



Evaluation of food security act: Perspective to Indian national food security Act 2013

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Abstract

Many people go hungry in India and some of them have got to do with administrative apathy. The Indian government, as well as its state-level counterparts, does not have sufficient cold storage facilities and as a result almost 40% of all vegetables and fruits produced in India and 20% of the food grains rot and never reach the market. The below poverty line (BPL) families spend 70% of their income on food. In case of families that are above poverty line (APL) the amount goes up to 50%. The National Food Security Act, 2013 (also Right to Food Act) is an Act of the Parliament of India which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's 1.2 billion people. It was signed into law on 12 September 2013, retroactive to 5 July 2013.

Keywords: Chronic undernourishment, National Food Security Act, Public Distribution System, Subsidized Price, Nutritional Standards

1. Introduction

So many people go hungry in India and some of them have got to do with administrative apathy. The Indian government, as well as its state-level counterparts, does not have sufficient cold storage facilities and as a result almost 40% of all vegetables and fruits produced in India and 20% of the food grains rot and never reach the market. This forces the sellers to raise the prices and put it beyond the reach of most. The below poverty line (BPL) families spend 70% of their income on food. In case of families that are above poverty line (APL) the amount goes up to 50%.

The working class people in the urban areas spend 30% of their income on food. The fact that the agricultural sector is failing, owing to a combination of variety of reasons, has contributed to its lessening impact on the national GDP over the years. It has now come to a point, where the largest employer in Indian economy — it provides jobs to 50% of the people in India — is no longer a crucial part of the same.

1.2 Global Problem

64% of the extremely poor people are spread in five countries of Asia and Africa. India is one of the countries along with Bangladesh, China, Congo, and Nigeria. All around the world, 20,000 children die every day because of hunger-related issues. 80% of the people around the world are able to spend less than 10 dollars a day. Every night one out of nine people go hungry. 791 million hungry people belong to the developing countries of the world. 13.5% people in developing countries suffer from chronic undernourishment. In Asia, 526 million people are always hungry. All around the world, 45% of the children die owing to inadequate nutrition. When judged on a global basis, there is 20% likelihood that underweight babies will die before they reach the age of five.

1.3 What Needs To Be Done

First of all, it is the responsibility of the government to come forward and ensure that not a single morsel is wasted anymore because of inadequate infrastructural facilities. It needs to make sure that these poor people have work opportunities

aplenty and that they are not cheated out of their money by the intermediaries entrusted with the job of paying them. However, there are several things that need to be done over the longer term. For starters, people in disadvantaged sections of Indian society need to be educated about the virtues of a dignified and savings-oriented life. They need to be made to understand that just because they are exploited each day in life they should not take recourse to alcohol or other ills in order to stave off their worries. Life is a hard grind for all and they are not the only ones with problems in life. After all, the government cannot do anything for you if you do not take control of your life and be responsible in everything in all your actions and decisions.

1.4 Food Security Bill

The National Food Security Act, 2013 (also Right to Food Act) is an Act of the Parliament of India which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's 1.2 billion people. It was signed into law on 12 September 2013, retroactive to 5 July 2013.

The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA 2013) converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programs of the Government of India. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services scheme and the Public Distribution System. Further, the NFSA 2013 recognizes maternity entitlements. The Midday Meal Scheme and the integrated Child Development Services Scheme are universal in nature whereas the PDS will reach about two-thirds of the population (75% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas).

Under the provisions of the bill, beneficiaries of the Public Distribution System (or, PDS) are entitled to 5 kilograms (11 lb) per person per month of cereals at the following prices:

- Rice at Rs. 3 per kg
- Wheat at Rs. 2per kg
- Coarse grains Re. 1per kg.

Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and certain categories of children are eligible for daily free cereals.

1.5 Features of food security bill

1. A centerpiece of the ruling government's campaign in 2009, the bill was cleared by a parliamentary committee in January this year.
2. The proposed bill aims to provide legal right over subsidized food grain to 67 percent of the population.
3. The bill proposes to do away with priority and general classifications of beneficiaries and provide uniform allocation of 5 kg food grain (per person) at fixed rate of Rs. 3 (rice), Rs. 2 (wheat) and Rs. 1 (coarse grains) per kg to 75 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the poor in urban India - about 800 million people.
4. Protection to 2.43 crore poorest of poor families under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) to supply of 35 kg food grains per month per family would continue.
5. Nutritional support to pregnant women without limitation is among other changes proposed in the bill.
6. It will be linked to the Aadhar scheme which provides every citizen with a unique identification number that's linked to a database that includes the biometrics of all card-holders.
7. At the proposed coverage of entitlement, total estimated annual food grains requirement is 61.23 million tones and is likely to cost the exchequer Rs. 1,24,724 crore.

The bill has been highly controversial; it was introduced into India's parliament on 22 December 2011; promulgated as a presidential ordinance on 5 July 2013, and enacted into law on 12 September 2013.

Odisa government implemented food security bill in 14 districts from. 17 November 2015 and Assam government implemented Act on 24 December 2015.

