

## Food Problem in India

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### ABSTRACT

The Indian planners, right from the beginning, realized the need to attain self-sufficiency in food grains as one of the important goals of planning. The government realized that food surplus countries used food surplus as a weapon to force several countries to submit to their dictates. Prime Minister JAWAHARLAL NEHRU realized that it was with the great difficulty that India was able to avoid the political strings attached with the food aid, but it did hurt national pride. In one of his broadcasts to the nation, NEHRU stated very candidly “we have sought help from abroad... and we shall continue to do so under pressure of necessity, but the conviction is growing upon me more forcefully than ever how dangerous it is for us to depend for this prime necessary of life on foreign countries. It is only when we obtain self-sufficiency in food that we can progress and develop ourselves. Otherwise, there is continuous pressure of circumstances, there is trouble and misery and there is sometimes shame and humiliation “India is predominantly an agriculture economy. Yet she has been facing food problem since a long period. During Second World War India had experienced a severe food crisis, which had led to a phenomenal increase in the prices of food grains. we have unforgettable situation which is Bengal famine, which was taken place in 1943 it is a serious famine where nearly 3.5 million people died out of starvation for come out from these problems The government of India accorded top priority to agriculture under different five year plans, India’s first five year plan gave priority on agriculture for increasing in food production and achieve self sufficiency in food grains. As a result of this effort food grains production in India has increased significantly over the period of planning from 50.8 million tons in 1950-51 to peak level of 217 million tons in 2006-07. Now India claims to have achieved self sufficiency in food grains production. The National Food Security Bill, 2011, Twenty Seventh Report, which defines the meaning of food security, "Food security means availability of sufficient food grains to meet the domestic demand as well as access, at the individual level, to adequate quantities of food at affordable prices." The main aims of food security in India provide sufficient nutrition food for below poverty line people and uplift them from acute poverty. The main components of food security system in India are 1) increasing domestic food production. 2) minimum support price. 3) public distribution system. 4) buffer stocks. In India food is provided to poor people through the public distribution system that to in fair price shops at lower prices than market prices.

**KEYWORDS-** : under nutrition, FCI, hunger and food security.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines food security as a “situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. Agriculture is not only a source of the commodity food but, equally importantly, also a source of income. In a world where trade is possible at reasonably low cost, the crucial issue for food security is not whether food is “available,” but whether the

monetary and non monetary resources at the disposal of the population are sufficient to allow everyone access to adequate quantities of food.

India is now facing an acute shortage of food. Indian soil is unable to feed her growing population, for which huge quantities of food grains are imported from foreign countries like U.K. U.S.A., Australia and Burma. At present India is not only struggling to get balance of economic growth but also struggling to tackle the wide spread poverty and hunger. India's poor population amounts to more than 300 million people, with almost 30 percent of India's rural population living in poverty. The good news is, poverty has been on the decline in recent years. According to official government of India estimates, poverty declined from 37.2% in 2004-05 to 29.8% in 2009-10. Rural poverty declined by 8 percentage points from 41.8% to 33.8% and urban poverty by 4.8 percentage points from 25.7% to 20.9% over the same period (World Bank 2012). India is home to 25 percent of the world's hungry population.

In India an estimated 43 per cent of children under the age of five years are malnourished (WFP 2012). India remains an important global agricultural player, despite the fact that agriculture's share in the country's economy is declining. It has the world's largest area under cultivation for wheat, rice, and cotton, and is the world's largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices (World Bank 2012). Nearly three-quarters of India's households are dependent on rural incomes. Agricultural productivity in the country's semi-arid tropical region is impeded by water shortages and recurrent drought, while environmental degradation and vulnerability to weather-related disasters pose challenges to the country as a whole.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to analyze the various issues prevalent in India relating to Food problems. The other objectives are:

- 1) To study the nature of food problem in India.
- 2) To analyze the under nutrition in India
- 3) To know the food corporation of India's functions
- 4) To study the various Food Schemes in India

## III. NATURE OF FOOD PROBLEM IN INDIA

India's food problem has three broad features. They are as follows:

### 1) Demand and supply gap

Food supply in India is inadequate in relation to demand. The gap between food requirement and actual production are mainly due to

- a) A fast increasing demand for food grains and
- b) A slow increasing supply of food grains. The increase in demand for food grains is mainly due to increase in population, increase in per capita income and urbanization. On the other hand, a slow increase in supply of food grains is attributed to slow rise in productivity, inadequate market surplus, wastage in storage, hoarding and speculation, etc.

