

# ECONOMICS

## Chapter 4: Food Security in India



## Food Security in India

### Dimensions of Food Security

Food is essential for a person to live. Food security means availability, accessibility and affordability of food throughout the lifetime of every person. Food availability means food production within the country, food imports and the stocks of previous years stored in government granaries. Accessibility means food is within the reach of every person. Affordability means that a person has enough sources to buy sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

#### What is food security?

Food security has the following dimensions

- (a) availability of food means food production within the country, food imports and the previous year's stock stored in government granaries.
- (b) accessibility means food is within reach of every person.
- (c) affordability implies that an individual has enough money to buy sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet one's dietary needs.

#### Food security is ensured in a country only if

- (1) enough food is available for all the persons
- (2) all persons have the capacity to buy food of acceptable quality
- (3) there is no barrier on access to food.

#### New Dimension to Food Security

According to Amartya Sen, the access to food through what he called entitlement—a combination of what one can produce and exchange in the market along with state or other socially provided supplies.

#### Effects of Calamity

During a natural calamity, the total production level decreases, thereby it creates a shortage of food. This leads to a price increase and people will not be able to buy food. Thus, a situation of starvation may lead to famine in those affected areas.

Famine means widespread deaths occur because of starvation and epidemics caused by forced

use of contaminated water or decaying food and loss of body resistance because of weakening from starvation. For example, the famine of Bengal in 1943.



### Food Security

There are many groups of people with no land—traditional artisans and petty self-employed—who suffer from food and nutrition insecurity in India. The working group in the urban areas is employed in ill-paid occupations and a casual labour market.

- Reasons for food insecurity: The social composition
  - SCs, STs and other OBCs who have either poor land-base or low productivity.
  - Because of natural disasters, people migrate to different areas in search of work.
- Food insecure people
  - A large proportion of pregnant, nursing mothers and children under the age of 5 years.
  - Backward states, tribal and remote areas, regions prone to natural disasters.

### Hunger

There are two types of hunger. These are as follows

#### (i) 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.

### **(ii) 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.

The eradication of hunger and reducing the risks of future hunger is required to attain food security. Hunger has chronic and seasonal dimensions. Chronic hunger is a consequence of inadequate food in terms of quantity and quality. Seasonal hunger is related to cycles of growing and harvesting food.

Indian agriculture adopted a new strategy which resulted in the Green Revolution particularly in the production of wheat and rice. In July 1968, the Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi released a special stamp titled 'Wheat Revolution'.

## **Food Security in India**

With the advent of the Green Revolution in the early 1970s, India has become self-sufficient in food grains. The Government ensured the availability of food grains in adverse weather and a well-designed food security system such as buffer stock and public distribution system.

### **Buffer Stock**

Buffer stock is the stock of food grains such as wheat and rice procured by the Government through the Food Corporation of India (FCI). FCI purchases grains from the farmers in surplus states and they are paid a minimum support price. These grains are distributed among the poor section in the deficit areas at a price (issue price) lower than the market price.

### **Programmes For Food Security in India**

In mid-1970s, National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) reported the high incidence of poverty level. Due to this, three important food intervention programmes were introduced.

They are

- Public Distribution System (PDS) for food grains

- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
- Food-For Work (FfW) programme.

Public Distribution System (PDS) Through government regulated ration shops, the food procured by the FCI is distributed among the poorer sections of the society. This is called the Public Distribution System (PDS). Ration shops are now present in most localities, villages, towns and cities. There are about 5.5 lakh ration shops all over the country. Ration shops are also known as fair price shops. They keep stock of food grains, sugar, kerosene oil for cooking. These items are sold to people at a price lower than the market price. Any family with a ration card can buy a stipulated amount of these items (e.g. 35 kg of grains, 5 liters of kerosene, 5 kg of sugar, etc) every month from the nearby ration shop. The ration cards are of three kinds, colour-coded for easy recognition

- Antyodaya card for the poorest of the poor.
- BPL card for families below the poverty line.
- APL card for all others.

