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## **FOOD SECURITY AS A HUMAN RIGHT IN INDIA**

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# Food Security as a Human Right in India

Suman Rani Pannu

(Asst. Prof. of Commerce, Dyal Singh College, Karnal)

**Abstract – Food security is a condition related to the ongoing availability of food. Concerns over food security have existed throughout history. There is evidence of granaries being in years ago, with central authorities in Civilizations including Ancient China and Ancient Egypt being known to release food from storage in times of famine. Yet it was only at the 1974 World Food Conference that the term 'food security' was established as a formal concept. Originally, food security was understood to apply at the national level, with a state being food secure when there was sufficient food to "sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices." A new definition emerged at 1996 World Food Summit; this time with the emphasis being on individuals enjoying food security, rather than the nation. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security "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." Over the past decade, a series of events in India have brought the question of food security into sharp focus. Vast famine-affected areas versus surplus production and stocks of grains, the impact of globalization and World Trade Organization laws on agriculture and farmers, the media's spotlight on starvation deaths and, finally, the Supreme Court of India's strong reaction to the plight of the hungry—all make a case for recognizing the right to food. This paper examines the situation prevailing in India and reviews the obligations and initiatives by the government of India to ensure food security.**

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## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to examine right to food in the Indian context. we analyse the right to food in terms of availability, accessibility, adequacy and sustainability. These are examined in terms of equity and justiciability. The study is different from the earlier studies on food security as it is based on human rights approach. the issue of food is approached from the rights perspective.

## INTRODUCTION

Food security is a condition related to the ongoing availability of food. Concerns over food security have existed throughout history. There is evidence of granaries being in use over 10,000 years ago, with central authorities in Civilizations including Ancient China and Ancient Egypt being known to release food from storage in times of famine. Yet it was only at the 1974 World Food Conference that the term 'food security' was established as a formal concept. Originally, food security was understood to apply at the national level, with a state being food secure when there was sufficient food to "sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices". A new definition emerged at 1996 World Food Summit; this time with the emphasis being on individuals enjoying food

security, rather than the nation. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security "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".

Household food security exists when all members, at all times, have access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Individuals who are food secure do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. Food insecurity, on the other hand, is a situation of "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways", according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food security incorporates a measure of resilience to future disruption or unavailability of critical food supply due to various risk factors including droughts, shipping disruptions, fuel shortages, economic instability, and wars. In the years 2011-2013, an estimated 842 million people were suffering from chronic hunger. The FAO identified the four pillars of food security as availability, access, utilization, and stability.[8] The United Nations (UN) recognized the Right to food in the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and has

since noted that it is vital for the enjoyment of all other rights.

The 1996 World Summit on Food Security noted that "food should not be used as an instrument for political and economic pressure". According to the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, failed agriculture market regulation and the lack of anti-dumping mechanisms engenders much of the world's food scarcity and malnutrition. As of late 2007, export restrictions and panic buying, US Dollar Depreciation, increased farming for use in biofuels, world oil prices at more than \$100 a barrel, global population growth, climate change, loss of agricultural land to residential and industrial development, and growing consumer demand in China and India are claimed to have pushed up the price of grain. However, the role of some of these factors is under debate. Some argue the role of biofuel has been overplayed as grain prices have come down to the levels of 2006. Nonetheless, food riots have recently taken place in many countries across the world. Food security is a complex topic, standing at the intersection of many disciplines.

Food security indicators and measures are derived from country level household income and expenditure surveys to estimate per capita caloric availability. In general the objective of food security indicators and measures is to capture some or all of the main components of food security in terms of food availability, access and utilization or adequacy. While availability (production and supply) and utilization/adequacy (nutritional status/anthropometric measures) seemed much easier to estimate, thus more popular, access (ability to acquire sufficient quantity and quality) remain largely elusive. The factors influencing household food access are often context specific. Thus the financial and technical demands of collecting and analyzing data on all aspects of household's experience of food access and the development of valid and clear measures remain a huge challenge. Nevertheless several measures have been developed that aim to capture the access component of food security, with some notable examples developed by the USAID-funded Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) project, collaborating with Cornell and Tufts University and Africare and World Vision. These include:

Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) - continuous measure of the degree of food insecurity (access) in the household in the previous month. Household Dietary Diversity Scale (HDDS) - measures the number of different food groups consumed over a specific reference period (24hrs/48hrs/7days). Household Hunger Scale (HHS) - measures the experience of household food deprivation based on a set of predictable reactions, captured through a survey and summarized in a scale. Coping Strategies Index (CSI) - assesses household behaviours and rates them based on a set of varied established behaviours on how households cope with food shortages. The methodology for this

research is based on collecting data on a single question "What do you do when you do not have enough food, and do not have enough money to buy food?" Food insecurity is measured in the United States by questions in the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The questions asked are about anxiety that the household budget is inadequate to buy enough food, inadequacy in the quantity or quality of food eaten by adults and children in the household, and instances of reduced food intake or consequences of reduced food intake for adults and for children. A National Academy of Sciences study commissioned by the USDA criticized this measurement and the relationship of "food security" to hunger, adding "it is not clear whether hunger is appropriately identified as the extreme end of the food security scale." The FAO, World Food Programme (WFP), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) collaborate to produce The State of Food Insecurity in the World. The 2012 edition described improvements made by the FAO to the prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) indicator that is used to measure rates of food insecurity. New features include revised minimum dietary energy requirements for individual countries, updates to the world population data, and estimates of food losses in retail distribution for each country. Measurements that factor into the indicator include dietary energy supply, food production, food prices, food expenditures, and volatility of the food system. The stages of food insecurity range from food secure situations to full-scale famine. A new peer-reviewed journal of Food Security: The Science, Sociology and Economics of Food Production and Access to Food began publishing in 2009.

## PILLARS OF FOOD SECURITY

The WHO states that there are three pillars that determine food security: food availability, food access, and food use. The FAO adds a fourth pillar: the stability of the first three dimensions of food security over time. In 2009, the World Summit on Food Security stated that the "four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilization, and stability".

## AVAILABILITY

Growth in food production has been greater than population growth. Food per person increased during the 1961–2005 period. The y-axis is percent of 1999–2001 average food production per capita. Data source: World Resources Institute. Food availability relates to the supply of food through production, distribution, and exchange. Food production is determined by a variety of factors including land ownership and use; soil management; crop selection, breeding, and management; livestock breeding and management; and harvesting. Crop production can be impacted by changes in rainfall and temperatures. The use of land, water, and energy to grow food often competes with other uses, which can affect food production. Land used for agriculture can be used for urbanization or lost to desertification, salinization, and soil erosion due

to unsustainable agricultural practices. Crop production is not required for a country to achieve food security. Nations don't have to have the natural resources required to produce crops in order to achieve food security, as seen in the examples of Japan and Singapore. Because food consumers outnumber producers in every country, food must be distributed to different regions or nations. Food distribution involves the storage, processing, transport, packaging, and marketing of food. Food-chain infrastructure and storage technologies on farms can also impact the amount of food wasted in the distribution process. Poor transport infrastructure can increase the price of supplying water and fertilizer as well as the price of moving food to national and global markets. Around the world, few individuals or households are continuously self-reliant for food. This creates the need for a bartering, exchange, or cash economy to acquire food. The exchange of food requires efficient trading systems and market institutions, which can have an impact on food security. Per capita world food supplies are more than adequate to provide food security to all, and thus food accessibility is a greater barrier to achieving food security.

## **ACCESS**

Food access refers to the affordability and allocation of food, as well as the preferences of individuals and households. The UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights noted that the causes of hunger and malnutrition are often not a scarcity of food but an inability to access available food, usually due to poverty. Poverty can limit access to food, and can also increase how vulnerable an individual or household is to food price spikes. Access depends on whether the household has enough income to purchase food at prevailing prices or has sufficient land and other resources to grow its own food. Households with enough resources can overcome unstable harvests and local food shortages and maintain their access to food. There are two distinct types of access to food: direct access, in which a household produces food using human and material resources, and economic access, in which a household purchases food produced elsewhere. Location can affect access to food and which type of access a family will rely on. The assets of a household, including income, land, products of labor, inheritances, and gifts can determine a household's access to food. However, the ability to access to sufficient food may not lead to the purchase of food over other materials and services. Demographics and education levels of members of the household as well as the gender of the household head determine the preferences of the household, which influences the type of food that are purchased. A household's access to enough and nutritious food may not assure adequate food intake of all household members, as intra house hold food allocation may not sufficiently meet the requirements of each member of

the household. The USDA adds that access to food must be available in socially acceptable ways, without, for example, resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies.

## **UTILIZATION**

The final pillar of food security is food utilization, which refers to the metabolism of food by individuals. Once food is obtained by a household, a variety of factors impact the quantity and quality of food that reaches members of the household. In order to achieve food security, the food ingested must be safe and must be enough to meet the physiological requirements of each individual. Food safety impacts food utilization, and can be impacted by the preparation, processing, and cooking of food in the community and household. Nutritional values of the household determine food choice. Access to healthcare is another determinant of food utilization, since the health of individuals controls how the food is metabolized. For example, intestinal parasites can take nutrients from the body and decrease food utilization. Sanitation can also decrease the occurrence and spread of diseases that can affect food utilization. Education about nutrition and food preparation can impact food utilization and improve this pillar of food security.

