

Revision Notes
Chapter-4
FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

Food security means availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times.

Availability : Food production in the country, import of food

Accessibility : Food within the reach of every person

Affordability : To have enough money to buy sufficient amount of food.

Food security

The poorest section of the society remains food insecure all the times. People above poverty line might also feel food insecure in times of natural calamity like earthquake, drought, flood, tsunami, etc.

Natural calamities may lead to starvation. Starvation in longer run turns into famine.

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

Food-insecure in rural areas, the worst affected people are: landless and small farmers, traditional artisans (weavers, potters, blacksmith etc.) providers of services(e.g. barbers, washer men etc), petty self-employed workers and destitute. In the urban areas, persons employed in ill-paid occupations and casual labourers are food insecure.

The social composition also plays a role in food insecurity. The SCs, STs and some sections of OBC (lower castes) who are landless or with low land productivity are prone to be food insecure.

Large proportion of pregnant and nursing mothers and children under the age of 5 years constitute an important segment of the food insecure population.

- **Hunger:** Hunger has chronic and seasonal dimensions. Poor people suffer from chronic hunger and are food insecure all the times. Seasonal hunger is caused by the seasonal nature of agricultural activities in rural areas. In urban areas, seasonal hunger occurs because of the casual type of work. Thus, **seasonal hunger exists when people are unable to get work for the whole year.**

Need for self-sufficiency in food grains.

- Our government since Independence realised the need to attain self-sufficiency in food grains because India experienced acute shortage of food grains after partition of the country in 1947.

The need for self-sufficiency arises from the following:

(a) to feed rising population

(b) to fight against droughts, floods, cyclone, etc.

(c) to reduce import of food grains

(d) to control prices of food grains.

- **Food Security System in India.** Since the advent of the Green Revolution in the 1960s the country has avoided famine, even during adverse weather conditions.
- Punjab and Haryana has shown very impressive growth in food production with 7.23 million tonnes in 1964-65 to a record 218 million tonnes in 2009-10.
- India has become self-sufficient in food grains during the last 30 years because of the variety of crops grown all over the country. Also, we have developed a food security system.
- Still a few states have lagged behind in food production.e.g. Orissa.

Buffer Stock: Buffer stock is the stock of food grains (wheat and rice) procured by the government through the Food Corporation of India (FCI). The FCI purchases wheat and rice for the government from the farmers of surplus states at pre-announced prices. This price is called 'minimum support price'.

The food is distributed to the poorer strata of society at lower price than market place is known as Issue price.

Public Distribution System (PDS)

PDS refers to a system through which the food procured by the FCI is distributed among the poor through government regulated ration shops. Ration shops are also called as fair price shops. The consumers are issued ration cards.

Rationing was introduced in India around 1940 after the Bengal famine.

Kinds of Ration Cards. There are three kinds of ration cards :

- (a) Antyodaya cards for the poorest of the poor,
- (b) BPL cards for those below poverty line and,
- (c) APL cards for those above poverty line.

Three Important Food Intervention Programmes. In the wake of high incidence of poverty levels in mid-1970s, three important food intervention programmes were introduced:

- (a) Public Distribution System (in existence earlier)
- (b) Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in 1975
- (c) Food for work in 1977-78.

In 2000, two special schemes were launched viz. Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and the **Annapurna scheme** (APS) with special target groups of the poorest of the poor and indigent senior citizens, respectively.

PDS has proved to be the most effective for stabilising prices and making food available to consumers at affordable prices.

But it has faced severe criticism on several grounds.

Granaries are full but hunger prevails. Some of the grains gets rotten or eaten by rats.

Excessive Food Stocks: In July 2002, the stock of wheat and rice with FCI was 63 million tonnes which was much more than the minimum buffer norms of 24.3 million tonnes. The stock reduced thereafter but always remained higher than the buffer norms.

Paradox of Excess Stocks and Starvation: In fact, India has experienced a paradoxical situation in recent years. While the granaries (godowns) of the government are overflowing with excess stocks of food, we also find people without food. The main reason for this unfortunate situation is that many poor families do not have enough money or income to buy food. Sometimes PDS dealers are resorting to malpractice.

In southern and western parts of the country the cooperatives are playing an important role in food security.

Mother's dairy, Amul are some of the success stories.

In Maharashtra Academy of Development Science has facilitated a network of NGOs and set up grain banks.