

# ANALYSIS OF FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA - A RECENT TREND

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**Abstract :** The concept of food security is multidimensional. Food security exists when all people have physical and economic access to adequate and nutritious food at all times, prioritizing their dietary needs and food for an active and healthy life. Ensuring food and nutritional security is a major challenge for India. In the Global Hunger Index released in 2014, India was ranked 55 out of 120 countries and this report is quite disturbing as India is one of the largest producers of food grains in the world. India is still lacking to meet the basic amenities of its people. However, India has become self-sufficient in food availability. But still millions of people are not getting enough food which shows the pathetic state of food security in the country. The crux of India's food problem is not with increasing food availability, but with the distribution of food. There are many challenges before India in achieving food security. Major problems of these are lack of country inappropriate policy, inadequacy in design, monitoring and evaluation, ineffective governance, political will and corruption in institutional system. To curb the existing problems of food security, the government enacted a new Act i.e. the National Food Security Act, 2013, which aims to provide subsidized food to two-thirds of the country. This paper discusses the concept of food security, analysis of food security in India and some important programs launched by the government for food security.

**Keywords:** Food security, MDM, MNREGS, NFSM, NFSA, ICDS, PDS.

## INTRODUCTION

India is the world's second most populous country and third largest economy, in purchasing power parity. Despite the recent strong economic growth in the country, access to adequate nutritious food for about a fourth of the population is still a concern. The state of food insecurity and hunger in India is of considerable significance for the global situation and, therefore, figures prominently in such discussions at the world fora.

Former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam had expressed his hope in Vision-2020 that India would be able to produce enough food items according to its needs long before 20 years. He had imagined that India would produce so much food, so that it could provide healthy food to its citizens, it would also become a big food exporting country. He thought that India would be able to produce surplus of all kinds of cereals and dairy products. He envisioned that India could produce another green revolution in agriculture by producing value-added crops, which could meet the growing domestic needs as well as international needs. As of today, we can assume that India has become self-sufficient in this field and is ready to move fast in the field of exports.

In an event Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Today the country is self-sufficient in terms of food and drink, so only the peasants of the country are sweating and persistent toiling behind it. Now we are looking at the farmer as exporter rather than nutrient. Be it grain, milk, fruits and vegetables, honey or organic products, we have a lot of export potential; and hence the budget emphasizes on creating an environment for the export of agricultural products. Investment has been increased on the creation of modern infrastructure ranging from food-processing to marketing." That is, we are looking at the same path that Kalam saheb had dreamed.

The Indian government has undertaken many reforms in the existing social safety nets to better deliver on nutrition and food security targets and have launched ambitious schemes such as the National Food Security Act (NFSA), the National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) and the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) that promote convergent approaches taking cognizance of the multi-dimensional nature of food and nutrition security and addressing inequalities related to gender, age, disability, income, caste and region. With a positive policy environment, support to the Government's efforts to address malnutrition and food insecurity has the potential to accelerate the pace of progress towards achievement of SDG 2. While there is a realization of the problems, a focused investment of the resources in the specific geographies and interventions, based on evidence, is crucial in addressing the problem of food security in the country. This Food and Nutrition Security Analysis (FNSEA) study has therefore been undertaken with the purpose to establish a baseline for developing a better understanding of the issues, using available datasets over a period of time in order to achieve a more nuanced knowledge to facilitate action.

## FOOD SECURITY

Food security means ensuring the availability of such diversified food in sufficient quantity throughout the life cycle for all the citizens of the society, this food is culturally acceptable to all and the proper means of acquiring them. The unit of food security can be a country, a state and a village. The availability of food grains increases when there is enough production of food grains, but it is not necessary that every family will also have food availability; unless he has the means to obtain food grains (e.g. employment or social security or protection of government scheme). In a way, along with the production of food grains, it is also very important to have a proper and equal distribution. It is for this that our government buys food grains from farmers at the minimum support price and makes it available to the people at cheaper rates from the public distribution system, i.e. ration shops.