### **Public Distribution System**

In a public distribution system, food procured by FCI is distributed among the poor people through government- regulated shops. Three kinds of ration cards are distributed among the people to avail food grains, sugar and kerosene oil for cooking at a lower price from these fair price shops. Antyodaya cards are provided to the poorest of the poor, below poverty line (BPL) cards for those below the poverty line and above poverty line (APL) cards for all the others.

Because of the high incidence of poverty, three important programmes were implemented in the mid-1970s. They are

the public distribution system in existence earlier but strengthened thereafter for food grains, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) introduced in 1975 and the Food-for-Work (FFW) programme in 1977–78.





### Current Status of the Public Distribution System

In 1992, the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced in 1700 blocks in the country. The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced to adopt the principle of targeting the poor in all areas. In 2000, two special programmers were launched- Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and the Annapurna Scheme (APS). They focused on the special target groups of the poorest of the poor and indigent senior citizens, respectively.

- AAY: One crore of the poorest among the BPL families are covered under this scheme. Twenty-five kilograms of food grains were made available to each eligible family at a subsidised rate of Rs 2 per kg for wheat and Rs 3 per kg for rice. It has been further expanded to two crore families covered under this scheme.
  - Subsidy is a payment which the Government makes to a producer to supplement the market price of a commodity.
  - In July 2002, the stock of wheat and rice with FCI was 63 million tonnes; this was much more than the minimum buffer norms of 24.3 million tonnes.
  - The storage of massive food grains is very undesirable and responsible for high-carrying costs. Freezing the minimum support price (MSP) for few years needs to be considered.
  - Rising MSP has raised the maintenance cost of procuring food grains by the Government. Rising transport and storage costs of the FCI are other contributing factors for the increase in MSP.

- Increase in MSP has induced farmers to divert land from the production of coarse grains to the production of wheat and rice.
- Another major area of concern is the ineffectiveness of PDS which is clear from the fact that the average consumption of PDS grain at the all-India level is only 1 kg per person per month. As a result, the poor have to depend on markets rather than ration shops for the need of food.
- PDS dealers were involved in malpractices such as diverting food grains to the open market for a better margin.

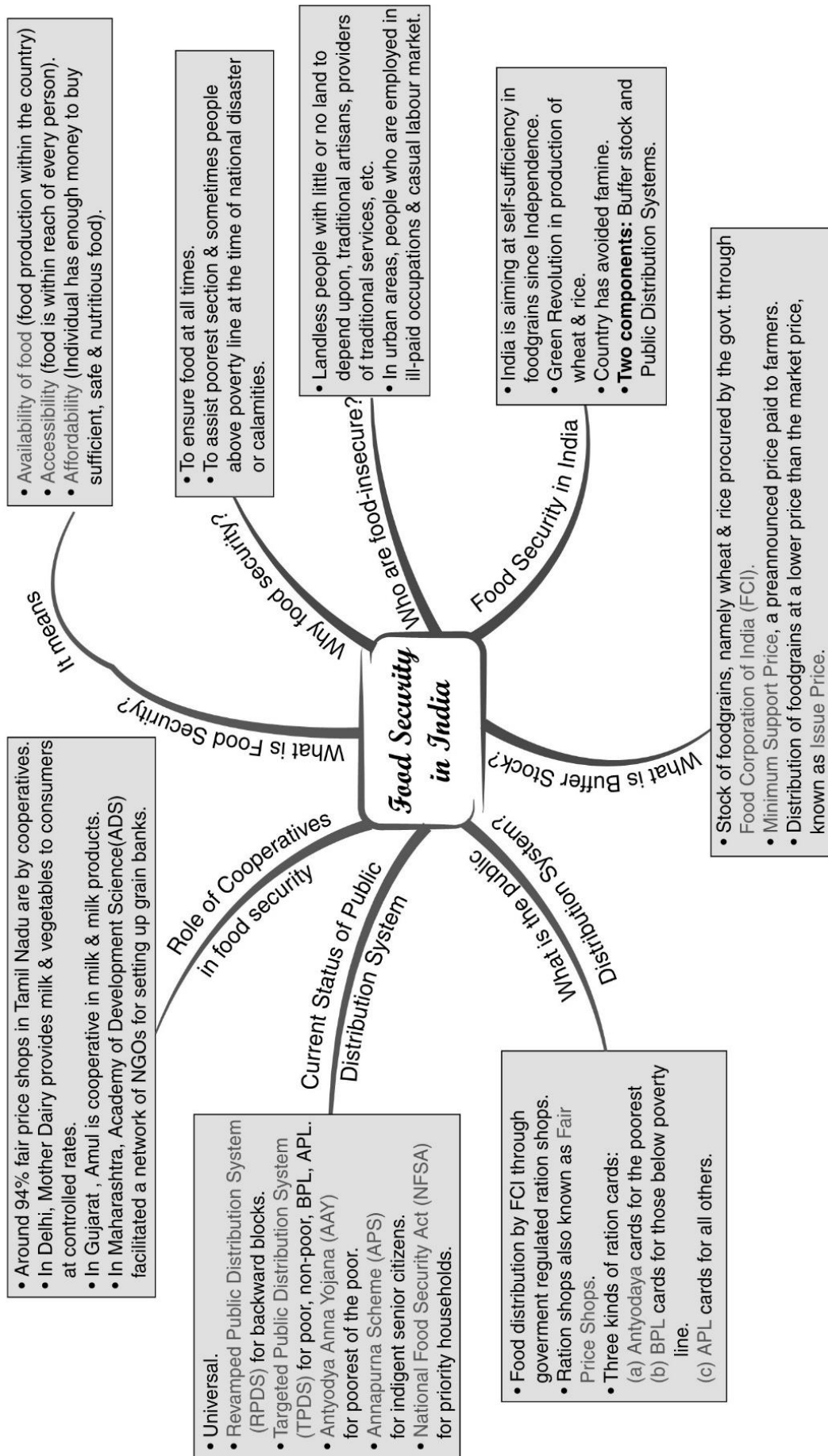
### Role of Cooperatives in Food Security

