

The Status of Food Security with Particular Reference to Food Availability in India

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Abstract:- Food security means that all people at all times have physical & economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods, which are produced in an environmentally sustainable and socially just manner, and that people can make informed decisions about their food choices. Food security is associated with several factors, such as socio-economic development, human rights and the environment. The main objective of the present study is to evaluate the status of food security in India and to examine the vulnerable sections of society in food security. The present study is entirely based upon the secondary sources of the data collected from the books, journals, government reports and websites. The analysis of the study reveals that India, with a massive agricultural crop production over the years, has moved away from dependence on food aid to become a net food exporter. Still, India has failed to ensure food security at the micro-level. The main reasons behind food insecurity in India are massive poverty, illiteracy, corruption, faulty government policies, lack of awareness among the masses and low technological development. The study proposes some suggestions to overcome the existing problems of food insecurity in India.

Keywords:- Food Availability, Foodgrains, Poverty, ICMR.

I. INTRODUCTION

Food security from time to time has been defined by different world organisations to incorporate arising issues and challenges. World Food Summit (WFS) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) defined food security as, "Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary and food preferences for an active life" (FAO, 2002). In other words, Food security means that all people at all times have physical & economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods, which are produced in an environmentally sustainable and socially just manner, and that people can make informed decisions about their food choices. Food security exists when the people who produce our food can earn a decent, living wage growing, catching, producing, processing, transporting, retailing, and serving food. At the core of food security is access to healthy food and optimal nutrition for all. Food access is closely linked to the food supply, so food security is dependent on a healthy and sustainable food system (www.resilience.org). Food security is also associated with several other factors, such as

socio-economic development, human rights and the environment.

Food is essential for life. The estimation of several reports says that there is more than enough food produced in all over the world to feed everyone, yet 815 million people go hungry. One of the most significant challenges the world faces is how to ensure that a growing global population - projected to rise around 10 billion by 2050 - has enough food to meet their nutritional requirements. To meet the dietary needs of another two billion people in 2050, food production will be needed to increase by 50 per cent globally. The concept of food security nowadays is getting more focus because of the growing population and the climatological threats to food production. Today the availability of food is associated with purchasing power, and food insecurity is caused by poverty. So the needs of the poor should be protected by improving their purchasing power through employment and income generation programmes.

Nowadays, the concept of food security is generally understood to include four main components: *availability, access, utilisation, and stability*; although some see stability as a separate cross-cutting factor. For an optimum status of food security to exist, all of these components must be sufficiently present.

➤ *Physical Availability of Food:*

The physical availability of food refers to adequate quantities of food, supplied through native production or imports. It refers to the 'supply-side' of food security.

➤ *Economic and Physical Access to Food:*

It refers to access by an individual to adequate resources (entitlements) for acquiring appropriate food for a nutritious and balanced diet.

➤ *Food Utilisation:*

Food Utilisation, in general, understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food through a balanced diet, clean water, hygiene, sanitation and health care.

➤ *Food Stability:*

Reliable supply of food products available at all times and for all people.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature relating to food security status, problems and prospects of food security in India and the significant challenges in the way of food security have been selected for the assessment of food security status in India and to find out the problems arising in the course of food security in India.

Rao and Deshpande (2002) argued that the existing system of government policies related to food security especially Public Distribution System (PDS) has become unwieldy and unsustainable and the study calls for the review of the policies. The study tried to show the feasibility of a decentralised system with the help of data from two drought-prone districts of Karnataka.

Das and Datta (2006) explored the food security situation in North East India. They found that all the seven states of North East India suffer from food deficiency because of the traditional method of cultivation. They showed that entire North East India is dependent upon the import of food grains from North India to meet their requirement. The study emphasised on the need to modernise the prevailing agricultural scenario to get better output and to improve the food security situation in the study area.

Agoramoorthy, G. (2008), in his study, revealed that by 2020, India has to increase productivity above 340 million tons of foodgrains given its population growth. For this purpose, there should be a high emphasis on agricultural research, technology, and rural infrastructure. The study stressed on the need to improve the agricultural conditions in the drylands which covers a vast stretch of Indian areal extent to meet the future demands of food in the country.

Kumbhare, et al. (2013) in their study revealed that the status of household food security was found low among below poverty line (BPL) household as compared to above poverty line (APL) household. The household food security was positively influenced by the variables like annual income, food quality, adoption of modern technology and social participation.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The followings are the primary objectives proposed for the present study.

- To evaluate the status of food security in India.
- To evaluate the vulnerable sections of society in food security.
- To find out the significant challenges in meeting the status of food security.

IV. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is entirely based upon the secondary sources of the data collected from the books, journals, government reports and websites. To analyse India's position in the world in terms of food security, the study uses data compiled from the different reports and publications of various world organisations such as IFPRI, FAO, and WHO etc. To show the trends and patterns of the status of food security, the study uses different years of data relating to food availability. The tables and graphs have been used for the interpretation of the data.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

➤ India's Position in Global Hunger Index:

Table 1 and Fig 1 indicate India's position in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) given by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). It is quite clear that from the table that India has remained under the severe category of nations and its rank in the world is also increasing over the years. This indicates that India has continued to have one of the enormous proportions of the population who is food insecure. Over the years, it is among the worst countries in terms of food security.