Food security has been defined in different ways at different times and forums. These definitions range from the availability of food to full stomach to the assured availability of balanced and nutritious food. Food security, in addition to the social and economic status of any country, also shows the internal security of that country. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security is primarily based on three points - "First, ensuring adequate production for adequate food supply, secondly maintaining stability in the flow of supply and third needy people to ensure availability of food grains as per their requirement." In 1983, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) stated that food security means

“ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food they need”. The World Bank took this definition forward in 1986 to assert that food security is “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life”. The definition of food security given by the Global Food Summit 1996 is the most accepted definition to date. According to this definition, “food security 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”. Hence, the food security status of any household or individual is typically determined by the interaction among a broad range of agro-environmental, socio-economic and biological factors, recognizing the three pillars of food security: aggregate food **availability**, household food **access**, and individual food **utilization**. Achieving food security requires that all three of these pillars are sufficient and stable over time, noting that:

- Aggregate availability of physical supplies of food from domestic production, commercial imports, food aid and national stocks is sufficient;
- Household livelihoods provide adequate access for all members of the household to those food supplies through home production, market purchases, or transfers from other sources; and
- Utilization of food supplied is appropriate to meet the specific dietary and health needs of individuals within a household.

Food security analysis is not only a static snapshot of food availability, household access to and individual utilization of food, but also includes risk and vulnerability analysis. Risk and vulnerability analysis includes the study of risks that communities, households and individuals face on a regular basis, in the context of food security and their capacity to respond to them effectively. In the end, there is a significant overlap between households that are currently food insecure and those at risk of fluctuations in food security that can threaten wellbeing. Conceptually, all households may be considered vulnerable to a certain degree, but the primary emphasis of vulnerability analysis should be on geographic and social analysis of those who are already food insecure or at risk of becoming food insecure.

### INDIAN FOOD SECURITY ANALYSIS

India has strengthened its economic position nationally and internationally in the last two-decades. But despite continuous population growth, low poverty levels, narrow literacy and agricultural growth rates are proving to be a hindrance in the path of integrated social development despite economic improvement in the country. About 22 percent of the country’s population is still deprived of adequate food while living below the poverty line. Therefore, ensuring food security for the welfare of its people remains a major challenge before the nation. Even after the implementation of poverty alleviation scheme and six decades of independence, India did not get freedom from the problem of poverty. Despite a continuous decrease in the share of agriculture in GDP (about 14 percent), almost half of the country’s population is directly and indirectly dependent on agriculture.

According to the combined figures of the FAO of the United Nations and the International Agricultural Development Fund (IFAD), every 9<sup>th</sup> person in the world (i.e. 795 crore People) in the year 2014-16 is malnourished. It has 78 crore people living in developing countries. According to the Global Hunger Index-2014, the starvation situation in India has improved compared to last year. India was ranked 63 in the Global Hunger Index in 2013, while it was ranked 55 in 2014. The Government of India has taken these figures very seriously and has expanded the framework of programs related to starvation eradication as needed. Under these efforts, a lot of emphasis has been laid on Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and National Rural Health Mission (NHRM) for the health, diet and overall development of children. Under it 1.4 million ICDS (Anganwadi) Center and NHRM are also to be included. Along with this, the Government of India started the NHRM in the year 2007, whose main goal is to solve the problems of poverty and hunger by increasing the production of ‘wheat, rice and pulses’ while ensuring a permanent basis for food security. Under this mission, emphasis has been laid on the use and management of advanced and new varieties of seeds, agricultural techniques.

