

Food Security in India Class

Exercise : Solutions of Questions on Page Number : 53

Q1 :

How is food security ensured in India?

Answer :

Food security is ensured in a country when the three dimensions of food security are taken care of. The three dimensions are:

Availability of food - Presence of enough food for all the persons

Accessibility of food - Absence of barrier on access to food

Affordability of food - Capability of all persons to buy food of acceptable quality Food security has been ensured in India because of the following factors.

- (i) **Self-sufficiency** of food grains - India has become self-sufficient in food grains (as was its aim since Independence) during the last thirty years. This has been because of a variety of crops grown all over the country.
- (ii) **Food-security system**- The availability of food grains has been ensured by the government with the help of a carefully designed food-security system. This system involves the maintenance of a *buffer stock* of food grains, and the distribution of this food among the poorer sections of the society with the help of a *public distribution system*.
- (iii) Implementation of several **poverty-alleviation programmes** having an explicit food security component - Apart from the distribution of food through fair-price shops, the government has come up with several poverty-alleviation programmes that enhance food security; for example, mid-day meals and food-for-work.
- (iv) Involvement of **cooperatives and NGOs**- In addition to the role of the government in ensuring food security, various cooperatives and NGOs are also working intensively towards this direction. Mother Dairy and Amul are two examples of cooperatives involved in ensuring food security.

Q2 :

Which are the people more prone to food insecurity?

Answer :

A large section of people suffer from food and nutrition insecurity in India. However, the worst affected groups areas follows:

- (i) Landless and land-poor households, traditional artisans, providers of traditional services, petty self-employed workers and destitute including beggars (in the rural areas)
- (ii) People employed in ill-paid occupations and casual labourers engaged in seasonal activities (in the urban areas)
- (iii) People belonging to the backward sections of society, namely SCs, STs and OBCs
- (iv) People belonging to economically-backward states with high incidence of poverty, tribal and remote areas and regions more prone to natural disasters
- (v) People affected by natural disasters who have to migrate to other areas in search of work
- (vi) Large proportion of pregnant and nursing mothers, and children under the age of 5 years

Q3 :

Which states are more food insecure in India?

Answer :

The economically-backward states with high incidence of poverty are more food insecure in India. The states of Uttar Pradesh (eastern and south-eastern parts), Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Chattisgarh, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra account for the largest number of food insecure people in the country.

Q4 :

Do you believe that Green Revolution has made India self-sufficient in food grains? How?

Answer :

In the late 1960s, the Green Revolution introduced the Indian farmer to the cultivation of high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of seeds. The HYVs (coupled with chemical fertilisers and pesticides) led to a growth in the productivity of food grains (especially wheat and rice), thereby helping India attain self-sufficiency in food grains. Since the advent of the Green Revolution, the country has avoided famine even during adverse weather conditions.

Q5 :

A section of people in India are still without food. Explain.

Answer :

The food insecure: A large section of people in India suffer from food and nutrition insecurity. This group of 'the food insecure' includes landless agricultural labourers and small farmers, casual labourers in the urban areas, people belonging to the backward social sections such as the SCs, STs and OBCs, people belonging to the backward regions, migrants and a large proportion of pregnant and nursing mothers, and children under the age of five years.

Government's efforts: The government has played a key role in ensuring food security for the poorest sections of society through various schemes such as the public distribution system, mid-day meals, food-for-work and rural employment guarantee. However, due to certain failings, a number of people still go without food.

Three dimensions of food security: Food security is ensured by ensuring food availability, accessibility and affordability. When either of these dimensions of food security is neglected, the overall system of food security gets adversely affected.

Negative effect on food availability: Through the Food Corporation of India, the government purchases food grains from states with surplus production. These food grains are stored in granaries and distributed in the food-deficit areas and among the poorer strata of society under the various government schemes. However, instances of hunger are prevalent despite overflowing granaries. The storage of massive food stocks has more often than not led to wastage of grains and deterioration in their quality. As a result, the availability of food grains is affected.

The increase in the minimum support prices (prices at which the government buys food grains from farmers) of rice and wheat has induced farmers to divert land from the production of coarse grains - the staple food of the poor - to the production of these crops. This again affects the availability of food.

Indian agriculture is largely dependent on the unpredictable monsoons. Only a small part of the national cultivable land is well irrigated. During times of delayed or low rains, the overall productivity and availability of food grains gets negatively affected.

Negative effect on food accessibility and affordability The food procured by the government is distributed via the fair-price shops at a price lower than market price. However, most public-distribution-system dealers resort to malpractices like diverting food grains to open market to make profits, selling poor quality grains at ration shops, irregular opening of the shops, etc. Such actions make safe and nutritious food inaccessible and unaffordable for many of the poor.

Lack of proper monitoring of schemes: The lack of proper implementation and proper targeting of many of the poverty-alleviation programmes have led to their lack of effectiveness in ensuring food security. Despite good intentions, many of the schemes

of the government have not reached the deserving poor. Hence, a great number of people are still food insecure.

Q6 :

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

Answer :

When there is a disaster or a calamity, the production of food grains decreases in the affected area. This in turn creates a shortage of food in the area. Due to the food shortage, the prices go up. The raised prices of food materials affect the capacity of many people to buy the same. When the calamity occurs in a very wide spread area or is stretched over a long period of time, it may cause a situation of starvation. A massive starvation can take the form of famine.

