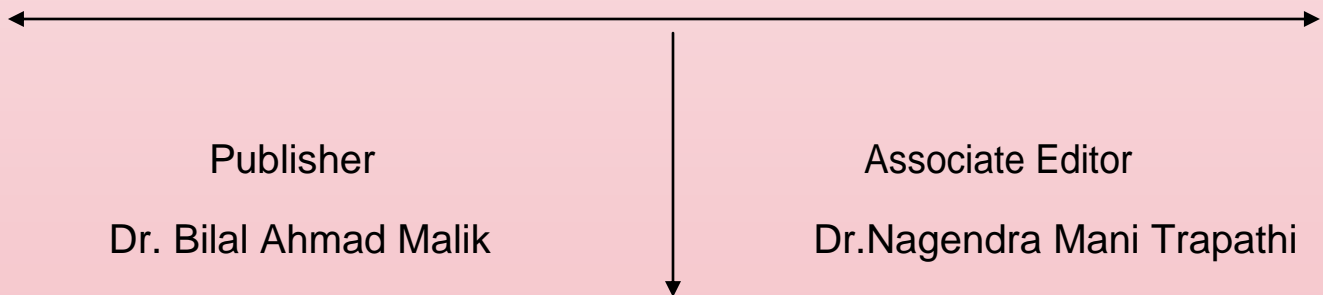


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# FOOD SECURITY IN BIHAR

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## INTRODUCTION

India deserves commendation for realizing the food requirement of its swelling population. The farm sector has ably responded to the food security issue. Today India has achieved self sufficiency in foodgrain production and is able to export the surplus. In spite of great strides in production of food grain, food insecurity and inequitable distribution of food continue to plague the country. The problem is not the production but impaired access to the food specifically by the most vulnerable groups.

India has witnessed green revolution and is readying for the second round of green revolution with newer farm technologies and innovations in farming systems. The farming community has demonstrated its coping capacity without letting down their performance despite a quite high frequency of crises in agriculture sector. Yet, many go hungry every day. Malnourishment among children keeps going high. What was gone wrong then? A close examination of persisting food security scenario underlines three major issue related to food security- Availability, affordability and Access. These are inter-related. If food is available, can it be afforded by the needy families? If affordable, can it be easily accessed? The most important question is that who is not getting food and why? Of course the poor who are either geographically away from the food distribution points or do not have enough money to afford it.

## FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

India ranks 66 among 88 countries according to Global Hunger Index 2008 released by the international Food Policy Research institute. The Index has been developed on three main criteria calorie deficiency, child malnutrition and child mortality. Over 200 million people in India have been reported to be unsure about



accessing daily bread. The incidence of poverty amongst tribal communities persists challengingly. It simply means that either system has not reached out them or it is not working properly.

The definitional jurisdiction of food security comprises there inherent and important dimensions viz. availability, accessibility and stability of food articles. While availability of food is a function of production of food grains, the accessibility to food relies on the state's food policy coupled with the purchasing power of the consumer. The third dimension is stabilization which is influenced by the sustainability of the food system. To a large extent, the sustainability of a food system minimizes the probability of risks related to food insecurity in normal as well as difficult times by ensuring the food consumption of a required level (Tripathy and Mishra, 2011).

Though India is one of the largest producers of the food in the world, yet nearly 300 million people struggle for meeting two square meals a day and 21 percent of the national population (230 million) are malnourished (International Food Policy Research Institute 2011). This indicates the issues of accessibility to adequate and nutritive food to the poor. Further, it is well documented that most poor families in the world spend 80 percent of their total income on food grains and insufficient purchasing power deprives them from accessing food in right quantity. In this backdrop, an attempt is made to study about food security management through the public Distribution system as well as to examine the efficiency of food based security not of the government towards achieving its objective of universal food and nutritional security.