According to the leading Indian agricultural economist, Dr. Ramesh Chand, in the last two and a half decades, Indian agriculture has gone through various adverse conditions. During the year 1988-89 to 1996-97, Indian agriculture grew at a growth rate of 3.15 per cent, which came down to 1.92 per cent from the year 1996-97 to 2004-05. This was the lowest level of growth in Indian agricultural development. But the policy makers took effective steps to revive the agricultural sector with this falling agricultural growth rate which proved to be a boon for the agricultural sector. As a result, agriculture again picked up the pace of growth and achieved a growth rate of 3.75 percent during the years 2004-05 to 2012-13, which is only 0.25 percent less than the target of 4.0 percent of agricultural production (4.0 percent).

**Table 1 : Food Production in India**

| Items      | 1996-97 | 2004-05 | 2013-14 | 2019-20* |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Rice       | 81.7    | 83.2    | 106.7   | 115.4    |
| Wheat      | 69.4    | 68.6    | 95.9    | 99.2     |
| Grains     | 184.2   | 185.2   | 254.8   | 250.0    |
| Pulses     | 14.1    | 13.1    | 19.3    | 17.9     |
| Vegetables | 40.5    | 50.9    | 89.0    | 115.5    |

\*Estimated

**Source :** Data Agricultural Statistics at a Glance-2014

It is clear from Table 2 that the steady increase in foodgrains is in fact a good sign for the agricultural world of the country. Due to improvement in economy and change in social and economic structure of the country, people are now consuming more fruits and vegetables.

**Table 2 : Average Annual Growth Rate (Percentage) in Population and Food Production**

| Items       | 1997-2005 | 2005-2014 | 2014-20* |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Population  | 1.80      | 1.39      | 1.40     |
| Food grains | 1.66      | 2.36      | 2.09     |
| Rice        | 1.59      | 2.07      | 1.35     |
| Wheat       | 1.42      | 2.97      | 0.88     |
| Grains      | 1.65      | 2.33      | 0.83     |
| Pulses      | 2.23      | 2.98      | -0.23    |
| Fruits      | 2.39      | 6.87      | 5.17     |

|            |      |      |      |
|------------|------|------|------|
| Vegetables | 4.23 | 6.41 | 1.72 |
|------------|------|------|------|

\*Estimated

**Source:** Agricultural Statistics at a Glance-2014

Analysis of the data in Table 2 shows that the average annual growth rate of food grains production was 1.66 percent in the years 1996-97 to 2004-05, which increased to 2.36 percent in the year 2004-05 to 2013-14. Whereas the population of India grew at a growth rate of 1.80 percent in the year 1996-97 to 2004-05, this was more than the rate of growth of grain production. But in the year 2004-05 to 2013-14, the average annual growth rate of the population was recorded by about one percent less than the production of food grains. Hence, it is clear that the average annual growth rate of food grains production is higher than the rate of continuously increasing population in our country. But in spite of better food production and productivity, the situation of poverty and hunger in the country has not ended.

**Table 3 : Plan-wise Target for Achieving and Target of Foodgrain Production (million tonnes)**

| Item       | 9 <sup>th</sup> Plan |             |                  | 11 <sup>th</sup> Plan |             |                  | 2013-14 |             |                  |
|------------|----------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|---------|-------------|------------------|
|            | target               | Achievement | Excess/Shortfall | target                | Achievement | Excess/Shortfall | target  | Achievement | Excess/Shortfall |
| Rice       | 437.0                | 436.4       | -0.6             | 494.5                 | 486.2       | -8.3             | 105.0   | 106.5       | 1.5              |
| Wheat      | 370.0                | 355.5       | -14.5            | 399.0                 | 421.8       | 22.8             | 92.5    | 95.9        | 3.4              |
| Grains     | 169.0                | 157.1       | -11.9            | 208.6                 | 200.0       | -8.6             | 42.5    | 43.1        | 0.5              |
| Pulses     | 76.0                 | 65.6        | -10.5            | 81.0                  | 79.3        | -1.7             | 19.0    | 19.3        | 0.3              |
| Foodgrains | 1052.0               | 1014.5      | -37.5            | 1183.1                | 1187.4      | 4.3              | 259.0   | 264.8       | 5.8              |

