

Dr. Pinky Rani
Guest Faculty
Department of Economics
Maharaja Bahadur Ram Ranvijay Prasad Singh College
Veer Kunwar Singh University, Ara
Class: B.A. Economics (Sem-04)
Paper: MJC-07
Topic: Food Security in India

Introduction

Food Security in India refers to both the availability of food and people's access to it. It ensures that individuals have enough safe and nutritious food throughout the year to maintain a healthy life. In the context of India, Food Security in India is not just about production but also about equitable distribution, affordability, and nutritional quality.

As per the World Food Programme, around 195 million people in India remain undernourished, highlighting the scale of the issue. Nearly 43% of children suffer from chronic malnutrition, which impacts health, education, and future productivity. In the Global Food Security Index 2022, India ranked 68th out of 113 countries, reflecting the urgent need for systemic reforms to strengthen food security mechanisms.

- According to the World Food Programme, 195 million people in India are undernourished.
- 43% of children in India are chronically undernourished.
- India ranks 68 out of 113 major countries in terms of the Global food security index 2022.
- **There are Four Dimensions:**

Availability: It is related to the production and supply of food.
Access: It is related to the ability of people to obtain food.
Utilization: It is related to the way people use food.
Stability: It is related to the ability of the food system to withstand shocks and stresses.

Why is there a need for food security in India?

- **Population Pressure:** With over 1.3 billion people, India has a large and growing population. The increasing demand for food places significant pressure on agricultural production and food resources.
- **Agricultural Productivity:** India's agricultural sector is characterized by low productivity due to several factors such as fragmented land holdings, inadequate

irrigation facilities, lack of modern farming techniques, and limited access to credit and technology.

- **Climate Change and Natural Disasters:** Erratic weather patterns, including droughts, floods, and extreme temperatures, affect crop yields and livestock productivity.
- **Water Scarcity:** Agriculture in India is heavily dependent on monsoon rains. However, rainfall patterns are increasingly unpredictable, leading to water scarcity in some regions.
- **Land Degradation and Soil Health:** Land degradation, caused by factors like erosion, overuse of chemical fertilizers, and improper land management practices, poses a threat to agricultural productivity.
- **Storage and Distribution:** Inefficient storage facilities and inadequate cold chain systems result in substantial food losses and wastage.
- **Poverty and Inequality:** Many people, particularly in rural areas and marginalized communities, struggle to afford and access nutritious food consistently.

How to address the challenges related to food security in India?

- **Sustainable Agriculture Practices:** Promote sustainable farming practices such as organic farming, agroforestry, and integrated pest management. These practices enhance soil fertility, reduce chemical inputs, and conserve water, leading to increased productivity and resilience.
- **Irrigation and Water Management:** Improve irrigation infrastructure by expanding access to reliable irrigation facilities, promoting water-efficient technologies like drip irrigation, and implementing water harvesting and conservation techniques.
- **Research and Technology:** Developing high-yielding crop varieties, drought and pest-resistant seeds, and innovative farming techniques. Encourage the adoption of modern technologies like precision agriculture, remote sensing, and digital farming tools to optimize resource use and improve productivity.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:** Implement crop diversification, crop rotation, and agroecology. Develop early warning systems for extreme weather events and support farmers in adopting climate-resilient practices.
- **Storage and Cold Chain Infrastructure:** Investing in modern storage facilities, cold chain infrastructure, and transportation systems will help reduce food losses and wastage.
- **Strengthening Food Distribution Systems:** Enhance the efficiency of food distribution networks through better logistics, supply chain management, and market linkages.

Food Security in India Government Initiatives

The Government of India has introduced several policies and schemes to tackle food insecurity and improve nutrition across the country. Some of the major initiatives include:

The National Food Security Act, 2013 – Provides subsidized food grains to nearly two-thirds of India's population, making food accessible and affordable.

Public Distribution System (PDS) – Ensures the supply of essential food items such as rice, wheat, and sugar at subsidized rates to vulnerable sections of society.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme – Provides cooked meals to school children, improving nutritional intake and encouraging school attendance.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) – Focuses on the health, nutrition, and development of children under six years of age, along with support for pregnant and lactating mothers.

National Nutrition Strategy – Aims to reduce malnutrition and improve the overall nutritional status of children, women, and adolescents.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) – Enhances irrigation efficiency and expands access to irrigation, reducing farmer's dependence on monsoon rainfall.

Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) – Supports states in strengthening agriculture and allied sectors through need-based planning and funding.

National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) – Promotes climate-resilient agricultural practices and efficient use of natural resources to ensure long-term food security.

National Food Security Mission

In 2007, the National Development Council (NDC) passed a resolution to launch a dedicated mission for food security. The goal was to increase annual production by 10 million tonnes of rice, 8 million tonnes of wheat, and 2 million tonnes of pulses by the end of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2011-12).

Following this resolution, the National Food Security Mission (NFSM), a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, was rolled out in October 2007. The mission focused on improving productivity through better seeds, soil health management, and efficient farming practices.

The NFSM turned out to be highly successful, as it not only met but also surpassed its targets, achieving the planned increase in rice, wheat, and pulses production. This played a crucial role in strengthening India's food security framework.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013

The National Food Security Bill, passed in 2013 and later enacted as the National Food Security Act (NFSA), is a landmark step toward guaranteeing food as a legal right in India. The Act is designed to ensure access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices for vulnerable sections of the population.

Key Features of the National Food Security Act

- **Targeted Coverage:** The Act identifies specific categories of beneficiaries entitled to subsidized food grains. These include priority households, which constitute the poorest of the poor, and eligible households under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).
- **Entitlements:** The Act **guarantees the right to receive food grains at subsidized prices.** Nutritional support is also provided to pregnant women and lactating mothers, as well as children through the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program.
- **Subsidized Prices:** For priority households, the prices for rice, wheat, and coarse grains are fixed at Rs. 3, Rs. 2, and Rs. 1 per kilogram, respectively.
- **Public Distribution System (PDS) Reforms:** The Act emphasizes the need for strengthening and reforming the PDS, by computerization of records, and grievance redressal mechanisms.
- **Grievance Redressal:** It aims to provide a platform for beneficiaries to seek remedies in case of denial or irregularities in accessing their entitlements.

• Way Forward

- It refers to the state in which all individuals within a country have access to an adequate supply of nutritious food, can afford to purchase high-quality food, and face no obstacles in obtaining it. While those living in poverty often struggle to meet their food needs, even wealthier individuals can experience food insecurity during emergencies or crises.
- To ensure the widespread availability of food, the Indian government has established a food security system comprised of two main components: a reserve stock of food and a public distribution system. Additionally, the government has implemented various programs aimed at reducing poverty and improving food security. In order to ensure food security in India it will require a multi-pronged approach that includes increasing agricultural production, reducing inequalities in access to food improving the infrastructure, and raising awareness.