## **STABILITY**

Food stability refers to the ability to obtain food over time. Food security can be transitory, seasonal, or chronic. In transitory food insecurity, food may be unavailable during certain periods of time. At the food production level, natural disasters and drought result in crop failure and decreased food availability. Civil conflicts can also decrease access to food. Instability in markets resulting in food-price spikes can cause transitory food insecurity. Other factors that can temporarily cause food insecurity are loss of employment or productivity, which can be caused by illness. Seasonal food insecurity can result from the regular pattern of growing seasons in food production. Chronic (or permanent) food insecurity is defined as the long-term, persistent lack of adequate food. In this case, households are constantly at risk of being unable to acquire food to meet the needs of all members. Chronic and transitory food insecurity are linked, since the reoccurrence of transitory food security can make households more vulnerable to chronic food insecurity.

## **MEASURES**

Agriculture : There are strong, direct relationships between agricultural productivity, hunger, poverty, and sustainability. Three-quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas and make their living from agriculture. Hunger and child malnutrition are greater in these areas than in urban areas. Moreover, the



higher the proportion of the rural population that obtains its income solely from subsistence farming (without the benefit of pro-poor technologies and access to markets), the higher the incidence of malnutrition. Therefore, improvements in agricultural productivity aimed at small-scale farmers will benefit the rural poor first. Food and feed crop demand is likely to double in the next 50 years, as the global population approaches nine billion. Growing sufficient food will require people to make changes such as increasing productivity in areas dependent on rainfed agriculture; improving soil fertility management; expanding cropped areas; investing in irrigation; conducting agricultural trade between countries; and reducing gross food demand by influencing diets and reducing post-harvest losses. According to the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture, a major study led by the International Water Management Institute, managing rainwater and soil moisture more effectively, and using supplemental and small-scale irrigation, hold the key to helping the greatest number of poor people. It has called for a new era of water investments and policies for upgrading rainfed agriculture that would go beyond controlling field-level soil and water to bring new freshwater sources through better local management of rainfall and runoff. Increased agricultural productivity enables farmers to grow more food, which translates into better diets and, under market conditions that offer a level playing field, into higher farm incomes. With more money, farmers are more likely to diversify production and grow higher-value crops, benefiting not only themselves but the economy as a whole. "Researchers suggest forming an alliance between the emergency food program and community-supported agriculture, as some countries' food stamps cannot be used at farmer's markets and places where food is less processed and grown locally. The gathering of wild food plants appears to be an efficient alternative method of subsistence in tropical countries, which may play a role in poverty alleviation.

**Political Will:** In order to implement the programmes, political will is important. The Southern states in India have done well in terms of political will as compared to some of the Northern and Eastern states.

**Resources:** Resources are important for undertaking some of the programmes in realizing right to food. Growth of the economy and resources are important for sustainability of the programmes. However, resource availability cannot be a precondition for fulfilling rights. **Effective Implementation:** Providing resources is only one part of the story. **Effective implementation** of the programmes is important in order to reach the benefits to the poor. **Right to Information:** As mentioned above, right to information would empower the poor regarding their rights in terms of government programmes and leads to accountability. **Social Mobilisation:** Mobilization of poor and other vulnerable groups and putting pressures on bureaucracy and politicians would enhance public accountability. **Decentralization:** Decentralization is also important for accountability. It is also more

participatory. The lower strata of society will have a chance to participate in local governance. It may be noted that women in panchayats are relatively doing well in solving people's problems. One can expect better delivery systems in PDS and other programmes if panchayats are involved.

## CONCLUSION:

The challenge of enhancing food security for each individual and each country around the world will require tremendous efforts on the part of all actors involved if malnutrition is ever to be eradicated. Food insecurity in developing countries has been a concern for long and is associated with a number of general and specific policy challenges. The development of genetically modified plant varieties and the introduction of IPRs in agriculture constitute two related and significant changes in the policy environment for addressing food security. The main challenge for developing countries is to develop legal frameworks which go beyond existing IPRs models that have generally not been developed with a view to ensure that the introduction of IPRs in new areas of technology does not have negative impacts on the realisation of basic needs, such as basic food needs. In practice, developing countries are under significant pressure within and without the WTO to introduce forms of IPRs generally modelled after existing models developed in the North. Thus, the UPOV Convention has been promoted as an appropriate model for a *sui generis* plant variety protection regime. Even if an UPOV style system is adopted, as has been the case in a number of countries over the past few years, developing countries should not stop there. The protection of traditional knowledge in general – and in this specific case the traditional knowledge of farming communities – must be enshrined in legal instruments. This constitutes a significant challenge because there is little by way of models that can be used to develop such frameworks but the protection of traditional knowledge is probably the most important part of a plant variety regime for most developing countries.

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