- The government has increased its social security programs and made direct cash transfers under Pradhan mantri kisan scheme. It also liberalised their finance to MGNREGA. Direct cash grants were given to the construction workers.
- The Government has launched a massive food security mission under "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. Under this scheme 800 million people were covered. The Government has distributed 5kg food grains per person per month and one kg of pulses per family for a period of three months starting from April 2020 ( Lockdown period). The Public distribution system has delivered goods perfectly to the beneficiaries through Aadhaar authentication.
- A special economic package of 20 lakh crores ( equivalent of 10 percent of GDP) were announced by the

government of India under Atma Nirbhar Bharat scheme to achieve the goal of self reliant India. It aims at giving livelihood and employment to the rural poor, labourers and migrants who are adversely affected by the pandemic.

- Health infrastructure and manpower were given importance. The Government has readjusted the policies and programs with the help of NGOs , governments, stakeholders, private sector, politicians.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Millions of farmers are affected due to lock down. Harvesting the fresh produce, transportation and marketing are affected. Many wholesale markets are shut down due to fear of virus. The government should ensure the procurement price and keep the markets functioning. Food demand comprises variety of products like rice, pulses, edible oils. In order to maintain food security government has to enhance the food basket.

India's public distribution system requires modernisation of supply chain operations. There is an urgent need to digitise the physical data, procurement and movement of goods. Modernization of physical infrastructure is also necessary. Income generation to rural economy is required. Growth of any rural economy depends on the disposable income of the people. Family spending is expected to increase on food grains and pulses. Government should raise the food basket of the rural poor through public distribution system. Digitisation of physical data enhances the quality of services at multiple levels and helps the beneficiaries and intermediaries. Research, Learning, contributing, and togetherness leads to overcome the pandemic and transform the agri- food system in rural sector. Let us hope the government of India's New Agricultural policy may enhance the institutionalisation of agriculture and gives a boost to the agricultural sector, so that the lives and livelihood of farmers may be changed.

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