Cooperative societies set up shops to sell low-priced goods to poor people. These cooperatives play an important role in food security in India.

- Of all fair price shops running in Tamil Nadu, nearly 94% are being run by cooperatives.
- In Delhi, Mother Dairy is making strides in the provision of milk and vegetables to consumers at a controlled rate decided by the Government.
- In milk and milk products, Amul from Gujarat is another cooperative society.
- The Academy of Development Science (ADS) has facilitated a network of NGOs for setting up grain banks in different regions of Maharashtra.

In India, the cooperatives are also playing an important role in food security especially in the southern and western parts of the country. The cooperative societies set up shops to sell low priced goods to poor people. Some of the examples of cooperative societies are Mother Dairy in Delhi, Amul from Gujarat, Academy of Development Science (ADS) in Maharashtra.

## CHAPTER- 4 FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA





## Important Questions

### Multiple Choice questions-

Question 1. Chronic hunger is a consequence of diets persistently inadequate:

- (a) in term of quality only
- (b) in term of quantity only
- (c) in term of quantity and quality
- (d) none of the above

Question 2. Seasonal hunger is a type of hunger when a person:

- (a) is unable to get food for the entire year
- (b) is able to get food for the entire year
- (c) is able to get work for the entire year
- (d) is unable to get work for the entire year

Question 3. Since independence, India is aiming at self-sufficiency in:

- (a) food security
- (b) food grains
- (c) work force
- (d) none of these

Question 4. The highest rate of growth in foodgrain was achieved in:

- (a) Punjab and Bihar
- (b) Haryana and Orissa
- (c) Punjab and Haryana
- (d) Punjab

Question 5. There are ..... lakh ration shops all over the country:

- (a) 4.4
- (b) 4.5
- (c) 4.6
- (d) 4.7

Question 6. Fair Price Shops keep stock of:

- (a) only food grains
- (b) food grains and sugar
- (c) food grain, sugar and kerosene oil

(d) none of the above

Question 7. Food security means:

(a) availability of food to all people at all times.

(b) availability and accessibility of food as all people at all times.

(c) availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times.

(d) none of the above.