### 2) Deficient nutrient content

The second significance features of the food situation in India is that nutrient content in the food of an average India is deficient. Over 90 per cent of calorie supply of an average Indian comes from cereals, starchy roots, sugar and pulses. As result, the people are not only underfed but are also under-nourished and their efficiency is also low

### 3) High prices of food grains

The third important feature of the food problem in India is that the prices of food grains are very high. The poverty ridden average India face a lot of hardships while buying food grains with her low purchasing power. Thus, food situation in India can be better described as "full silos empty stomachs".

### How Food Corporation of India is Functioning to Tackle Food Problem in India

The Food Corporation of India was setup under the Food Corporation Act 1964, in order to fulfill following objectives of the Food Policy: Effective price support operations for safeguarding the interests of the farmers. Distribution of food grains throughout the country for public distribution system maintaining satisfactory level of operational and buffer stocks of food grains to ensure National Food Security FCI's Objectives are:

- 1) To provide farmers remunerative prices.
- 2) To make food grains available at reasonable prices, particularly to vulnerable section of the society.
- 3) To maintain buffer stocks as measure of Food Security.
- 4) To intervene in market for price stabilization

### Functions & Activities of Food Corporation of India

**STORAGE CONSTRUCTION:** FCI carries out the Storage construction Activities as per the annual plan approved by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, (Department Food & Public Distribution).

**Storage Capacity:** In the year 1965 the Storage Capacity taken over from Department of Food was a meagre 5.68 lakh tones. Presently the covered storage capacity available with FCI as on 31.05.2014 is 130 lakh tones. A covered capacity of 124.32 lakh tonnes has been added since 1965 by the Engineering Division of FCI. During the VI & VII Five Year Plan 50 lakh tonne capacity was created. Covered and Plinth (CAP) storage capacity created by Engineering Division is 26.00 lakh tonnes.

**Weighbridges:** When FCI took over the Department of Food 12 No. of weighbridges were existing at Depots. A policy decision was taken by the Management to provide Weighbridges in all the depots having a capacity of 5,000 tonnes and above. The total number of weighbridges existing as on 31.05.2014 is 644 Nos. Out of this 617 weighbridges are fully electronic. 11 weighbridges are under upgradation from Mechanical/Hybrid to Electronic type and balance is under process of upgradation.

**Railway Sidings:** Only 7 depots had railway siding facilities when FCI came into existence in the year 1965. As on date, (i.e upto May 2014) this number has gone upto a phenomenal 106. Almost all the high capacity depots and smaller depots with high turnover have been provided with railway siding facilities which have contributed to substantial savings on transit losses and better mode of foodgrain movement from one corner to another part of the country.

**Construction Of Staff Quarters/ Office Buildings:** Besides construction of food grain godowns/ railway siding, the Engineering division carries out the planning and supervision of the construction activities of FCI own staff quarters. FCI has built staff quarters at Borivilli, Manmad and Port Blair and barrack type accommodation in remote areas like Aizawl, Kolasib, Bhairabi under Mizoram, Bhalukpong under Arunachal Pradesh.

### Food Production and Per Capita Food Availability in India

The population of India is increasing at a rapid rate. Over a period of about five decades, India's population has multiplied by more than two and a-half times. This has resulted in an enlarged demand for food grains. In fact, there are two important aspects of consumption of food grains in India. Such as

- 1) There is increasing number of mouths to be fed.
- 2) The consumption pattern of people have been loaded in favor of cereals, special wheat and rice.

**Table-A:** total food grains production and per capita net availability of cereals and pulses

Year	Total production (million tons)	Cereals			Pulses	Per capita net availability per day (grams)		
		Net production (Mn.T)	Net imports (Mn.T)	Net availability (Mn.T)	Net availability (Mn.T)	Cereals	Pulses	Total
1951	50.8	40.1	4.1	44.3	8.0	334.2	60.7	394.9
1961	82.0	60.9	3.5	64.6	11.1	399.7	69.0	468.7
1971	108.4	84.5	2.0	84.0	10.3	417.6	51.2	468.8
1981	129.6	104.1	0.5	104.8	9.4	417.3	37.5	454.8
1991	176.4	141.9	-0.6	145.7	12.9	468.5	41.6	510.1
2001	196.8	162.5	-4.5	145.6	11.3	386.2	30.0	416.2
2002	212.0	174.5	-8.5	175.9	13.6	458.1	35.4	494.1
2003	174.8	143.2	-7.1	159.3	11.3	408.5	29.1	437.6
2006	208.6	170.8	-3.8	168.5	13.3	412.1	32.5	444.5

