



FOOD SECURITY, INFLATION AND FISCAL DEFICIT IN INDIAN ECONOMY

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Abstract- This paper depicts a thorough analysis of the plausible implications of the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The paper finds out that how National Food Security Act may improve the nutritional status of the population. The paper links insecurity with price rise. Act is being brought in the Parliament when internationally, conditional cash transfers (CCTs), rather than physical distribution of subsidized food, have been found to be more efficient in achieving food and nutritional security. Paper also examines that how the National Food Security Act is giving the solution of the existing problem. It has been used for the government stability in coming Lok Sabha election.

Keywords- National Food Security Act, conditional cash transfers, Food Security. Poor Population

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Introduction

National Insecurity among lower income groups may be visible because of falling real wage, loss of purchasing potentiality and price rise. It is being observed that wage of informal sector labor including those of BPL families has not changed much, real wage and income have not gone up and food inflation has gone up to an undesirable level. As a consequence insecurity is highly visible and needs attention. Food Security Act aims to provide food and nutritional security. It ensures access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity. The National Food Security Act (NFSA), tabled in the parliament on 22 December 2011, and passed in Lok Sabha on August, 27, 2013 and by Rajya Sabha on September 2, 2013 and subsequently assented by the President of India proposes to divide the households into three groups. Section 2(3) of the Act clarifies that eligible households are households covered under priority households and the Antyodaya Anna Yojana. Priority households are entitled to 5 kg of food grains per person per month at subsidized rates (Schedule 1). Identification of eligible households will be transparently recorded (Chapter VI).

Households covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana qualify for 7 kg of food grains per capita per month. The commodity wise prices are given in Schedule 1. Entitlements will be covering upto 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population. The state government may also provide wheat flour in lieu of the entitled quantity of food grains. In Section 2(11) of the Act it is mentioned that a meal implies a hot-cooked meal or pre-cooked and heated meal or even take home ration, as may be prescribed by the Central Government. Children aged six months to 14 years are entitled

to collect take-home rations or hot cooked food. The Act classifies the population into an Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) group, a priority group and an excluded category. The Antyodaya Anna Yojana is an older scheme launched by the Central Government in 2000. The excluded category is maintained at 25% of the rural and 50% of the urban population. The AAY category will be as per existing norms of about 10% of all households. The Act provides separate entitlements to various groups. The poorest of the poor (the AAY group) will receive 35 kg of food grains per household per month while others (the priority group) will receive only 5 kg of food grains/person/month.

Thus it appears that the key features of NFSA are as follows:

1. Statutory understanding of hunger and malnutrition and making the right to food a legal claim and also doubling the people covered under PDS scheme from 36% to 67% of the population.
2. Strengthening and large expansion of the PDS.
3. Proceeding farther from the poverty line based divisions of APL and BPL
4. Those states who were buying quantum of APL grain such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh will continue getting it at current APL prices (Schedule IV).
5. The maternal entitlements will now be universal;
6. In schedule II, the deletion of notes 1, 2 and 6 have at least prevented the logic for the entry of contractors. Although the clauses asking for removal of commercial interest from all food schemes and preference to local community.
7. In a bid to give women more authority in running their households, the oldest adult woman in each house would be consid-

ered the head of that household for the issuing of ration cards. Moreover, pregnant and lactating women will be entitled to free meals during pregnancy and six months after child birth. They will also receive maternity benefit of at least ₹ 6000.

