

Understanding the Challenges of Food Security and Human Security in India

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Abstract: The poor and the vulnerable people in developing countries like India are the ones which are seriously affected by limited or even no access to food. This situation demands for a revision of the concept of food security in recent times. Though India's economic growth has been remarkable in last few years except current situation, the country is still struggling with extreme hunger and poverty. Around 14.8 percent of the population in India is undernourished, as per the FAO estimates in the 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2018' report. It is therefore essential to investigate the status of food security in India from the perspective of human security. This paper is an attempt to assess the Security Challenges and policies for ensuring food security in India.

Keywords: Agriculture, Food security, Human Security, Hunger, India, Policy.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In traditional security analysis discourse and government's policy-making process, state security has always occupied a key position. The concept of territorial sovereignty or national security has been associated with this traditional notion of security. But there has been a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of the concept of security in the post-Cold War era. In response to the Middle East oil crisis and the increasing awareness of global environmental degradation in the 1970s-80s, academic discourse on security began to think of security in broader sense- other than non-military terms- that gave rise to the concept of human security.

The heart of human security is the security of the individual. It is associated with the well-being of the individual and, most notably, with human dignity. Seven threats to human survival were identified in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report which includes- economic insecurity, food insecurity, personal insecurity, health insecurity, community and cultural insecurity, environmental insecurity and political insecurity. But food insecurity or hunger has remained the biggest possible obstacle to the realisation of human security for poor Indians in developing countries like India. Total food grain production in India has been seen to increase day by day, but many poor people's are still starving, unable to access food products that are considered necessary to live a decent life. The First Millennium Development Goal (MDG) emphasized that the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger must be achieved by 2015. Recent statistics, however, present a very gloomy image of the food security of Indian people. India ranked second in farm production worldwide, but in

terms of the severity of hunger, India ranked 102 out of 117 countries (Global Hunger Index Report, 2019). Various poverty alleviation programmes have been taken up by the government in the post-colonial period to ensure Indian citizens' food security. Despite all these efforts, India still has the greatest number of undernourished population in the world, reflecting the drawbacks of effective government policy implementation.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is analytical and descriptive in nature. The paper is mainly prepared with the help of secondary sources. For the sources, this study is based on various articles, books, reports, newspaper and seminar papers which are related to this study. In the secondary sources the features such as suitability of data, adequacy of data and reliability of data have been considered. This paper seeks, in particular, to understand the food security challenges in India and to recommend some policy measures to ensure food security in India.

1.3. FOOD SECURITY AND HUMAN SECURITY: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

At the World Food Conference in 1974, the concept of food security was articulated for the first time primarily from the perspective of providing sufficient food access on a national scale. It is now a condition in which all individuals have access at all times to enough nutritious food of good quality for a better quality of living. There are essentially four dimensions to this- First, the availability of a sufficient quantity of food, which is a function of food production; Second, the consistency of the supply over time, which depends on the ability to preserve the food produced and to supplement the food available by imports; Third, access to the available food, which depends on the level of income and its distribution; and Fourth, Usage of food, including acquisition, ingestion and digestion, all of which are dependent on nutritional quality, health and education. Food security is also interpreted as a condition in which all individuals have physical and economic access to adequate, secure and nutritious food at all times to meet their dietary needs and food preferences (World Food Summit, 2003).

The concept of human security has been central to every nation-state discourse since the 1990s due to its increasing prominence and urge around the globe. At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a much-needed breathing space in which an alternative security paradigm started to be discussed with the concept of 'putting people first'. As a result, notion of human security has moved to the centre stage. One of the earliest attempts was the Bonn Declaration of 1991, describing human security as the 'absence of threat to human life, lifestyle and culture through the fulfilment of basic needs'. A new notion of human security introduced in the 1994 Human Development Report, equates security with peoples rather than territories, with development rather than weapons. Since security is all about providing protection to people as individuals and as a group, it therefore implies that protection from hunger and food insecurity also. Threat in any aspects of these fields may pose a threat to human life and dignity.