Source: Economic survey, 2007-08. P- Provisional

the data above the given table-A reveals that, food grains production has increased from 50.8 million tons in 1950-51 to 208.6 million tons in 2005-06 more than fourfold increase but in 1950-51 population was around 35 crore but in 2005-06 population is around 100 crore so population also increased how food production increased in this duration so it shows this production is not enough to our population. The net production of cereals has increased from 40.1 million tons in 1951 to 170.8 million tons in 2006- more than fourfold increase. Whereas,

net availability of pulses has seen a slow growth i.e., it was 8.0 million tons in 1951 and increased just 13.3 million tons in 2006.

According to FAO (Food Agriculture Organization) (state of food security in the world, 2003) estimate there were 213.7 million malnourished persons in India. The total number of malnourished persons in the world 860 million. This data reveal that almost one-fourth of the hungry people of world are found in India alone. In terms of nutritional status, about 50 percent of adults and 55 percent of children are undernourished. This persistence of hunger and malnutrition strongly justifies the need of more production and efficient management in food security in the country.

#### IV. FOOD PROBLEM IN INDIA

The most important challenge is to increase the energy intake of the bottom 30% of the population and at the same time facilitate diet diversification to meet micronutrient deficiency. The food gap can be met from the existing food grain stocks in the medium term and by increasing their purchasing power in the long run through increasing job opportunities. The micronutrient deficiency can be rectified through supplementary nutrition and supply of fortified food. There is also a need to improve the efficiency of the various food schemes initiated by the government and make it more available and free of corruption and urban bias.

However for those who are around the poverty line, this has to be understood as a distress phenomenon, as with marginal increase in their incomes over time they are forced to cut down on their food consumption to meet other pressing demands of health and education that were not considered important in the past. Food is still needed, but not demanded for lack of money. Endemic hunger continues to afflict a large proportion of Indian population. Internationally, India is shown to be suffering from alarming hunger, ranking 66 out of the 88 developing countries studied by IFPRI in 2008. India as part of the world community has pledged to halve hunger by 2015, as stated in the Millennium Development Goal 1, but the present trends show that this target is unlikely to be met

India is a poignant example of how food sufficiency at the aggregate level has not translated into food security at the household level. The revised thrust of the World Food Programme will be to bring the hungry, malnourished, and vulnerable within the ambit of human development.

Today, on the threshold of 60 momentous years of Independence, the nation is justifiably proud of its myriad achievements. Among these is the remarkable success in eliminating widespread famines and the impressive increases in food production. Nonetheless, there is a long road to be travelled before the vision of a truly food secure India is achieved. As the world's leading humanitarian agency and the food aid arm of the United Nations, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been privileged to work with the Government of India in its efforts to eliminate hunger and ensure food security to the poor. Although its assistance is small compared to the scale of the Government's own programmes, yet with its international outreach, and the experience gained globally, the WFP has a special niche in complementing and sharpening government efforts to eliminate hunger.

**Table-B** Number Of Undernourished People In India

State	Prevalence of calorie undernourishment (%)	Proportion of underweight children < 5 years (%)	Under-five mortality rate (%)	Hunger Index Score	Hunger Index Rank
Punjab	11.1	24.6	5.2	13.63	1
Kerala	28.6	22.7	1.6	17.63	2
Andhra Pradesh	19.6	32.7	6.3	19.53	3
Assam	14.6	36.4	8.5	19.83	4
Haryana	15.1	39.7	5.2	20.00	5
Tamil Nadu	29.1	30.0	3.5	20.87	6
Rajasthan	14.0	40.4	8.5	20.97	7
West Bengal	18.5	38.5	5.9	20.97	7
Uttar Pradesh	14.5	42.3	9.6	22.13	9
Maharashtra	27.0	36.7	4.7	22.80	10
Karnataka	28.1	37.6	5.5	23.73	11