8. The obligations of both the Centre and State governments have been categorically differentiated in the Act. The centre will allocate food grains to states based on the formulae of number of persons to be covered in each state. However, if the annual allocation to a state is less than the quantity of food grains it lifts from the central stocks for the last three years under the existing TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System), the same shall be protected at prices determined by the Centre. The Act specifies the quantity of allocation to states.
9. The Centre will transport food grains to the central depots in each state. The state will be responsible for the last point delivery transporting food grains from the state depots to each ration shop. In case of short supply of food grains, the Centre will provide cash to the states, which will be passed on to the beneficiaries. The Centre will provide states with funds in case of short supply of food grains. The Centre shall also sanction assistance to state governments for meeting their expenditure on intra-state movement, handling of food grains, and margins paid to fair price shop dealers.
10. States have also been given the responsibility to decide on eligibility criteria based on socio-economic and caste census (SECC) data. However, the SECC survey is likely to take six more months. As per the amended proposal, states have one year to implement the scheme. Earlier, the limit was six months

Chapter IX provides a grievance redressal system. It has been set up at the district and state levels. Vigilance committees have also been established at the state, district, block and ration shop levels. The bill also contains provisions for social audits. The Bill provides for penalty to be imposed on public servants or authority, if found guilty of failing to comply with the relief recommended by the District Grievance Redressal Officer.

Food Security Act is perhaps the most important national effort yet to address these deficiencies in India. It is at times assumed that the relationship between economic growth and health is unidirectional with improving economic conditions leading to better health. In reality, and as confirmed by recent research, the reverse is equally true and health is an 'economic engine.' That is, better health which is an important end in itself leads to and may, in certain cases, be a necessary prerequisite for economic development. Hence besides being an end in itself, the economic role of health and nutrition thus provide an additional and compelling rationale for public policy to support well targeted nutrition.

The Expert Committee understands the logic of this view but is also conscious of the fact that this implies a massive procurement of food grains and a very large distribution network entailing a substantial step up in subsidy. Since the coverage proposed by the NAC is also not 100% and there are differential categories of entitlement, the need for proper identification of beneficiaries still exists. The approach of the Expert Committee in examining these recommendations has been to secure the wholly laudable underlying objectives in a way that is sustainable and administratively feasible. With this end in view the Expert Committee has identified the following major operational issues which need to be resolved to realize the goals of the proposed NFSA:

Given the current status of food grain production and government procurement, and the likely improvements in these over time, will there be adequate availability of grain with the public authorities to implement the full entitlements for the priority and general category as proposed in the NFSA?

What will be the impact of such large government food grain procurement on the open market prices? This is relevant since both the priority and general category will be purchasing a part of their consumption needs from the open market.

What are the subsidy implications for both the phases and can these levels be sustained in the future?

Given the inefficiencies and leakages in the current distribution system, identify the principal areas of reform of the PDS and the alternative mechanisms reaching the food grain/subsidy to the entitled households.

Material

Economic Features of Target Groups

The National Food Security Act threatens to undermine this positive trend. It effectively reimposes BPL targeting under another name that too based on rigid national criteria. 'Priority groups' are not fundamentally different from BPL households, and the Socio-Economic and Caste Census, which seems to be expected to identify priority households, is much the same as earlier BPL censuses. In fact, the term 'Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011' appears to be treated as interchangeable with 'BPL Census 2011' on the website of the Ministry of Rural Development. This is a serious problem: the 'hit or miss' approach involved in BPL censuses is bad enough when the PDS is run as a scheme, but it is especially problematic for the purpose of legal entitlements. A legal right cannot leave any ambiguity as to who is entitled to it. There is a simple way out of this mess: abolish the distinction between general and priority groups, and give all households a common minimum entitlement under the PDS *unless* they meet well-defined 'exclusion criteria'. In other words, target the rich instead of trying to target the poor.

Indeed, the rationale of the distinction between general and priority households is far from clear. Neither the National Advisory Council, nor the Rangarajan Committee, nor any other expert group recommended that the proportion of excluded households should be as high as 25% in rural areas (and 50% in urban areas), as the bill prescribes. Insisting, after *this exclusion exercise*, on a further distinction between priority and general households is unnecessary, counterproductive, and impractical. There is, of course, a case for giving special treatment to the poorest households (e.g. by giving them pulses and edible oil, in addition to foodgrains, under the PDS). But this purpose would be better served by retaining and consolidating the Antyodaya programme, which is working reasonably well and already covers about 25 million rural households. This simplified framework would be relatively practical, transparent, equitable and politically appealing. Most people would be clear about their entitlements, making it much more likely that the Act will succeed. This approach would also resolve much of the alarming confusion that surrounds the Socio-Economic and Caste Census, the National Food Security Act, poverty lines, and related matters [1].

