

## JUSTIFICATION OF FOOD SECURITY IN INDIAN ECONOMY

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### ABSTRACT

Availability of proper food for every one basically have-nots groups of society is concern as food security in India. Household food security exists when all members, at all times, have access to enough food for an active, healthy life Individuals who are food secure do not live in hunger or fear of starvation Food insecurity, on the other hand, is a situation of limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. The basic question regarding problem of food security in India is as-

- Requirement vs Availability
- Nutritional value vs Reasonable price

### INTRODUCTION\*

An Attempt has been made in this paper to present an overview about “**Justification of Food Security in Indian Economy.**” The paper is divided into Four Sections. Section First Covers a brief Introduction about the theme. Section second deals that **Food Security Programme is not a proper Economics** in India. In Section third Nets of Food Security in India are discussed. The Paper concludes with section four which gives some suggestions about policy makers for betterment of food security in India. Food availability relates to the supply of food through production, distribution, and exchange. High economic growth rates have failed to improve food security in India leaving the country facing a crisis in its rural economy. According to the United States department of agriculture (USDA). Food security

incorporates a measure of resilience to future disruption or unavailability of critical food supply due to various risk factors including droughts, shipping disruptions, fuel shortages, economic instability, and wars. In the years 2011-2013, an estimated 842 million people were suffering from chronic hunger. The FAO identified the four pillars of food security as availability, access, utilization, and stability. The United Nations (UN) recognized the right to food in the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and has since noted that it is vital for the enjoyment of all other rights. The bill signed into law in September of this year makes the state responsible for providing subsidized food grains to approximately 230 million of Indians. India’s landmark Right to Food Bill known as National Food Security Bill of 2013 gave historical background of the bill and talked in details about provisions and

weaknesses of the bill. Four pillars of food security are-

- Availability,
- Access,
- Utilization,
- Stability

No doubt in India availability of food grains is not a big problem, but its proper utilization is a serious problem. The ambitious proposal should be seen in the context of India being home to roughly one third of the world's poor; where over 70 per cent of children are malnourished and about 10 million or more people die of chronic hunger or hunger-related diseases every year. The Food Security Bill, the UPA-II's flagship scheme, envisages the distribution of wheat, rice and coarse grains at just Rs 2, Rs 3 and Re1 a kilo each to about 65 per cent of the population — 75 per cent of them in rural areas and the rest in cities and towns. Add to that, some entitlements to 'special groups,' like destitute or homeless persons, who will be entitled to at least one meal a day. Through this world's largest experiment of providing food grain to poor, the government plans to double its food subsidies to 2 per cent of the GDP. If the government machinery is able to deliver this project, it could mean the end to country's widespread malnutrition and poverty relatively soon! "It's a most thoughtful and timely action, in the light of coming times. Then what is the clamour all about? Why are some people hell-bent on opposing it? The general view is that if the government can pull it off, it can be the biggest trump card for the UPA government, at a time when nothing seems to be working in its favour at the moment neither politics nor Economics.

Food security has always been of concern in developing countries but off late a new concept of healthy food has slowly crept into the minds of economically well off and health conscious people. A further improvisation of organic foods- few industrialists and entrepreneurs who afford the means have started cultivating food items for their dining tables under their own strict vigil. By way of comparison, in one of the largest food producing countries in the world, the United States,

approximately one out of six people are "food insecure", including 17 million children, according to the United States department of agriculture. A 2012 study in the *Journal of Applied Research on Children* found that rates of food security varied significantly by race, class, and education. In both kindergarten and third grade, 8% of the children were classified as food insecure, but only 5% of white children were food insecure, while 12% and 15% of black and Hispanic children were food insecure, respectively. In third grade, 13% of black and 11% of Hispanic children are food insecure compared to 5% of white children.

## FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME IS NOT A PROPER ECONOMICS

Governments with strong tendencies can undermine food security even when harvests are good. When government monopolizes trade, farmers may find that they are free to grow cash crops for export, but under penalty of law only able to sell their crops to government buyers at prices far below the world market price. The government then is free to sell their crop on the world market at full price, pocketing the difference. This creates an artificial *poverty traps* from which even the hardest working and motivated farmers may not escape. "India's inequality (gender, caste, religion, class) explains why India has been less successful than other countries. For example, within a family a woman eats least and last. Born in a dalit caste closes many opportunities of livelihood and exposes you to much exploitation. If a child is not properly breast-fed in the first 6 months of her life then the process of malnourishment is irreversible." Similarly we say that Muslims are now at the same level of backwardness as Dalits. Some Activists have been arguing for a local control of food production as one of the possible solution to hunger. There are three ways a household can access food: *produce, buy, or provisioned by the state*. But, one very important factor worth taking notice is: the scheme can severely impact on India's economic growth prospects, should the populist measure be brought