1.6 Necessity of Food Security Law in India

The National Food Security Bill 2013 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha session which seeks to enact "The National Food Security Act 2013". It aims to provide food and nutritional security to whole of India; access to adequate quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and for matter connected therewith and incidental there to; and provide assistance to state government. This Bill provides major relief to the common man who falls under the 'eligible households' as covered under the 'Priority Household' category. This in turn is defined under Section 15 of the proposed Act, as well as the Antyodaya Anna Yojana referred to in sub section (1) of Sec 3 of the said Act.

Under this Act a provision has been made to provide 5 kg of food grains per month per person to those identified under this scheme. This will be given at highly subsidized rates (Rs 3/2/1 for Rice! wheat! coarse grains respectively). As prescribed under Schedule I of the State Govt. under the TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System). Besides, the provision also says that all households covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana shall, as specified by the Central Govt. in relation to each State, be entitled to 35 kg of food grains per household per month at the subsidized prices specified in the said Schedule.

The subsidized price in relation to these food grains could extend to as high as 75 percent for the rural population and up to 50 percent for the urban population. Moreover, every pregnant or lactating mother would be entitled to a meal free of charge. during pregnancy and 6 months after the child birth, through the local Anganwadi so as to meet the nutritional standards as set up in Schedule II of the said Act. For children

up to the age of 14 years this proposed Act provides: In the case of a child between six months to six years, a meal free of charge through the local Anganwadi. For children between the ages of six to fourteen years one midday meal to be provided free of charge in all schools aided by Govt. as well as those run by local bodies. All these meals would be in conformity with Schedule II of the nutritional standards as prescribed by the Govt. in this Act. Every school and Anganwadi(s) shall have provision for cooking meals, drinking water and sanitation.

In addition the children suffering from any malnutrition would be identified and provided all meals absolutely free of charge to meet the nutritional standards as prescribed under the said Act. In case of non-supply of these food grains for any reason whatsoever the food security allowance would be paid to the identified people by the respective State Govt. Apart from the above, the Act also provides obligations for the Central Govt. as regards Food Security. The Central Govt. would release from the central pool the required quantity of food grains to the respective State Govt. under the TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System) so that the allocated level of supply of food grains to meet these schemes is always maintained.

The food grains would be transported to the various depots as prescribed by the Central Govt. The monitoring and implementation of these schemes will however largely be left in the hands of the concerned State Govt. These Central Govt. schemes could be run in tandem to any other schemes being run by the State Govt. themselves. Further, the concept note seeks to take away the freedom enjoyed by the states until now to

1. Fix the numbers of those who are BPL in their respective states;
2. Decide the amount of food grain to be given to them, and
3. Fix the rate at which these shall be provided.
4. Universalisation of TPD In view of the above provisions it is amply clear that the provisions of the proposed Food Security Bill 2013 are in the nature of largely benevolent provisions and can eradicate hunger and poverty from the face of this Nation once and for all.

The only catch is that once it is passed, it should be implemented both by the Central and the respective State Govt. with all the zeal and passion it deserves.

The National Food Security Bill 2013 is therefore a well thought out carefully planned blueprint for the effective eradication of hunger and malnutrition from our Country. It requires careful and consistent application on the part of both the Central Govt. as well as all the respective State Govt. It is after all a scheme spread out for the whole of India and for its successful implementation the effective participation of the State Govt. is a must.

Although it's true that the food grains as well as the other items for distribution would be provided by the Central Govt. yet all the distribution and monitoring has to be handled by the respective State Govt. to the satisfaction of the Central Govt. and as per guidelines which are laid down by them. The proposed National Food Security Act is being designed to ensure economic access to food through legal entitlement, while factors relating to production and absorption are proposed to be included as essential enabling provisions.

The bill is likely to cost the government Rs 1.25 lakh crore each year. But this entire amount is not new expenditure for the government. India is already spending close to Rs 1.16

lakh crore on schemes that are listed as “entitlements” under the FSB for instance food subsidy (Rs 85,000 crore), mid-day meal (Rs 13,215 crore), Integrated Child Development Scheme (Rs 17,700 crore) and maternity entitlements (Rs 450 crore). So, the additional expenditure is around Rs 8,635 crore, an increase of 0.09 percent of the GDP. But its impact on fiscal deficit is an old issue that had largely been overcome when the growth was good. It is therefore naive to suggest that this programme can be successful without the effective participation of the Central Govt., the State Govt. and all its local bodies. The Centre in its wisdom has brought about this phenomenal piece of legislation which seeks a sea change in the way we look at our poor.

So think rationally and force the negatives out of the system like maintaining the buffer stock perfectly without getting rotten; the government wants to provide 25 kilograms of rice and wheat at Rs.3/kg to BPL families. This is too narrow an approach for Right to Food etc. This is something which the poor cannot afford to do without and therefore the National Food Security Bill 2013 needs to be passed without any further delay.

Food security is not just a poverty issue; it is a much larger issue that involves the whole food system and affects every one of us in some way. Food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. Global and National Food Security must exist to meet the challenge of providing the world’s growing population with a sustainable, secure supply of good quality food.

Therefore to address deficiencies in the country’s food security situation there is need of food security Law in India:

1. To encourage economical development of a country.
2. To reduce poverty.
3. To encourage development of backward classes.
4. To encourage P.D.S system.

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