Identification of Target Groups

The Act does not specify criteria for the identification of households (Priority or Antyodaya) eligible for PDS entitlements. The Central Government is to determine the state-wise coverage of the PDS, in

terms of proportion of the rural/urban population. Then numbers of eligible persons will be calculated from Census population figures. The identification of eligible households is left to state governments, subject to the scheme's guidelines for Antyodaya, and subject to guidelines to be "specified" by the state government for Priority households. The lists of eligible households are to be placed in the public domain and "displayed prominently" by state governments.

To improve the functioning and to improve the standard of living of targeting group and for motivational approach and to improve the efficiency following steps are taken by Food Security Act :

Coverage and Entitlement under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)

Instead of coverage of upto 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population under two categories of priority and general households with different entitlements and issue prices provided in the original Bill, there would be only one category of beneficiaries with uniform entitlement of 5 kg per person per month [2,3].

Protection of Entitlements under Targeted Public Distribution System

The entitlement of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households, which constitute poorest of the poor will, however, be protected at 35 kg per household per month. It is also proposed to accept the recommendation of the Committee to protect the existing allocation of food grains to the States/UTs, subject to it being restricted to average annual off take during last three years, 2009-10 to 2011-12 [4].

State-wise Coverage and Identification of Beneficiaries

Corresponding to coverage of 75% / 50% of the rural/urban population at the all India level, State-wise coverage will be determined by the Planning Commission. The work of identification of eligible households is proposed to be left to the States/UTs, which may frame their own criteria or use the Social Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data.

Subsidized Prices under TPDS and their Revision

Uniform prices of ₹ 3/2/1 per kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains respectively will be applicable to all eligible beneficiaries. It is proposed to fix these prices for the first three years of implementation of the Act, and thereafter link the same suitably to MSP.

Cost of Intra-State Transportation & Handling of Food Grains and FPS Dealers' Margin

In order to address the concerns of States/UTs regarding additional financial burden, it is proposed that Central Government may provide assistance to States towards cost of intra-State transportation, handling of food grains and FPS Dealers' margin, for which norms will be devised.

At the coverage and entitlement now proposed, total estimated annual food grains requirement is 612.3 lakh tons and the corresponding estimated food subsidy for implementation of NFSB, at 2013-14 costs, is about ₹ 1,24747 crore. When compared to the estimated food subsidy requirement under existing TDPS and Other Welfare Schemes, the additional food subsidy implication is about ₹ 23,800 crore per annum. Requirement for assistance to States for meeting the expenditure on Transportation, Handling and FPS Dealers' margin, etc. would be additional.

Food Inflation Led Insecurity

According to the World Bank, India is the second most populous country in the world with approximately 1.22 billions people.

In 2010, the World Bank estimated India's population to have 32.7% below the international Poverty Line of \$1.25 per day purchasing power parity (PPP) and 68.7% live on less than \$2.00 per day. India's poverty line however is much less than International Poverty Line and was recently lowered to ₹ 28 (rupees) per day; depending on the currency rate exchange ₹ 28 is approximate \$ 0.56 per day.

We examine here different aspects of the present four-year phase of uninterrupted high inflation (2008-2012). Also explored here is inflation's impact on the purchasing power and food security of poor people and other related issues. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) which uses 2004-05 as the base year (it was 100 in 2004-05), stood at 168.7 in October 2012. One rupee's purchasing power in October 2012 was equal to 23 paise in 1990-91 [Table-1]. In other words, the rupee lost more than three-fourths of its worth during this period. On the basis of the Consumer Price Index (CPI-IW), the loss in the rupee's purchasing power during this period has been much steeper: one rupee's purchasing power in October 2012 was equal to 19 paise in 1990-91.

