

Chapter 4 Food Security in India

1. What is food security?

Food security means availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times. The poor households are more vulnerable to food insecurity whenever there is a problem of production or distribution of food crops. Food security depends on the Public Distribution System (PDS), Government vigilance and action at times when this security is threatened.

2. What are the dimensions of Food Security?

(a) *Availability of food* means food production within the country, food imports and the previous year's stock stored in government granaries.

(b) *Accessibility* means food is within reach of every person. There is no barrier on access to food.

(c) *Affordability* implies that an individual has enough money to buy sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet one's dietary needs.

3. What happens to the supply of food when there is a disaster or a calamity?

Due to a natural calamity, say drought, total production of food grains decreases. It creates a shortage of food in the affected areas. Due to shortage of food, the prices go up. At the high prices, some people cannot afford to buy food. If such calamity happens in a very wide spread area or is stretched over a longer time period, it may cause a situation of starvation. A massive starvation might take a turn of famine.

4. What is famine?

A Famine is characterized by wide spread deaths due to starvation and epidemics caused by forced use of contaminated water or decaying food and loss of body resistance due to weakening from starvation.

5. A section of people in India are still without food. Explain. Or Why is food security needed in India?

Even today, there are places like Kalahandi and Kashipur in Orissa where famine-like conditions have been existing for many years and where some starvation deaths have also been reported. Starvation deaths are also reported in Baran district of Rajasthan, Palamau district of Jharkhand and many other remote areas during the recent years. Therefore, food security is needed in a country to ensure food at all times.

6. Who are the people more prone to food insecurity in India?

i) Although a large section of people suffer from food and nutrition insecurity in India, the worst affected groups are landless people with little or no land to depend upon, traditional artisans, providers of traditional services, petty self-employed workers and destitutes including beggars.

ii) In the urban areas, the food insecure families are those whose working members are generally employed in ill-paid occupations and casual labour market. These workers are largely engaged in seasonal activities and are paid very low wages that just ensure bare survival.

iii) The SCs, STs and some sections of the OBCs (lower castes among them) who have either poor land-base or very low land productivity are prone to food insecurity.

7. What are the various factors that play important role in food insecurity?

- a) **Economic backwardness:** Write points i and ii above
- b) **Social Composition:** The social composition along with the inability to buy food also plays a role in food insecurity. The SCs, STs and some sections of the OBCs (lower castes among them) who have either poor land-base or very low land productivity are prone to food insecurity.
- c) **Regional backwardness:** The food insecure people are disproportionately large in some regions of the country, such as economically backward states with high incidence of poverty, tribal and remote areas, regions more prone to natural disasters etc. In fact, the states of Uttar Pradesh (eastern and south-eastern parts), Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Chattisgarh, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra account for largest number of food insecure people in the country.
- d) **Hunger:** Hunger is another aspect indicating food insecurity. Hunger is not just an expression of poverty, it brings about poverty. The attainment of food security therefore involves eliminating current hunger and reducing the risks of future hunger.

8. What are the dimensions of hunger? Or Differentiate between chronic and seasonal hunger.

- i) Chronic hunger is a consequence of diets persistently inadequate in terms of quantity and / or quality. Poor people suffer from chronic hunger because of their very low income and in turn inability to buy food even for survival.
- ii) Seasonal hunger is related to cycles of food growing and harvesting. This is prevalent in rural areas because of the seasonal nature of agricultural activities and in urban areas because of the casual labour. season. This type of hunger exists when a person is unable to get work for the entire year.

9. How has the Green Revolution made India self-sufficient in food grains?

- i) In Punjab and Haryana, where foodgrain production jumped from 7.23 million tonnes in 1964–65 to reach an all-time high of 30.33 million tonnes in 1995–96.
- ii) Since the advent of the Green revolution in the early-'70s, the country has avoided famine even during adverse weather conditions.
- iii) India has become self-sufficient in foodgrains during the last thirty years because of a variety of crops grown all over the country.
- iv) In July 2002, the stock of wheat and rice with FCI was 63 million tones which was much more than the minimum buffer norms of 24.3 million tonnes.

10. What are the two components of food security system in India?

- (a) **Buffer stock:** Buffer Stock is the stock of foodgrains, namely wheat and rice procured by the government through **Food Corporation of India (FCI)**. The FCI purchases wheat and rice from the farmers in states where there is surplus production. The farmers are paid a pre-announced price for their crops.
- (b) **Public distribution system:** The food procured by the FCI is distributed through government regulated ration shops among the poorer section of the society. This is called the public distribution system (PDS). Ration shops are now present in most localities, villages, towns and cities. There are about 4.6 lakh ration shops all over the country. Ration shops also known as **Fair Price Shops** keep stock of food grains, sugar, kerosene oil for cooking. These items are sold to people at a price lower than the market price.

11. What is Minimum Support price?

The FCI purchases wheat and rice from the farmers in states where there is surplus production. The farmers are paid a pre-announced price for their crops. This price is called Minimum Support Price. The MSP is declared by the government every year before the sowing season to provide incentives to the farmers for raising the production of these crops.

12. Why is a buffer stock created by the government?

This is done to distribute food grains in the deficit areas and among the poorer strata of society at a price lower than the market price also known as **Issue Price**. This also helps resolve the problem of shortage of food during adverse weather conditions or during the periods of calamity.