To live a healthy life, which is considered to be a fundamental human right, the availability of sufficient food for individuals is important. The World Food Summit (WFS) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) have described that food security exists when all people have physical and economic access at all times to adequate, safe and nutritious food that meets their food and dietary preferences for active living. It is not only about adequate food supply, but also about enough purchasing capacity of the individual or household to fulfill the demand for sufficient levels of food. That implies that when its inhabitants do not live in hunger or fear of hunger, a household is considered as food-secure. In recent years, the food insecurity of human beings, that is, poverty and hunger, has remained the greatest threat to human beings' peace, progress and security. The 1 and 2 no Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly discuss the issue of food insecurity and malnourishment, which are considered as the core elements of human security. Rapid rises in food prices, volatile weather patterns and competition for natural resources have left millions of people in insecure conditions. Human security notion therefore places emphasis on individual capacity building so that they can overcome the problem of hunger and food insecurity.

1.4. FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES IN INDIA

In developing countries like India, the prime cause of food insecurity is the inability of people to gain access to food because of widespread unemployment and poverty, which also hinders purchasing power and prevents secure access to food supplies. Food consumption, in terms of quantity and nutrition, has been found to be far behind in India. As per the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) report, the minimum per capita food grain needed for an adult is 182.5 kg / year, while the availability in India is only 173.6 kg / year and the daily intake should be 50 mg as far as the protein requirement is concerned, but the condition seems to continue to stagnate, with only 10 mg per capita daily intake. All of these figures indicate that food insecurity exists, either in terms of lack of access to food or in terms of less food intake for a healthy life. The Naandi Foundation's 'HUNGaMA Survey Report 2011' showed that 42.5% of children under the age of five are underweight (low weight for age); 58.8% are stunted (low height for age) and 11.4% are 'wasted' (low weight for height). While India becomes urbanised gradually, 22.3 percent of children under five were stunted, 21.4 percent were underweight and 13.9 percent were wasted in India 's ten most populated cities, showed the Urban HUNGaMA (hunger and malnutrition) Survey report 2014, released in the year 2018. The problem of food security in India, therefore, is not only limited to rural areas, but also extends to urban areas.

While drought poses a big challenge to the affordability and availability of food products, excessive rain has also been a major contributing factor to the current food price rise. So even though climate conditions favor rising food prices, the limitations in the distribution of farm inputs are also a serious hurdle for farmers. Traditional subsistence farming is a form of farming system that is prevalent in India. This system is characterized by the use of simple farm equipment, limited farm holdings, limited access to credit facilities and poor agricultural inputs, insufficient storage facilities, volatile post-harvest markets and the exploitation of farmers by middlemen.

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) for 2019 was based on four indicators: undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting and child stunting. It is important to note that India's position in the GHI is shrinking rapidly every year. In the year 2019, India ranked 102 out of 117 countries, well below that of neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. As per the GHI report, India is suffering from a serious hunger problem. It indicates India's negative image of food insecurity system, leading to a breach of human security. The position of India in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) since 2014 is demonstrated in Figure-1 below.

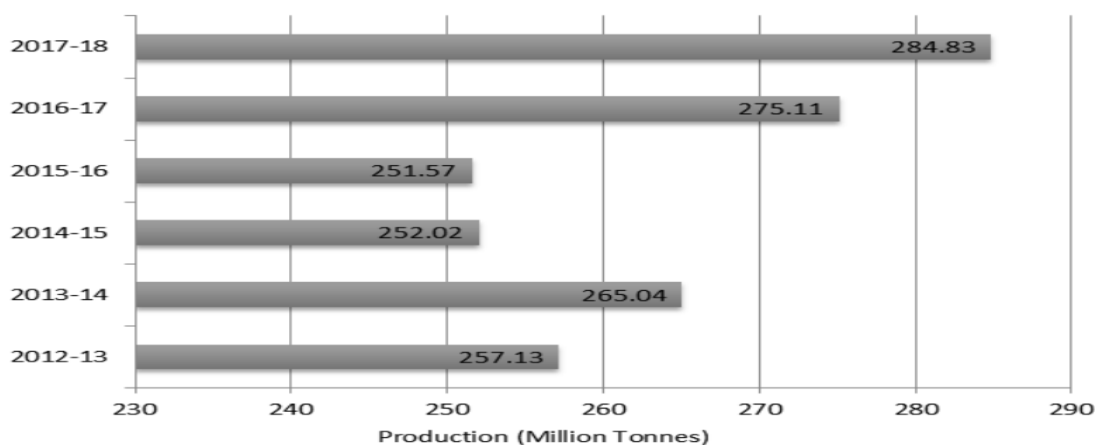
Figure-1: Position of India in Global Hunger Index since 2014

| Year | Ranking | Total countries |
|------|---------|-----------------|
| 2014 | 55 | 76 |
| 2015 | 80 | 117 |
| 2016 | 97 | 118 |
| 2017 | 100 | 119 |
| 2018 | 103 | 119 |
| 2019 | 102 | 117 |