Table 1- Purchasing Power of Rupee (Base 1990-91=100 paise)

Year/ Period	Amount	
	Based on WPI	Based on CPI-IW
1990-91	100	100
1993-94	74	75
1997-98	55	53
2000-01	47	43
2006-07	36	34
2009-10	30	26
October 2012	23	19

Provisional WPI figures indicate that primary articles having 20.12% weight in the WPI basket recorded 9.41% year-to-year inflation rate in November 2012.
 Source: Ministry of Finance data and Upadhyey [12].

Figures for the last six months [Table-2] clearly demonstrate that primary articles (including food items) and fuel and power have been showing the fastest increase in prices which, in other words, means that it is the poor people who are the worst sufferers from inflationary trends. WPI, however, can at times be a misleading indicator of price rise. WPI is based on wholesale prices, which are not the prices at which consumers buy products.

Table 2- Trend of Rate of Inflation based on WPI

Major Groups	Weight	Nov-12	Oct-12	Sep-12	Aug-12	Jul-12	Jun-12
All Commodities	100%	7.24	7.45	8.07	8.01	7.52	7.57
Primary Articles	20.12%	0.41	8.21	9.21	11.23	10.54	9.74
Food Articles	14.34%	8.49	6.62	8.06	9.34	10.16	10.91
Fuel and Power	14.91%	10.02	11.71	12	8.73	8.39	12.06
Manufactured Products	64.97%	5.41	5.94	6.47	6.35	5.86	5.36

Source: Ministry of Commerce

The impact of change in prices on household budgets can be better studied with the help of the Consumer Price Indices (CPIs), which are based on retail prices. These indices have weighting patterns quite different from the WPI. For example, the food group has 46.20% weight in the Consumer Price Index basket for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) in the new series introduced from January 2006,

compared to the 24.31% weight in the WPI basket. During 2010, the rate of inflation based on CPI-IW index was consistently and significantly higher than the WPI-based inflation rate for every month. During 2011 (up to November) these two rates showed convergence at around 10% [Table-3]. But again, from March 2012, CPI-IW rate has been significantly higher than the WPI-based rate. This shows that in the current high inflation period, the WPI has generally, failed to capture the true impact of the price rise experienced by the people [5].

Table 3-General Inflation and Food Inflation based on WPI and CPI-IW

Year	Month	WPI	CPI-IW	All India General CPI
2011-12	Jan	7.23	5.32	7.65
	Feb	7.56	7.57	8.83
	March	7.69	8.65	9.37
	April	7.5	10.22	10.26
	May	7.55	10.16	10.36
2012-13	June	7.58	10.05	9.93
	July	7.52	9.84	9.86
	Aug	8.01	10.31	10.03
	Sep	8.07	9.14	9.73
	Oct	7.45	9.6	9.75
	Nov	7.24		9.9
	Dec	7.18		10.56

Source: Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Labour; P: Provisional Estimates

Governance on Food Pricing and Controlling

The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who was earlier in the news for suggesting that food inflation is occurring because people are becoming more prosperous in India and eating more, stated in Davos that not only are the recent increases in petrol prices justified but diesel prices will also be decontrolled and increased in the near future. Ministers are also suggesting that the solution to food inflation lie in allowing MNCs like Walmart and Tesco to open supermarkets in India. These callous and cruel statements are symbolic of a Government, which has dropped even its pretence of working for the *aam admi*.

There are four main reasons.