13. Why was rationing introduced in India?

The introduction of **Rationing** in India dates back to the 1940s against the backdrop of the Bengal famine. The rationing system was revived in the wake of an acute food shortage during the 1960s, prior to the Green Revolution.

14. Name the three important food intervention programmes introduced by the Government in India in mid-1970s.

Public Distribution System (PDS) for food grains ; Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (introduced in 1975 on an experimental basis) and Food-for-Work (FFW) (introduced in 1977–78).

15. What is the current status of PDS in India? (What are the different types of PDS?)

i) Public Distribution System (PDS) is the most important step taken by the Government of India towards ensuring food security. In the beginning the coverage of PDS was

universal with no discrimination between the poor and non-poor.

ii) Over the years, the policy related to PDS has been revised to make it more efficient and targeted.

iii) In 1992, Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced in 1,700 blocks in the country. The target was **to provide the benefits of PDS to remote and backward areas**.

iv) From June 1997, in a renewed attempt, Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced to adopt the principle of targeting the **'poor in all areas'**. It was for the first time that a differential price policy was adopted for poor and non-poor.

v) Further, in 2000, **two special schemes** were launched viz., Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and the Annapurna Scheme (APS) with special target groups

16. Name the two special schemes introduced in 2000, targeting 'poorest of the poor' and the needy poor senior citizens.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Annapurna Scheme (APS)

17. What are the achievements (or importance) of Public Distribution system?

- i) The PDS has proved to be the most effective instrument of government policy over the years in stabilising prices and making food available to consumers at affordable prices.
- ii) It has been instrumental in averting widespread hunger and famine by supplying food from surplus regions of the country to the deficit ones.
- iii) In addition, the prices have been under revision in favour of poor households in general.
- iv) The system, including the minimum support price and procurement has contributed to an increase in food grain production and provided income security to farmers in certain regions.

18. What are the criticisms faced by the PDS in India? Or What are the factors that led to the decline of the PDS?

- i) Instances of hunger are prevalent despite overflowing granaries. FCI godowns are overflowing with grains, with some rotting away and some being eaten by rats.
- ii) PDS dealers are sometimes found resorting to malpractices like diverting the grains to open market to get better margin, selling poor quality grains at ration shops, irregular opening of the shops, etc.
- iii) It is common to find that ration shops regularly have unsold stocks of poor quality grains left. This has proved to be a big problem. When ration shops are unable to sell, a massive stock of food grains piles up with the FCI.
- iv) Now, the issuing of three types of ration cards and TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System) of three different prices, any family above the poverty line gets very little discount at the ration shop. The price for APL(Above Poverty Line_ family is almost as high as open market price, so there is little incentive for them to buy these items from the ration shop.

19. Prove by giving examples that the PDS is not as effective as expected in many states in India.

- i) The average consumption of PDS grain at the all-India level is only 1 kg per person per month. The average consumption figure is as low as less than 300 gm per person per month in the states of Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh.
- ii) In contrast, the average consumption in most of the southern states like Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh is in the range of 3–4 kgs per person per month. As a result the poor have to depend on markets rather than the ration shops for their food needs.
- iii) In Madhya Pradesh only 5% of wheat and rice consumption of the poor are met through the ration shops. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar the percentage is still lower.

20. Explain the role of cooperatives in the food security in India.

- i) The cooperative societies set up shops to sell low priced goods to poor people. For example, out of all fair price shops running in Tamil Nadu, around 94 per cent are being run by the cooperatives.
- ii) In Delhi, Mother Dairy is making strides in provision of milk and vegetables to the consumers at controlled rate decided by Government of Delhi.
- iii) Amul is another success story of cooperatives in milk and milk products from Gujarat. It has brought about the White Revolution in the country. These are a few examples of many more cooperatives running in different parts of the country ensuring food security of different sections of society. Continue ...

21. Explain the food security intervention programmes in Maharashtra.

In Maharashtra, Academy of Development Science (ADS) has facilitated a network of NGOs for setting up grain banks in different regions. ADS organises training and capacity building programmes on food security for NGOs. Grain Banks are now slowly taking shape in different parts of Maharashtra. ADS efforts to set up Grain Banks, to facilitate replication through other NGOs and to influence the Government's policy on food security are thus paying rich dividends. The ADS Grain Bank programme is acknowledged as a successful and innovative food security intervention.

22. What has our government done to provide food security to the poor?

Discuss any two schemes launched by the government? Or How is food security ensured in India? (Explain Buffer Stock, PDS, or Rationing)

23. Write any two consequences of procurement of food grains at Minimum Support Price (MSP) ?

i) There is a general consensus that high level of buffer stocks of food grains is very undesirable and can be wasteful. The storage of massive food stocks has been responsible for high carrying costs, in addition to wastage and deterioration in grain quality..

ii) As the procurement is concentrated in a few prosperous regions (Punjab, Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and to a lesser extent in West Bengal) and mainly of two crops— wheat and rice— increase in MSP has induced farmers, particularly in surplus states, to divert land from production of coarse grains, which is the staple food of the poor, to the production of rice and wheat.

iii) The intensive utilization of water in the cultivation of rice has also led to environmental degradation and fall in the water level, threatening the sustainability of the agricultural development in these states.