## **PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

The public distribution system (PDS) has been recognised as a permanent feature of the India economy for the supply and distribution of essential commodities at reasonable prices to the needy people. It is a part of distribution system owned and controlled, in principle, by public authorities on behalf of the general public of specific group thereof. It is not a system of distribution under public ownership as in the case of many socialistic countries, nor is it an independent system of consumer co-operatives to the type found in Scandinavian countries. In a country like India, which has mixed economy and where about 40 per cent of the people live below the poverty line, the concept of PDS has some specification. In fact, there are two alternative systems with regard to PDS viz., nationalisation of wholesale trade and strengthening and improving the specified system of public distribution. Since ours is a mixed economy the former system, therefore, cannot be a practicable proposition. For this reason the latter system is advocated for an economy like India where both the PDS and free market system



co-exist. This arrangement, obviously, would be in the larger interest of economically vulnerable sections of the India society.

## FOOD SECURITY IN BIHAR

There are several challenges ahead to achieve the goal of food security in Bihar. Bihar's food security policy has a laudable objective to ensure availability of food grains to the common people at an affordable price and it has enabled the poor to have access to food where none existed. The Eleventh Plan. Government of Bihar has focused on the food security policy where state policy emphasised on growth in agriculture production specially food grains production and on support price for procurement and maintenance of rice, wheat and maize stocks the responsibility for procuring and stocking of food grains lies with FCI, SFC and for distribution with the public distribution system (PDS).

The most important component of the food security system is public distribution system instituted subsequent to the committee's proposals consists of procurement storage and public distribution of food grains. The main objective is to give price insurance to farmers to encourage them to food production and to provide food to consumers at price. Bihar has a large programme of food distribution through fair price accounting for a significant part of government's budgetary subsidies.

In Darbhanga district, the issue of food security has been a matter of concern for the policy makers as well as administrator because a large number of people in the state go without food for several days and as a result of that many of them die of hunger. The state government took several steps to ensure food and nutritional security for chronic a poor person which costs very high prices. Presently there are a number of programmes being implemented in the state which directly and indirectly are related to providing various types and degrees of food safety nets and means of poverty alleviation. These programmes target different degrees of publication, their means, methods and components vary but their objectives are addressing the situation of poverty problems, enhancing food security and improving nutrition's levels of the vulnerable groups of population. We should consider here some of the key programmes that are being carried out in this contexts in Bihar at present before doing so, we may first take a look on the gross off take of food grains from the central pool in recent years for different purposes like Targeted Public Distribution system (TPDS). Various welfare schemes, open market operations and exports. The introduction of TPDS was meant for the chronic poor people but there became many black holes in the system. When state government came to know the ground reality about TPDS. The state



Government took alternative steps to ensure food security among the poor people. In other word, the objective of TPDS failed in the eyes of government and it was considered to be the best platform of loot of public property by the dealers, leaders and government officials. So, Government launched many alternative programmes for food security for the poor like Antyodaya Anna Yojna, Sampoorna Gramin Rzgar Yozna, food-for work programme etc. The people in Bihar has however, hardly, benefited from the food distribution programme.

## CONCLUSION

We want hunger free India. But for a common man, even in a land of plenty, there is no assurance of deliverance from hunger unless government of the day takes conscious and deliberate steps to channelising the abundance in his favour so that he, at least, gets the little that he actually needs.<sup>13</sup> Guided by this principle, one of the major objective of planning in India has been to provide National Minimum level of living to its subjects. As the first condition, this requires provision of not only the needed quantum of foodgrains but also the required quality of food. The government of India has adopted the dual market mechanism to meet the situation. It has been felt necessary by the government that there should be an efficient PDS because if enough foodgrains are not provided to the weaker section of the society, it will impair many of government's other programmes. Say, if some sections of the society do not get enough food, mortality rates particularly infantile mortality rates, would continue to be high in many food deficit states, and consequently, the government sponsored family welfare programmes would not be successful. Even the proposed employment generation programmes would get a set back because of reduced productivity of workers/ employees on account of their poor health due to malnutrition.

Not only this, the liberalisation of the Indian economy, set in motion in 1991 has generated renewed interest in social safety-net programmes such as PDS.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, on the present showing, it is certain that the PDS is going to stay in India at least for some decades to come if not more.

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