Q7 :

Differentiate between seasonal hunger and chronic hunger.

Answer :

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 (e.g., there is less work for casual construction labour during the rainy season). This type of hunger exists when a person is unable to get work for the entire year.

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.

Q8 :

What has our government done to provide food security to the poor? Discuss any two schemes launched by the government?

Answer :

The government has ensured the availability of food grains with the help of a carefully designed food-security system. This system involves the maintenance of a buffer stock of food grains, and the distribution of this food among the poorer sections of the society with the help of a public distribution system. The government has also come up with several poverty-alleviation and food-intervention programmes that enhance food security; for example, the Antyodaya Anna Yojana and the National Food for Work Programme.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana

- (i) Launched in December 2000, it caters to the families below poverty level.
- (ii) Under this scheme, one crore of the poorest among the BPL families covered under the targeted public distribution system were identified.
- (iii) Twenty-five kilograms of food grains were made available to each eligible family at a highly subsidised rate (Rs 2 per kg for wheat and Rs 3 per kg for rice)
- (iv) The quantity of food grains was enhanced from 25 to 35 kgs with effect from April 2002.
- (v) The scheme was expanded twice to include a greater number of BPL families. By August 2004, 2 crore families were covered under this scheme.

National Food for Work Programme

- (i) Launched in November 2004, it caters to 150 most backward districts of the country.
- (ii) Its objective is to intensify the generation of supplementary wage employment.
- (iii) Any rural poor in need of wage employment and having the desire to do manual unskilled work can avail of this programme.
- (iv) It is a 100 per cent Centrally-sponsored scheme. The food grains are provided to the States free of cost.
- (v) The district collector is entrusted with the overall responsibility of planning, implementation, coordination, monitoring and supervision.

Q9 :

Why is a buffer stock created by the government?

Answer :

A buffer stock of food grains is created by the government so as to distribute the procured food grains in the food-deficit areas and among the poorer strata of society at a price lower than the market price. A buffer stock helps resolve the problem of shortage of food during adverse weather conditions or during periods of calamity.

Q10 :

Write notes on:

- (a) Minimum support price**
- (b) Buffer stock**
- (c) Issue price**
- (d) Fair-price shops**

Answer :

(a) Minimum support price- It is the pre-announced price at which the government purchases food grains from the farmers in order to create a buffer stock. The minimum support price is declared by the government every year before the growing season. This provides incentives to the farmers for raising the production of the crops.

The rising minimum support prices of rice and wheat have induced farmers to divert land from the production of coarse grains - the staple food of the poor - to the production of these crops. The rising minimum support prices have raised the maintenance cost of procuring food grains.

(b) Buffer stock- It is the stock of food grains (usually wheat and rice) procured by the government through the Food Corporation of India. The purchased food grains are stored in granaries.

A buffer stock of food grains is created by the government so as to distribute the procured food grains in the food-deficit areas and among the poorer strata of society at a price lower than the market price. A buffer stock helps resolve the problem of shortage of food during adverse weather conditions or during periods of calamity.

(c) Issue Price- The food grains procured and stored by the government are distributed in food-deficit areas and among the poorer strata of society at a price lower than the market price. This price is known as issue price.

(d) Fair-price shops- The food procured by the Food Corporation of India is distributed through government-regulated ration shops. The prices at which food materials are sold at these ration shops are lower than the market prices. The low pricing is to benefit the poorer strata of society. This is why these shops are called fair-price shops.

Fair-price shops keep stock of food grains, sugar and kerosene oil. Any family with a ration card can buy a stipulated amount of these items every month from the nearby ration shop.

Q11 :

What are the problems of the functioning of ration shops?

Answer :

The public distribution system (PDS) is the most important step taken by the Indian government towards ensuring food security. However, there have been several problems related to the functioning of ration shops. The food grains supplied by the ration shops are not enough to meet the consumption needs of the poor. As a result, they have to depend on markets instead. The average all-India level of consumption of PDS grains is only 1 kg per person per month.

Most public-distribution-system dealers resort to malpractices like diverting food grains to open market to make profits, selling poor quality grains at ration shops, irregular

opening of the shops, etc. Such actions make safe and nutritious food inaccessible and unaffordable for many of the poor.

Under the targeted public distribution system, there are three kinds of ration cards: Antyodaya cards (for the poorest of the poor), BPL cards (for those below poverty line) and APL cards (for all others). Prices of the food materials are fixed accordingly. Under this system, any family above the poverty line gets very little discount at the ration shop. The price of food items for an APL family is almost as high as in the open market, so there is little incentive for them to buy the items from the ration shop.

Q12 :

Write a note on the role of cooperatives in providing food and related items.

Answer :

Along with the government, cooperatives are also playing an important role in ensuring food security in India, especially in the southern and western parts of the country. The cooperative societies set up shops to sell low-priced goods to the poor. Out of all fairprice shops running in Tamil Nadu, around 94 per cent are being run by cooperatives. Mother Dairy, in Delhi, is involved in providing milk and vegetables at controlled rates decided by the government. Amul, responsible for the White Revolution in India, is a cooperative involved in providing milk and milk products. The Academy of Development Science (ADS) in Maharashtra has been involved in the setting up of Grain Banks in different regions. It organises training and capacity-building programmes on food security for NGOs. Its efforts are also directed towards influencing the government's policy on food security. Thus, through these examples, it can be seen that cooperative are playing an active role in the distribution of food and related items.