Orissa	21.4	40.9	9.1	23.80	12
Gujarat	23.3	44.7	6.1	24.70	13
Chhattisgarh	23.3	47.6	9.0	26.63	14
Bihar	17.3	56.1	8.5	27.30	15
Jharkhand	19.6	57.1	9.3	28.67	16
Madhya Pradesh	23.4	59.8	9.4	30.87	17
India	20.0	42.5	7.4	23.30	-
China	-	-	-	7.1	-
Vietnam	-	-	-	12.6	-
Sri Lanka	-	-	-	15.0	-
Nepal	-	-	-	20.6	-
Pakistan	-	-	-	21.7	-
Bangladesh	-	-	-	25.2	-
Zimbabwe	-	-	-	23.8	-

Source: India State Hunger Index, IFPRI 2008

The above table-B shows some ideas of the variation among major states and also gives how India is placed as a whole in relation to other Asian countries. It is evident that India's performance with respect to hunger is abysmal particularly in relation to other large developing countries like China, but even in comparison to the rest of South Asia, with only Bangladesh having a higher value of the index. Indeed, India's index value is close to that of Zimbabwe, a country which is in the throes of severe hyperinflation and collapse of domestic food markets. Within India, some of the supposedly richest states with most rapid recent growth of GDP, such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat, perform very poorly on the hunger index, clearly much worse than Kerala but even worse than Assam. West Bengal is close to the middle among the major states, and slightly below the national average in terms of the hunger index, which means that it is an important policy concern also within this state.

### Causes of food problem in India

The following are the principle causes of food-problem in India

- 1) Poverty and ignorance of Indian farmers
- 2) Tillers are not in feasts and picnics
- 3) Wastage of food in feasts and picnics
- 4) Wastage of food in wrong process of cooking
- 5) Wastage of food for ignorance preserving method

**Food Schemes in India:** India has the largest food schemes in the World

- 1) **Entitlement Feeding Programmes**
  - a) Integrated Child Development Services ( ICDS ) (All Children under six, Pregnant and lactating mother)
  - b) Mid day meal scheme (MDMS) (All Primary School children)
- 2) **Food Subsidy Programmes**
  - a) Targeted Public Distribution System (35 kgs'/ month of subsidized food grains)
  - b) Annapurna (10 kgs' of free food grain for destitute poor)
- 3) **Employment Programmes**
  - a) National Rural Employment Scheme (100 days of employment at minimum wages)
- 4) **Social Safety Net Programmes**
  - a) National Old Age Pension Scheme (Monthly pension to BPL)
  - b) National Family Benefit Scheme (Compensation in case of death of bread winner to BPL families)

## V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Food insecurity and hunger is caused by a large number of factors and hence solutions too have to be multi-sectoral in nature. First, revamp small holder agriculture. Because of stagnating growth in agriculture after the mid-1990s there has been employment decline, income decline and hence a fall in aggregate demand by the rural poor. The most important intervention that is needed is greater investment in irrigation, power, and roads in the poorer regions. It is essential to realize the potential for production surpluses in Central and Eastern India where the concentration of poverty is increasing.

First, increased water availability and reduced soil erosion increases production on small and marginal farmers' lands. And last, the higher productivity of Common Property Resources improves access of the poor to more fodder, fuelwood, water and NTFPs. NREGA assets should be monitored for at least five years to establish their links with drought proofing and enhanced availability of water. Second, launch massive watershed development programmes in central India, where most tribes live. In a successful watershed programme the poor benefit in three ways. First, as the net sown area and crop intensity increases more opportunities for wage employment are created, which may also increase the wage rate besides the number of days of employment.

Third, start a drive to plant fruit trees on degraded forests and homestead lands that belong to or have been allotted to the poor. This will not only make the poor people's diet more nutritious, but will also diversify their livelihoods and reduce seasonal vulnerability.

Fourth, improve the skills of the poor for market oriented jobs, so that they are absorbed in the sunrise industries such as hospitality, security, health, and construction.

Last, India requires a significant increase of targeted investments in nutrition programmes, clinics, disease control, irrigation, rural electrification, rural roads, and other basic investments, especially in rural India, where the current budgetary allocations are inadequate. Higher public investments in these areas need to be accompanied by systemic reforms that will overhaul the present system of service delivery, including issues of control and oversight. Outlays should not be considered as an end in itself. Delivery of food based schemes requires increasing financial resources, but more importantly the quality of public expenditures in these areas. This in turn requires improving the governance, productivity and accountability of government machinery.

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