into force. Due to Food Security Bill India's inflation risk remains high and a slowdown in revenue collections and higher spending on subsidies may make it challenging for the government to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 4.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Economy watchers say, both these deficits will only bloat immensely in due course, should the bill be passed and implemented. But, it is the trade deficit, which will soar manifold since the government will have to resort to large scale import of food grain as our own grain output is not adequate to handle such a voluminous expenditure programme. "It will worsen the fiscal deficit situation, but more than that it is India's trade deficit which will be hit hard as the programme will require 70-80 million tonnes of more food grain every year. India obviously does not produce that much and the shortfall will have to be met from imports. The country produces 225-230 million tonnes of food grain every year barring a bumper crop year when the output surges by a few million tonnes more. Where will the rest come from, if not from overseas market! It will increase food inflation.

## NETS OF FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

Food Security Bill makes the State legally responsible for provisioning food for those who are hungry and malnourished. Food security in India 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. High economic growth rates have failed to improve food security in India leaving the country facing a crisis in its rural economy. Some main nets of Food Security in India are as-

- Public distribution system in India (PDS)
- Integrated child development services (ICDS)
- Mid day meal programme (MDM)

Subsidies on food and agriculture have shot up and bumper crops have been harvested, but instead of bringing down food prices, it seems to have had the opposite effect. Farmers are being paid more than double than what they were 10 years ago for their food grain, and retail prices of food have gone up — but they are still committing suicide. It is not a perfect Bill and has been variously criticised for low food entitlements, inadequate attention to nutrition, too much discretion to state governments in identifying beneficiaries, a poor grievance redresses mechanism and providing scope for substituting the Public Distribution system (PDS) with cash transfers. The food ministry estimates that the subsidy bill in the current year is likely to cross Rs 1.3 lakh crore. And even this is inadequate, according to a paper by the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, which puts the cost at Rs 2.41 lakh crore in the first year of implementation. Over three years, it says, the outlay will be Rs 6.82 lakh crore, including the Rs 1.1 lakh crore required for up scaling food production. Whatever the figure, the fact is that every year, the minimum support price (MSP) will go up and impact the food subsidy bill. Since 2003-04, MSPs of wheat and rice have more than doubled, from Rs 640 to Rs 1,350 per quintal in the case of wheat, and from Rs 550 to Rs 1,250 for paddy. But the food subsidy bill has gone up more than three times in the same period, from Rs 25,181 crore to Rs 85,000 crore. This is because handling and storage costs have gone up as well. Some problems regarding food security in India are as-

- Burden of food subsidy.
- In spite of surplus food-grains stock, it is also a reality that a vast number of people do not have enough money to feed them twice a day. Even, 30% of the people of India are below the poverty line.
- Less food grains range.
- There has been a gradual shift from cultivation of food crops to cultivation of fruits, vegetables, oil seeds, and crops which act also as industrial raw materials. This had led to the reduction in net sown area under cereals, millets, and pulses.

- Lack of proper food availability due to improper use of fertile agricultural land.
- The use of more and more land for construction of factories, ware-houses and shelters has reduced the land under cultivation and now fertile land for farming, is no longer available.
- Problem of food holdings.
- The productivity of land has started showing a declining trend. Fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides, which once showed dramatic results, are now being held responsible for reducing fertility of the soil.
- Nutrition plan unsatisfactory.
- Corrupt PDS system in India.

## CONCLUSION

If food security is a complex objective, pursued with others (shelter, safety, health, self-esteem), in a world where individual households face diverse, complex and different livelihood opportunities, what role can policy possibly play? Can governments ever know enough to act? We consider the two best-known facts about India's food economy. On the one hand, 42 percent of our little children are malnourished. On the other, our godowns are bursting with food grain. Can we join the dots by drawing a straight line from the warehouse to the homes of the hungry? That's only the most obvious of our food system's glaring contradictions. However, there's no argument against a framework law on the right to food per se. If a small farmer could get food grain for as little as Rs 1 per kg, as proposed in the food security bill, why should he bother to grow his own? And what would happen in a bad crop year, or successive bad years? Policymakers clearly have little idea how much implementing the Right to Food will cost. In the current year, Finance minister P Chidambaram has allocated only Rs 90,000 crore towards the food subsidy, of which Rs 10,000 crore is the additional amount for implementing the food security bill. India is sufficient food grains, and may not be forced to be importing it, but if food is provided at the subsidies

rates, government is expected to carry subsidy will burden. In this reference if we really want to secure poorer to availability of food, we have to change our consumptions & production patterns, because proper food availability is a necessary condition for food security in India.

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