- The immediate reason for the spurt in the prices of specific food items, like onions today or earlier in the case of sugar and pulses, is hoarding. Trader cartels, encouraged by an inept Government, are mainly responsible for this. Assured of inaction, hoarders are creating artificial shortages.
- Secondly, the growing penetration of big corporates in the food economy, international trade of food items and speculative futures trading in agricultural commodities have weakened the government’s capacity to control food prices. The share of corporate retail in food distribution has tripled over the past four years. The PDS has been weakened considerably through targeting. In most states, the role of the ration shops, state agencies like the NAFED etc. and consumer cooperatives in food distribution, has been whittled down. The profit margins of private traders have also increased, reflected in growing gaps between wholesale and retail prices.
- There are medium and long-term reasons too. Our agriculture is in a crisis. We are not producing enough to meet the needs of a growing population. The peasantry continues to be in distress,

with 2.5 lakh farmers committing suicide over the past 15 years. State intervention in raising agricultural productivity has been weakened [6].

- Finally, the cuts in subsidies and price hikes of inputs like diesel and fertiliser are also contributing to food inflation. The deregulation of petrol prices has led to very steep hikes in the recent weeks.

The present steps being undertaken by the Government are inadequate. What we need is a long-term strategy to fight inflation. The first step should be to strengthen state intervention in the food economy, both in food distribution and production [6].

Food inflation has been a continuing theme in India for the past decade, and its persistence almost without any remission over the entire period of the two UPA governments suggests that it has provided to be relatively intractable at least for Indian policy makers to address. [Fig-1] shows the movements of the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for all commodities as well as for food, indicates that food inflation has significantly outstripped the increases in the general price level.

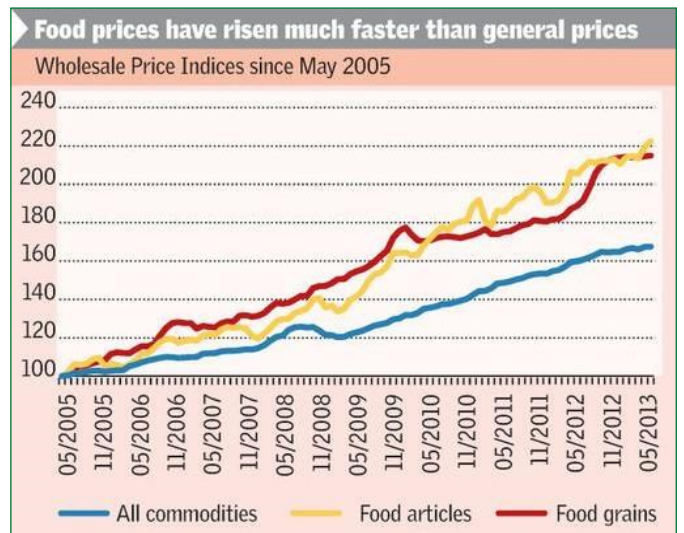


Fig. 1-Trends in Food Inflation, 2005-13

Regarding some methodological issues on estimation of price indices it has been observed that food prices as per WPI for August, 2013 shows a higher food inflation than last year August, 2012, where as food inflation as per CPI for the same month of August is lower this year. This contradiction needs to be clarified. In normal situation difference between estimates of CPI and WPI does not exist. Data just released in September showed that food inflation jumped from 9.3% in August, 2012 to 18.2% on an annualized basis in August 2013 based on WPI. The corresponding figure as per CPI showed a fall from 12% to 11%. The reasons behind this divergence between WPI and CPI are due to a couple of facts. Firstly, the CPI does include data from controlled price shops such as PDS. In PDS outlets prices are lower whereas in WPI only market prices are reflected. Secondly, CPI is calculated on prices at the retail level whereas WPI is estimated by taking mandi level prices. Retail mark ups may occasionally be on the lower side which indicates lower CPI inflation than WPI [5].

Result: Food Subsidy Vs. Conditional Cash Transfer?

