

## 9<sup>th</sup> - Food Security in India - I



Food security refers to availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times. Food security depends on the Public Distribution System (PDS) and government vigilance and to action, when this security is threatened.

**Meaning of Food Security:** Food security means availability of adequate supply of basic foodstuffs at all times. The 1995 World Food Summit declared, "Food security at the individual, household, regional, national and global levels exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". The "poverty eradication is essential to improve access to food". Food security has following dimensions

1. **Availability of Food** It means food production within the country, food imports and the previous year's stock stored in government granaries.
2. **Accessibility of Food** It means food is within reach of every person.
3. **Affordability of Food** It implies that an individual has enough money to buy sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet one's dietary needs.

The above dimensions conclude that food security is ensured in a country only if Enough food is available for all the persons, all persons have the capacity to buy food of acceptable quality and there is no barrier on access to food,

**Necessity of Food Security:** Food security is needed in a country to ensure food at all times. It is needed to ensure that no person in a country dies of hunger.

**Effect of Natural Calamity on Food Security:** the poorest section of the society might be food insecure, but others may also be food insecure when the country faces a national disaster/calamity like earthquake, drought, flood, tsunami, widespread failure of crops causing famine, etc. The total production of foodgrains decreases due to a natural calamity. It creates a shortage of food in the affected areas. The price of the food products goes up due to this shortage. At the high prices, some people cannot afford to buy food. If such calamity happens in a very widespread area or is stretched over a longer time period, it may cause a situation of starvation. A massive starvation might take a turn of famine. Thus, natural calamity affects the food security adversely.

**Famine and Starvation:** A famine is characterized by widespread deaths due to starvation and epidemics caused by forced use of impure water or decaying food and loss of body resistance due to weakening from starvation. The most devastating famine in India was the famine of Bengal in 1943. Thirty lakh people died in it.

**People Affected by Famine:** No famine has occurred in India since independence. But today also, there are places like Kalahandi and Kashipur in Odisha where famine-like condition still prevails. Starvation deaths are also reported in Baran district of Rajasthan, Palamau in Jharkhand and many other remote areas.

**Food Insecure People:** Food and nutrition insecurity has affected the large section in India. But the most affected people in the rural areas are landless agricultural labourers, traditional artisans and petty self-employed workers. In urban areas the most affected are beggars and homeless people, casual labourers people employed in ill-paid occupations and construction migrant and other seasonal workers. Further, many pregnant and nursing mothers and also children under the age of 5 years are food insecure people. The second National Health and Family Survey (NHFS) conducted during 1998-99 estimated that approximately 11 crore women and children in India are food insecure. **National Health and Family Survey (NHFS) 1998-99:** a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India. The survey provided essential data on health and family welfare needed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other agencies for policy and programme purposes.

**Story of Ramu and Ahmad:** Ramu, a landless agricultural labourer in Raipur village, has a large family of a wife and 6 small children, with the eldest child being 10 years old. His wife and eldest son work for food and low wages. His family is food insecure when he does not have employment in agricultural activities



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during 4 months in the year. At this time, he has to take up odd jobs. Ahmad is working as a rickshaw puller in Bengaluru, having migrated from his village along with his family of 7 others. The family depends only on his daily earnings, which fluctuate from day to day. On the day when he gets less customers, his earnings are not enough for the family's daily necessities. However, he has a BPL Ration Card, with which he buys the essentials like foodgrains, sugar and kerosene oil at subsidised prices. Thus, his family is able to survive in the city on his little earnings.

**Food Insecure Regions:** Economically backward states with high level of poverty, tribal and remote areas, regions more prone to natural disasters (like Eastern and South-eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh) consist the largest number of food insecure people.

**Hunger:** Food insecurity also has the important aspect of hunger. To create food security, current hunger should be removed and the risk of future hunger should be reduced. Hunger has two dimensions i.e. chronic and seasonal.

**1. Chronic Hunger:** It is a consequence of a diet regularly deficient in quantity and quality this is caused due to lack of income to buy food for survival. Chronic hunger has reduced in rural areas from 2.3% of households in 1983 to 0.7% in 1999 - 2000. In urban areas, it has reduced from 0.8% to 0.3% during the same period.

**2. Seasonal Hunger:** It is related to seasonal cycles of food growing and harvesting. It affects landless agricultural labourers in rural areas the most. In urban areas, casual construction workers suffer from this during the time when they do not get work. The proportion of households experiencing seasonal hunger in rural areas has reduced significantly from 16.2% in 1983 to 2.6% in 1999-2000. In urban areas, it has reduced from 5.6% to only 0.6% during the reference period.

**Malnutrition** is a condition that results from eating a diet in which certain nutrients are lacking or in wrong proportions.

**Measures for Self-Sufficiency in Food grains:** India is aiming at self-sufficiency in foodgrains since independence. India has adopted all measures to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains. The Green Revolution during the late 1960s and early 1970s helped significantly to achieve this, although the success varied from region to region. During this period, **High Yielding Varieties (HYVs)** of wheat and rice were introduced in many states. The highest rate of growth was achieved in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, where food grain production jumped from 7.23 million tonnes in 1964-65 to reach an all-time high of 78.9 million tonnes in 2012-13. Production of foodgrains in Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Assam, Tamil Nadu has dropped. West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, on the other hand, recorded significant increases in rice yield in 2012-13. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, officially recorded the impressive progress of the Green Revolution in agriculture by releasing a special stamp entitled 'Wheat Revolution' in July 1968.

**Food Security In India:** The Green Revolution was started in early 70s. Since then, our country has avoided famine even during adverse weather conditions. India has become self-sufficient in foodgrains during the last 30 years due to the variety of crops grown. Foodgrains availability even in adverse conditions has been ensured by the government through a food security system consisting of maintaining a buffer stock of foodgrains, along with a Public Distribution System (PDS) for foodgrains and other essential items.

