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Trends in food security in India: A cursory view

Niladri De

Abstract

Sustainable food security involves strengthening the livelihood security of all members within a household by ensuring both physical and economic access to balanced diet including the needed micronutrients, safe drinking water, and environment situation, basic health care and primary education. The food should originate from efficient and environmentally benign production technologies that conserve and enhance the natural resource base of crops, farm animals, forestry, inland and marine fishers.

Foodgrain Production depends on many variables like population, food consumption, per capita income etc. For example, if food consumption increases, demand for food increases and as a result food production increase. On the other hand, if population increases, also demand for food increases and food production increases. Also, if per capita income increases, people's quality of life increases and as a result lifestyle of people better off and standard of living increases and demand for food increases and as a result food production increase. Data have been chosen from different statistical handbook and some analysis have been conducted to understand the pattern of trend in the Indian context.

Key Words: Food Production, Population, Food Consumption, Per Capita Income

JEL Classification: J11, Q11.

1. Introduction

The concept of food security has been undergoing an evolutionary change during the last 50 years. In the nineteen fifties, food security was considered essentially in terms of production. It was assumed that adequate production will assure adequate availability of food in the market as well as in the household. In the seventies, it became clear that availability alone does not lead to food security, since those who lack purchasing power will not be able to have access to balanced diets. Purchasing power again is related to jobs or livelihood opportunities. More recently, it is becoming evident that even if availability and access are satisfactory, the biological absorption of food in the body is related to the consumption of clean drinking water as well as to environmental hygiene. Sustainable food security will have to be defined as 'physical, economic, social and ecological access to balanced diets and safe drinking water, so as to enable every individual to lead a productive and healthy life in perpetuity'. Food insecurity occurs when people do not have enough food to satisfy hunger, have an insufficient and limited diet, are anxious about having enough food or need to resort to makeshift coping strategies such as begging, scavenging, or relying on emergency assistance programmers (Cook and Frank, 2008).

Substantial progress has been made in reducing food insecurity in the four decades since the organisation of the first World Conference in 1974. But, maintaining food security at the national and household levels continues to be a major concern for India, both for the welfare of the people as well as for political stability. In order to improve food security, the Government of India has adopted a number of strategies which include concerted efforts to increase foodgrain production, intervention in the grain markets, institution of public distribution system and maintenance of stocks for major foodgrains. However, in spite of several initiatives and strategies, the problems of food and nutritional security continue to persist in India. India is home to one-third of the world's undernourished children, almost half of the Indian children are stunted and 40 per cent are underweight; one-third of the Indian women are also underweight. And high rates of micro-nutrient deficiencies prevail across the board. At the same time, India is the second fastest growing economy in the world.

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