Food subsidy Act represents the basic direct cost incurred by the central government on procurement, stocking and supplying to vari-

ous food based safety nets such as PDS. During the last ten years, food subsidy has more than quadrupled from ₹ 17,494 crore in 2001-02 to ₹ 72,823 crore in 2011-12 (RE) at current prices. As a ratio of GDP-Agriculture, it has increased from 3.6 percent to 5.1 percent in the same period. Increasing economic costs of handling food grains, record procurements in recent years and widening difference between the economic cost of food grains and the central issue price have been the major factors leading to the ballooning food subsidy [7,8].

Pooled cost of grain (MSP and bonus) accounts for two-thirds of economic cost of wheat and rice. MSP for paddy & wheat have increased at a compound annual growth rate of 10.9 percent & 8.6 percent over the last five years (2007-08 to 2012-13 marketing seasons). The cost of production of rice and wheat has gone up by more than 45% during last three years (2010-11 to 2012-13 marketing seasons), i.e., on an average, by about 15% per year (according to cost projections made by CACP based on Comprehensive survey done by DES). This is primarily due to sharply rising labour and energy costs, including fertilizers. There is an acute shortage of labor in agriculture that has suddenly cropped up in these three years. In some states, labor costs have gone up by more than 100% over the same period. Due to these rising costs, the margins of production for farmers have been declining both for paddy and wheat. Therefore, the government may have to raise procurement prices for rice and wheat to encourage farmers to increase production of these staples. As the cost of production of crops is rising, MSP can't be kept frozen. The increase in the food subsidy bill will primarily depend on the rate at which the MSP for wheat and rice increases and the economic cost of handling grains (their procurement, stocking and distribution to the targeted households) [9].

CCTs are arguably more efficient than general subsidies, and over time databases and mechanisms can be developed to improve targeting efficiency. Brazil is a classic example of this - the *Bolsa Familia* programme, world's largest conditional cash transfer program, has lifted more than 20 million Brazilians out of acute poverty and also promotes education & health care. These types of social protection systems are now being adopted nearer home too as in Indonesia & Philippines with immense success. Philippines' '*Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program*'-another CCT scheme- costs less than 0.5% of the country's gross domestic product, yet reaches 15 million people. In this context, the recently announced policy of cash transfers for some 29 schemes excluding food and fertilizers' subsidy in 51 districts in 15 states from 1st January, 2013 is a bold step and in the right direction. Under the new system, a cash transfer will happen only when a person has an Aadhaar number, so the wastages from money being transferred to fraudulent or non-existent person is eliminated. The money has to be deposited directly into a beneficiary's bank account. Given the relatively low level of penetration of bank branches, particularly in rural areas, a business correspondent- armed with micro-ATMs linked with the banking system- would render the service. 'Dilli Annashree Yojanaa' recently announced by the Delhi Government is the first such initiative to provide food security through cash transfers. The scheme will facilitate the transfer of cash benefit directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries using an Aadhar-enabled no-frills bank account, which can be accessed only by the senior-most woman member of the vulnerable household. These cash transfers signal a paradigm shift in the use of instruments from price policy to income policy to achieve equity goals. There would certainly be some tech-

nical or exclusion glitches in the beginning but there will be ample savings (in the form of reduced leakages) eventually to revamp the entire infrastructure. Inclusion of food subsidy too in its ambit would further be a right step. So, at the end we can say that CCT is better option than Subsidies but some time inclusion of both the options should be adopted.

Discussions: Political Vision Vs. Social Reason

The percentage of people, who is food insecure, is many times more than what is officially acknowledged [10]. Recently; debates of poverty lines in media have heightened the public awareness about the controversy around the minimalist definition of poverty in India. Measures based on calorie intake put the percent of food insecure people in rural India to around 80% of the rural population [11]. Moreover, despite low level of average calorie intake, the declining intake over last two decades points out serious distress looming, especially in rural India. In context of such mass distress, any step to continue targeting under the national food security bill by the parliament of the nation would be recorded as a sad event in the history.