**Source:** Agricultural Statistics at a Glance-2014

According to data published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, there has been a steady increase in food production in India. During the 9<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, India was able to produce 37.5 million tonnes less than the target of food grain production. Due to which a situation of hunger was created in the country, due to which a worrying situation was created in the country. To tackle this problem, the government took effective steps and implemented the NFSM in the year 2007. Therefore, the positive impact of the government-run scheme was clearly seen at the end of the 11th Five-Year Plan. Finally, India set a new record in food production by producing 4.3 million tonnes more than the target. Apart from this, in the year 2013-14 also, 5.8 million tonnes more could be produced in food grains than the target. In the year 2013-14, all the food grains in India such as rice, wheat and pulses etc. recorded additional production against the target.

Due to the continuous development in food production in India, we are moving towards self-reliance in food production for the maintenance of the country's population. Table 4 shows the per capita food production which is about 154.2 kg in the year 2004-05. Per year or 422.5 grams per person per day, increased to 179.3 kg in the year 2013-14. Reached per year or 491 grams per person per day.

**Table 4 : Production of Foodgrains Per Person Per Year in India**

| Year       | kg Per year |         |         |          | grams Per day |         |         |          |
|------------|-------------|---------|---------|----------|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
|            | 1996-97     | 2004-05 | 2013-14 | 2019-20* | 1996-97       | 2004-05 | 2013-14 | 2019-20* |
| Rice       | 78.1        | 64.7    | 72.6    | 51.4     | 214.0         | 177.3   | 198.9   | 140.7    |
| Wheat      | 65.4        | 56.3    | 66.8    | 40.7     | 179.2         | 154.2   | 183.0   | 111.5    |
| Grains     | 170.1       | 142.7   | 162.1   | 120.5    | 466.0         | 391.0   | 444.1   | 330.1    |
| Pulses     | 13.5        | 11.5    | 17.2    | 22.3     | 37.0          | 31.5    | 47.1    | 61.1     |
| Foodgrains | 183.6       | 154.2   | 179.3   | 189.2    | 503.0         | 422.5   | 491.2   | 518.3    |

\*Estimated

**Source :** Data Agricultural Statistics at a Glance-2014

Therefore, it is clear from the study of Table 3 that if there is an increase in per capita foodgrains at the same pace, India will have enough food grains to feed a large population in the year 2020. India's grave situation as reflected in the Global Hunger Index 2014 confirms this. India is the second largest country in the world in terms of population. But the ever-increasing population, limited arable land and means of irrigation, global temperature and climate change are going to pose a challenge to the nation for food security in future.

According to data from the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), in the year 2011-12, poor people had 4 and 3 times more difference in intake of nutrients like calories and protein respectively compared to rich people. In 1983 there was a difference of 6 and 4.5 times respectively. This is indicative of the fact that in the long term, the difference between the nutritional and the nutritious between the poor and the rich is decreasing.

It is clear from Table 5 that the state-wise malnutrition situation in India has improved considerably in the year 2011-12 as compared to the year 1983. But in the year 1983, the situation of the most malnourished states like Jharkhand, Assam, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh etc. has improved a lot in the year 2011-12. But still the situation of malnutrition in states like Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Assam, Bihar and Odisha still remains worrying.

**Table 5 : State wise percentage of malnourished population in total population of India**

| State          | 1983 | 2011-12 |
|----------------|------|---------|
| Karnataka      | 35.3 | 25.9    |
| Chhattisgarh   | 23.6 | 25.7    |
| Jharkhand      | 37.6 | 25.5    |
| Assam          | 32.6 | 25.4    |
| Bihar          | 26.9 | 23.1    |
| Madhya Pradesh | 23.2 | 22.5    |
| Uttar Pradesh  | 24.7 | 21.2    |
| W. Bengal      | 34.0 | 20.5    |
| Maharashtra    | 31.7 | 17.2    |
| Odisha         | 30.1 | 17.2    |

|                   |      |      |
|-------------------|------|------|
| Andhra Pradesh    | 32.2 | 14.4 |
| Rajasthan         | 16.5 | 14.0 |
| Haryana           | 18.7 | 13.8 |
| Punjab            | 22.8 | 10.5 |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 11.6 | 8.1  |
| Uttarakhand       | 12.1 | 4.6  |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 16.2 | 4.3  |
| India             | 30.3 | 20.8 |