Question 8. The famine of Bengal occurred is:

(a) 1941

(b) 1942

(c) 1943

(d) 1944

Question 9. Starvation deaths are also reported in Baran district of:

(a) West Bengal

(b) Bihar

(c) Orissa

(d) Rajasthan

Question 10. Food security is needed in a country:

(a) to ensure food at all times

(b) to ensure food to the rich

(c) to ensure food at sometimes

(d) none of the above

Question 11. The food insecure people are disproportionately large:

(a) in all the states of India

(b) in the states of Bihar and Orissa

(c) in some region of the country

(d) none of the above.

Question 12. Hunger is another aspect indicating:

(a) food security

(b) food insecurity

(c) to meet their demands

(d) none of the above

**Very Short Questions-**

Question 1. What does 'Food Security' mean?

Question 2. On what factors does food security depend on?

Question 3. How does the situation of starvation arise?

Question 4. Which was the most devastating famine to have occurred in India?

Question 5. What kind of people in rural areas are food insecure?

Question 6. Which other parts of society are prone to food insecurity?

Question 7. How people affected by natural disasters are food insecure?

Question 8. Does hunger cause food insecurity?

Question 9. Which states achieved the highest rate of growth in food grain production during Green Revolution?

Question 10. Which states continued to lag behind in food production despite Green Revolution?

### Short Questions-

Question 1. Explain the three dimensions of food security.

Question 2. How is food security ensured in a country?

Question 3. What kind of people faces food insecurity?

Question 4. How is food security affected during a calamity?

Question 5. How do famines lead to widespread deaths?

Question 6. In which areas of India even today famine has caused starvation deaths?

Question 7. What type of people in urban areas are food insecure?

Question 8. Is it true that a high incidence of malnutrition prevails among women?

Question 9. In which regions are food insecure people disproportionately large in our country?

Question 10. Which states of India account for the largest number of food insecure people?

### Long Questions-

Question 1. What are the dimensions of 'food security'?

Question 2. Why do we need 'food security'?

Question 3. How is food security affected during a calamity?

Question 4. What is a 'famine'? Which states in India are affected by famines?

Question 5. Who are the most affected food insecure people in India?

Question 6. How are food insecure people disproportionately large in some regions of the country?

Question 7. Cite evidences which explain that India is self-sufficient in food grain production.

### MCQ Answers-

1. Answer: (c) in term of quantity and quality
2. Answer: (c) is able to get work for the entire year
3. Answer: (b) food grains
4. Answer: (c) Punjab and Haryana
5. Answer: (c) 4.6
6. Answer: (c) food grain, sugar and kerosene oil
7. Answer: (c) availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times.
8. Answer: (c) 1943
9. Answer: (d) Rajasthan
10. Answer: (a) to ensure food at all times
11. Answer: (c) in some region of the country
12. Answer: (b) food insecurity

### Very Short Answers-

1. **Answer:** Food security means availability, accessibility and affordability of food to all people at all times.
2. **Answer:** Food security depends on the Public Distribution System (PDS) and government vigilance and action at times when this security is threatened.
3. **Answer:** If any calamity happens in a very widespread area or is stretched over a large time period, it may cause a situation of starvation. A massive starvation might take the form of famine.
4. **Answer:** The most devastating famine that had occurred in India was the famine of Bengal in 1943. This famine killed thirty lakh people in the province of Bengal.
5. **Answer:** The worst affected groups are landless people with little or no land to depend upon, traditional artisans, providers of traditional services, petty self employed workers and destitute including beggars.
6. **Answer:** The SCs, STs and some sections of OBCs who have either poor land base or very low land productivity are prone to food insecurity.
7. **Answer:** The people affected by natural disasters, who have to migrate to other areas in search of work, are also among the most food insecure people, since they are not settled in their life.
8. **Answer:** Hunger is another aspect indicating food insecurity, arising from poverty.
9. **Answer:** Punjab and Haryana achieved the highest rate of growth in the production of wheat.
10. **Answer:** Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and the northeastern states lagged behind in food production, despite Green Revolution.