- Thanks to the sustained high economic growth rates, today the economy and the government undoubtedly possess more resources than earlier. With growing affluence one expects willingness to spend more and improve welfare services to people who are either left out or are affected adversely by the same economic growth. However, with increasing wealth the government has attempted to artificially reduce the extent of the problem through use of undesirable measures such as poverty line and targeting. This trend has to be reversed with help of this law.
- The most damaging impact of targeting is that it divides the poor community. Poor are forced to compete with each other and other better off households in the village to get BPL status. In such competition, many poor households are overtaken by the more influential better-off households and some poor households end up becoming more dependent on the local powerful people. The Fair Price Shops executing the targeted PDS in villages would end up as a mechanism which makes the poor feel (a) the failure of state, (b) the breakdown of community support and (c) their own powerlessness. Such individualising effect on the community members and the poor will deepen the crack within community. The spirit of a law enacted by parliament should be much more than dividing poor and community in the name of food [2].
- The government today realizes that the participation and ownership of the community members in monitoring the scheme is a key to the successful implementation of such massive scheme. It is due to such realization that government is attempting to form and activate local vigilance groups and create provisions for making the service providers accountable. However, a major error committed by the government is that it expects bottom-up democratic processes to follow its unilateral top-down decision to target the food security law. The government must realize that this is a historic opportunity to initiate a bottom-up process, whereby it can cater to the already existing demand from community and civil society members for a universal food security law.
- Both central government and state governments play equally important roles in implementing PDS or the proposed food se-

curity Act. Hence cooperation and ownership between the Centre and States is necessary for successfully implementing the food security act. Given that many states have already opposed moves to use targeting, any attempt to unilaterally bring targeting would mean prematurely killing the scheme and centre-state cooperation before launching it [2,3].

- The PDS coverage should have been made more universal. The privileged class could have even been excluded by simple exclusion criteria like income tax, permanent government employees, and those four wheelers for personal use [5].
- No adequate provisioning of other nutritious grains, pulses and oil.
- There should be higher provision for adult
- Cash transfers and Aadhar remains.
- Food security allowance and section 44 "force majeure" relating to withdrawal of the right in times of natural calamities and war stands. The Centre and States shall not be liable for failure to supply food grains in conditions such as war, flood, drought, earthquake, etc. The Planning Commission may be consulted.
- What was needed was a complete reimagining of the food economy in the country by keeping the small and marginal farmers who are producing food and the most vulnerable person who needs food at its centre.
- Women's safety should be linked to food Act. Food production should be handed to vulnerable women.
- As compared to earlier versions, the Act does not include entitlements for starving, destitute and homeless persons although pregnant women and children still continue to be included as beneficiaries.

Conclusions

The NFSA required universalization coverage. For that it also needs nutritional security, bottom up approach, removing corruption, more area under irrigation, balancing between the farmers' income and the cost of agriculture produce and hence overall financial burden for the government, the real effectiveness of the programme. The most haunting question in 65 years of Independent India exists in the form of hungry and malnourished masses in India. The parliament needs a minimal face saving political will by passing a food security bill, where food rights are guaranteed to all and that no one is denied the right to food. 75% coverage in rural areas and 50% in urban areas are to high targets. Further the honorable Supreme Court hearing the case of Right to Food (PUCL Rajasthan vs. Union of India) has given a series of orders without allowing itself to be bogged down by affordability arguments. In the process of consistently ignoring the economic cost of universalisation, they have managed to read up the food entitlements into the Right to Life. The public policy makers need to take inspiration from this stance. Food inflation created insecurity. Without income switching policy and inflation control right to food will remain a distant dream.

And one thing is also clear here why this bill is presented just before coming Lok Sabha election only because to get vote base expanded and want to attract the attention of voters mainly food insecure people. Government does not want to control public corruption. Else cash transfer could have been a better option.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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