Source: NSO Unit Level Data

## GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Public Distribution System (PDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) are the five major schemes of the Government of India to ensure food security for all, details of which are given below. Being presented -

**1. Public Distribution System (PDS) :** Studies have found that the PDS is the most efficient and efficient system of providing food security in India. But due to inadequate access of PDS in rural areas of the country as well as problems like black marketing, the last person is not getting proper benefits of this system. According to a study, in the recent years, most states of India were found to have the most disturbances and black marketing in the public distribution system in Haryana, Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal respectively. Whereas in states like Bihar, Assam, Tripura etc., there has been a significant reduction in black marketing in the public distribution system in 2011-12 as compared to 1983.

In the last few years, the Government of India has also taken effective steps towards addressing malnutrition arising out of high food inflation. In some states, initiatives have been taken in matters related to this reform, but a lot more remains to be done in this direction. The analysis of the data also proves that there has been a decline in the poverty rate due to public distribution system among different classes. In the year 2011-12, it was found that the beneficiary PDS. The poverty rate among them was high. Poverty rate was 37.9 percent in 2004-05 which decreased to 22.3 percent in the year 2011-12. All the systems are being linked to the Aadhaar Card for transparency in PDS. This allows PDS every information related to the internet will be made public through the internet, which will help keep a close watch on the department to prevent challenges like theft of food grains, transparency and scarcity, fake ration card, weak complaint settlement trend etc. Apart from this, it is also necessary to monitor the smooth implementation of this system from time to time through the Vigilance Department.

**2. Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDM) :** MDM was implemented by Bharat Sarka on 15 August 1995 on the auspicious occasion of the country's Independence Day. The main objective of this scheme was to stop the tendency to drop out of school to ensure primary education in all the children of the country. Under this, elimination of malnutrition by providing nutritious and tasty food to the children studying in all primary government schools, along with the ability to take education, and develop the desire to reduce the drop-out rate in children. According to an estimate, under this scheme, 12 crore children are being provided in about 1 lakh schools in the country.

**3. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) :** MNREGS was implemented by the Government of India in the year 200. The main objective of which was to eradicate poverty, hunger and unemployment in the country by providing less than 100 days of employment per year to one person from each family in rural areas of the country. Despite many controversies regarding the implementation of this scheme, this scheme has played an important role in reducing hunger from rural areas.

**4. National Food Security Mission (NFSM) :** The NFSM was implemented by the Government of India in August 2007 with the main objective of bridging the gap between the two, while coordinating between the country's ever-increasing population and the slow pace of food production. According to the Annual Report 2014-15 of the Ministry of Agriculture, by the end of the Twelfth Plan, the production of wheat, rice and pulses is to be increased by 8, 10, and 4 million tonnes respectively, to rid the country of starvation. Apart from this, the basic strategy of this mission includes new and advanced technologies in the agriculture sector of the country like seeds, micronutrients, soil amendment, integrated pest management, agricultural machinery and equipment, along with resource conservation capacity building of farmers and had to give promotion of irrigation equipment. During the Twelfth Plan in 2014-15, the scheme has been implemented in 623 districts of 28 states of the country. Under this scheme 126 districts of 11 states for wheat production, 206 districts of 25 states for rice production and 622 districts of 27 states for pulses production were identified.