It has been reported in different reports of national and international organisations that some of the states of India have performed worse than the many of the poorest countries of Africa. If this trend continues and the situation does not improve, then India might experience other low rank and poor performance in the global hunger index, and it will continue to have the most extensive sufferers of food insecure populations. This is a matter of serious concerns for a country like India, which has enough potential and resources to meet the needs and demands of people.

| S. No | Year | Total Countries | Rank | Score | Status |
|-------|------|-----------------|------|-------|---------|
| 1 | 2012 | 79 | 65 | 22.9 | Serious |
| 2 | 2013 | 78 | 63 | 21.3 | Serious |
| 3 | 2014 | 76 | 55 | 17.8 | Serious |
| 4 | 2015 | 104 | 80 | 29.0 | Serious |
| 5 | 2016 | 118 | 97 | 28.5 | Serious |
| 6 | 2017 | 119 | 100 | 31.8 | Serious |
| 7 | 2018 | 119 | 103 | 31.1 | Serious |
| 8 | 2019 | 117 | 102 | 30.3 | Serious |
| 9 | 2020 | 107 | 94 | 27.2 | Serious |

Table 1: India's Position in Global Hunger Index (2012-2020) Source: IFPRI

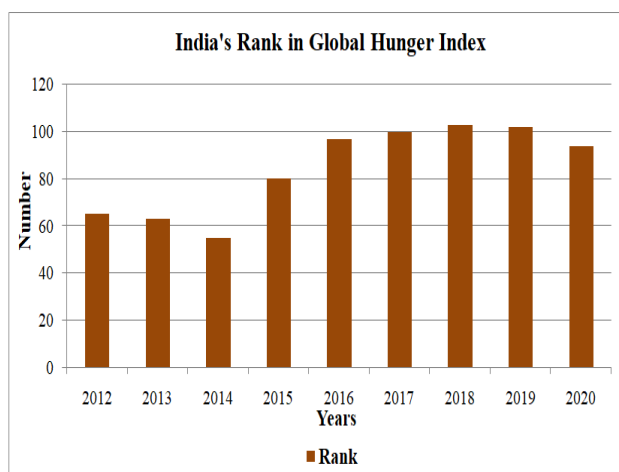


Fig: 1

➤ **Foodgrain Availability:**

With a five-fold increase in food grain production from 50 million tonnes in 1950-51 to about 250 million tonnes in 2014-15, India has moved away from dependence on food aid to become a net food exporter (FAO, 2017). But India has failed to ensure the food security at the micro-level. Table 2 reveals that although by and large India has per capita availability of cereals above the recommended level of dietary allowances for an adult male but till today millions of people in different states in India and numerous sections of society have not been able to meet their daily dietary needs. The main reasons behind such large scale food insecurity in India are massive poverty, illiteracy, corruption, faulty government policies, lack of awareness among the masses and low technological development.

| S. No. | Year | Per Capita Net Availability (in gm.) | | ICMR Recommended Dietary Allowances for an Adult Male (in gm.) | |
|--------|------|--------------------------------------|--------|--|--------|
| | | Cereals | Pulses | Cereals | Pulses |
| 1. | 2014 | 442.9 | 46.4 | 420 | 60 |
| 2. | 2015 | 421.4 | 43.8 | 420 | 60 |
| 3. | 2016 | 443.7 | 43.0 | 420 | 60 |
| 4. | 2017 | 465.3 | 52.9 | 420 | 60 |

Table: 2 Per Capita Availability of Foodgrain in India
Source: Agricultural Statistics & ICMR

On the other hand, India, despite having a high proportion of the population as a vegetarian, has been failing to ensure the requirements of pulses at the recommended level to its population over the years. Due to low production and high demands of pulses, India has to import pulses from different countries every year. This makes the price of pulses go upward every year, and it becomes almost impossible to have pulses in the diet for the poor and to some extent for the well-off sections of society when prices of pulses soar.

➤ **States Facing Problems of Food Insecurity:**

Although food insecurity is not peculiar to a specific state in India, it is almost widespread in each state of India. However, still, some states and particular areas in those

states have been identified as more prone to food insecurity as the others. It has been observed a significant chunk of food insecure populations is found in few states and these states are the worst sufferer in food security. The central states that have a large proportion of food-insecure people are Uttar Pradesh (Eastern and South Eastern Parts), Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, parts of Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Maharashtra. The occurrence of massive food insecurity in these states is mainly because of the high population growth, widespread poverty, faulty government policies, increased frequency of natural disasters and lack of technological development. In these states also, there are some particular sections and class of the people are the worst sufferers in food security.

The followings are the worst affected groups in Food Insecurity:

- The beggar, homeless people and to many extents landless people,
- Casual labourers,
- Ill paid families,
- Unskilled and traditional artisans,
- SCs, STs Minorities and some sections of OBCs.
- Migrants as a result of natural disasters.
- Women and children,
- The families who are under below the poverty line.

➤ **Suggestions to improve Food Security in India:**

The followings are the crucial suggestions proposed for this study to improve the existing scenario of food security in India.

- 1) Improve the soil fertility, irrigation infrastructure and water management practices.
- 2) Introduce the high yielding seed distribution system of pulses varieties.
- 3) Monitoring and timely evaluation of food and nutritional programmes should be done.
- 4) Increase the subsidy to the farmers.
- 5) Crop insurance scheme should be provided to the farmers.
- 6) The employment generation programmes to fight against poverty and low purchasing power prevalent among the people should be initiated.
- 7) There is a need for long-term relief measures which should also be sustainable in the event of natural disasters.

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