Source: Hunger Index Report, 2019

India is the largest producer of some products in the world, as per the 2016 FAO World Agriculture Statistics. Some spices, milk, various fruits and vegetables are these products. It also includes a number of fibrous crops, such as jute. Despite this, annual grain production in India has remained relatively stable, with a decline in production between 2014 and 2016 due to drought. Figure-2 shows the annual gain production of India below-

Figure-2: Annual Gain Production of India



Source: Indian Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

Food shortages were the main cause of food insecurity when India set up its own food assistance scheme in the 1940s. In recent decades, having attained food self-sufficiency to some extent, India now has access to food to satisfy domestic demand at least in terms of calories. Although the Public Distribution System of India maintains that Indians have

sufficient calories to survive, it does not provide the requisite dietary variety to maintain a healthy and secured life.

1.5. ENSURING FOOD SECURITY AND HUMAN SECURITY IN INDIA: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure effective and climate sensitive agricultural and food systems:

As food demand rises, greater attention is being given to the ecological footprint of agriculture and food systems as a result of population growth. Improved farming intensification includes productivity gains while adapting to changing climate and reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. Agriculture, which is climate-sensitive, makes growth and security more sustainable, thus enhancing ecosystem management.

Making sure access to nutritious food through comprehensive food and nutrition security approaches:

It is necessary to address all forms of malnutrition. In order to improve food and nutrition security, policies, programmes and investments should concentrate on access and affordability of food, understand the value of diversified diets consisting of healthy foods, and encourage vulnerable people to have access to both social safety and social services.

Acknowledging the main role of agriculture in eradication of poverty, hunger and ensure nutrition:

Small - scale farmers are major contributors to addressing these challenges, which in rural areas are the most pronounced. Key elements are: (a) facilitating smallholder farmers to participate and benefit from domestic and foreign markets; and (b) supporting poor development through investment in both rural and non-farm; (c) providing the requisite public goods and support to increase rural incomes.

Making sure responsible investments in food production and agriculture:

Investment in agriculture and food systems can result in significant societal benefits, including reducing inequality, sustainable growth and the generation of decent employment. Effective investment can be boosted by- a) actively involving small-scale producers and their organizations in the development and implementation of national agricultural and food security measures; b) ensuring their safe land tenure and facilitating their access to improved technological innovation; c) Make sure that key public goods - market infrastructure, price stabilization mechanisms, affordable financial services and effective extension services gain.

1.6. Way Forward

This paper is an effort to assess food security and human security in India from security perspectives. The main challenges of food security, as well as the recommendations for ensuring food security in India, are also addressed. Achieving sustainable food security means maintaining continuous access to food for the present generation and future generations, both in terms of quantity and quality. In order to achieve health and productivity

goals, sufficient food intake is important. Thus, food insecurity, hunger, and poverty are closely linked. The most critical result of food deficiency is malnutrition. In part, nutritional deficiencies are responsible for low school enrolment, early dropout, and poor performance in the classroom, with consequent productivity losses during adulthood. In order to address these challenges, the government must take proactive measures to provide an enabling environment by promoting the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and by providing credit facilities to serve as a forum for the most vulnerable, particularly in rural areas. To increase agricultural productivity, advanced science and technology must be adopted. Well-designed social security programs should be in place to help people to strengthen their resilience to shocks.

In recent decades, concerns about food security in India have gradually developed and have thus become a contemporary issue that needs urgent government attention at all levels. The need for a change in policy is also apparent. It is possible to achieve sustainable food security if the government adopts inclusive growth policies in its development efforts. Development should be participatory and collaborative in nature. People-centered agricultural development places farmers first and uses resources and education to attack poverty and insecurity.

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