**5. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) :** The scheme called Integrated Child Development Services was implemented by the Government of India in 1975. It has services provided by a network which we also know as Anganwadi center. Its main objective is to provide full-fledged food, health facilities and pre-school education to children below six years of age (with special attention to girls), pregnant women and lactating mothers by Anganwadi centers based on population parameters set in rural and urban areas. The basic features are to be provided in an integrated manner. Each Anganwadi center is responsible for the care of about 200 families. The goal of this scheme is to ensure physical, social and proper psychological development in children. Apart from this, reducing mortality, sickness and malnutrition etc. in children are also important objectives under this scheme. Establishing effective synergies for policy formulation and implementation in various departments to promote child development and to develop mothers' skills for the general health, nutrition and development needs and care of children through appropriate community education are also part of the scheme. There is a network of about 13.42 lakh Anganwadi centers in the country, through which ICDS is providing services to about 1045.08 lakh beneficiaries, of which around 849.4 lakh children are under six years of age. About 370.7 lakh children who are under 3-6 years of age are also provided pre-school education under this program. Therefore, the Anganwadi Center, run by the Government of India, is one of the largest and specialized programs in the world. At present, the Government of India is arranging modern information technology to develop it further so that data such as daily intake of food, adequate supply of food grains, health and supplementary nutrition in children can be uploaded online. Reduction of average daily calorie consumption in children can be reduced and maximum transparency can be brought in the implementation of the scheme.

## NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT (NFSA)

The National Food Security Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on 26 August 2013 and the Rajya Sabha on 2 September 2013. The bill was finally passed by the Government of India on 12 September 2013, which has ensured the judicial system of the right to food for the poor. Its main objective is to remove malnutrition and starvation from the country by providing cheap food grains to a large part of the total population of India. Under this Act, out of about 1.3 billion population of the country by the Government of India, about 70 percent of the poor people from rural areas and about 50 percent from urban areas, on the highest grant (subsidy) every month for very low prices of rice, wheat, coarse grains etc. But by providing, the country has to eradicate malnutrition and starvation. Under this, on the basis of 2011 Census, the State Governments have identified 3 families of rice and 2 kg of wheat or 5 kg of grains per person for three years by identifying poor families. After completion of three years, there is a provision to review this scheme. After its implementation, people living below the poverty line, rice, wheat and coarse grains were given Rs. 3, Rs. 2 respectively. And Rs. 1 is being provided at the rate of per kg. Apart from this, there is also a provision for giving food security allowance prescribed by the Center to the concerned State, Union or Union Government if there is no supply of food grains to the poor families identified by the states. To make this scheme more effective, formation of Vigilance Committees and grievance redressal mechanism at district level, use of Aadhar card for proper identification of beneficiaries, etc. Many good steps have been taken. After the National Food Security Act 2013 came into existence, the food security programs released earlier, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services and Public Distribution System have become even stronger.

## CONCLUSION

Barriers in ensuring food security and reducing hunger are due to faulty improper policy, inadequacies in design, monitoring and evaluation, ineffective governance and lack of political will. Mere economic development, improvement in food security, reduction in malnutrition and improvement in food intake by the poor are not enough. Food security will remain a challenge in a country with a large population like India without comprehensive reforms on various fronts and effective implementation reforms with necessary policy changes.

The Government of India has designed and implemented various programs like Public Distribution System, Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Nutrition Program, Mid Day Meal, ICDS etc. to enhance food security and has been successful to a remarkable extent but there remain serious challenges on many fronts. National Employment Generation Schemes and Self-employment Programs are also proving to be helpful in increasing access to food and nutrition. The Government of India wants to provide subsidized food to every weaker section of the country under the National Food Security Act. For this, better administration is necessary for effective operation of food based programs. There is a need to bring administration closer to the socio-economic environment and appropriate institutions are needed to improve governance. Also, it requires social mobilization, community participation and decentralization based approach. Appropriate institute is required for better implementation of these policies. In nutshell, despite ensuring adequate availability of food, the existence of food insecurity at micro level in the country remains a formidable challenge for India.

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