## Short Answers-

1. **Answer:** Availability of food means food production within the country, accessibility means food within reach of every person and affordability is that an individual has enough money to buy sufficient safe food.
2. **Answer:** Food security is ensured in a country only if enough food is available for all persons, all persons have the capacity to buy food of acceptable quality and there is no barrier on access to food.
3. **Answer:** The poorest section of the society might be food insecure most of the times while persons above the poverty line might also be food insecure when the country faces a national disaster/calamity like drought, flood, tsunami, widespread failure of crops causing famine, etc.
4. **Answer:** Due to a national calamity say, drought, total production of food grain decreases. It creates a shortage of food in the affected areas. Due to shortage of food the prices go up. At the high prices, many people cannot afford to buy food.
5. **Answer:** A famine is characterised by widespread deaths due to starvation and epidemics caused by forced use of contaminated water or decaying food and loss of body resistance due to weakening from starvation.
6. **Answer:** Even today there are places like Kalahandi district and Kashipur tehsil in Raigarh district of Odisha where Some starvation deaths have been reported due to famine like conditions. Starvation deaths are also reported in Baran district of Rajasthan and Palamau district of Jharkhand.
7. **Answer:** In the urban areas, the food insecure families are those whose working members are generally employed in ill-paid occupations and casual labour market. These workers are largely engaged in seasonal activities and are paid very low wages that just ensure basic survival.
8. **Answer:** This is a matter of serious concern as it is true. It puts even the unborn baby at the risk of malnutrition. A large proportion of pregnant and nursing mothers and children under the age of 5 years constitute an important segment of food insecure population.
9. **Answer:** The food insecure people are disproportionately large in some regions of the country, such as economically backward states with high incidence of poverty, tribal and remote areas, regions more prone to natural disasters, etc.
10. **Answer:** The states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra account for the largest number of food insecure people in the country.

## Long Answers-

1. **Answer: The dimensions of food security are:**
  - i. **Availability of food:** It is the food production within the country including food imports and previous year stock of food in government granaries.
  - ii. **Accessibility:** This means food within the reach of every person.
  - iii. **Affordability:** This means whether the individual has enough money to buy sufficient and



nutritious food.

**2. Answer: Food security is needed because:**

- i. The poorest section of the society might be food insecure most of the times.
- ii. People above the poverty line might also be food insecure when the country faces a national disaster or calamity like an earthquake, drought, flood, tsunami, etc.
- iii. There can also be a widespread failure of crops causing famines, etc.

**3. Answer:**

- i. Due to a natural calamity, total production of food grains decreases.
- ii. It creates a shortage of food in the affected area.
- iii. Due to shortage of food, the prices go up.
- iv. At higher prices, some people cannot afford to buy food.
- v. If such a calamity occurs in a widespread area, it may cause a situation of starvation.
- vi. A massive situation of starvation might turn into a famine.

**4. Answer:** A famine is characterised by widespread deaths due to starvation and epidemics caused by forced use of contaminated water or decaying food and loss of body resistance due to weakening from starvation:

- i. The most devastating famine that occurred in India was the Famine of Bengal in 1943. This famine killed 30 lakh people in the province of Bengal.
- ii. Even today, there are places like Kalahandi and Kshipur in Orissa, where famine-like conditions have been existing for many years and starvation deaths have also been reported.
- iii. Starvation deaths are also reported in Baran district of Rajasthan, Palamau district of Jharkhand and many other remote areas during the recent years.

**5. Answer: Worst affected people in rural areas are:**

- i. Landless people with little or no land to depend on.
- ii. The traditional artisans.
- iii. Providers of traditional services like Pandits performing religious ceremonies.
- iv. Petty, self-employed workers.
- v. Poor and the destitute including beggars.

**Worst affected people in urban areas are:**

- i. Those families are food insecure whose working members are generally employed in ill-paid occupations.
- ii. Casual labour in the market.
- iii. These workers are mostly engaged in seasonal activities and are paid very low wages that just ensure their bare survival.

**6. Answer:**

- i. There are some states which are economically backward states with high incidence of poverty.
- ii. These are the tribal and remote areas, and regions more prone to natural disasters, etc.
- iii. In fact, the states of UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra account for the largest number of food insecure people in the country.

**7. Answer:** India has become self-sufficient in food grain production during the last thirty years.

- i. This is because of a variety of crops grown all over the country.
- ii. The availability of food grains even in adverse weather conditions or otherwise, has further been ensured with a carefully designed food security system by the government.
- iii. **This system has two components:**
  - (a) Buffer stocks and
  - (b) Public distribution system.