

# POVERTY ERADICATION AND FOOD SECURITY

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## Abstract:

Poverty and food security are complex and multidimensional in character and both are interlinked. Eradication of poverty and provision of food security is indispensable for economic growth and development. The objective of the study is to focus on three important aspects of food security namely, -role of public distribution system, prevention of food wastage and scope of technology/bio-technology in achieving the objective of food security to eradicate poverty. Public distribution is corrupt and inefficient therefore, efforts should be made to eliminate corruption (36% of cereals are sold in black market). Food wastage is inevitable because of traditional practices and methods which have strong resistance to change. Technology in particular bio-technology is giving us hope by adding nutritional value and stimulating agricultural production besides conservation of natural resources. So food security is an ambition to be achieved in the years to come.

**Key words:** poverty eradication, Above poverty line and Below poverty line, food security, public distribution system (PDS), food wastage, technology/bio-technology, nutrition

## Introduction:

Hunger and poverty are interlinked to one another. Worldwide almost 870 million people are chronically undernourished. It is for this reason that they lack full potential. It is a well known fact that about one third of the world's poor population live in rural areas and they directly or indirectly depend on agriculture for their existence.

**Poverty affects intellectualism:-**According to Adam Smith, father of economics, "The real tragedy of the poor is the poverty of their aspirations". Poverty limits their intellectual and dilutes productivity, this keeps the entire society in darkness where poor are unable to realize their potential in them.

Poverty has a cascading effect. It disturbs physical and mental health and makes them unable to think and act beyond subsistence. It is rightly said that –"you cannot teach philosophy to a hungry stomach". So we have to **provide Food security by eradicating poverty.**

## Definition of Poverty:

Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or people in a society lacks the necessary financial resources and amenities to enjoy a minimum standard of living.

Production of goods and services is very important for growth and development. Growth and development are complimentary to each other i.e one does not exist without the other. , *Amarthya Sen*, a noble laureate in economics stated that “Growth alone is not enough to fight poverty... What is needed is an integrated approach to development and growth. He stated that “a healthy and educated workforce can produce a range of commodities....so according to him, health is a very important factor which contributes to growth and development. To be healthy, nutrition is essential. Providing nutritious food is the first aspect to eradicate poverty. The path chosen to achieve the desired objective is food security.

## Meaning of Food Security:

The *World Food Summit* of 1996, defined food security as, “when all people at all time have access to sufficient, safe nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”.

**World Bank** defines Food security as “access by all people at all time to enough food for an active healthy life”. Therefore, food security focuses on the provision of healthy food and optimal nutrition for all.

Poverty eradication is very important to ensure food security particularly, in a country like India, where one third of the population is estimated to be absolutely poor and one half of children are malnourished. Youth accounts for 23.5percent of the world’s working poor, i.e out of 842 million hungry people in the world, nearly 200 million are youth. Similarly, out of 1.2 billion youth in the world almost 88 percent of the youth live in developing countries (60 percent in Asia and 18 percent in Africa).

## Food security measures:-

Food security can be realized by adopting the following measures:-

- 1) **Government policy:** The government policy should be framed in favour of the subsistence sector, by stabilizing the prices of food grains.
- 2) **Effective implementation of agricultural strategies:** this brings out efficiency in administration which in turn helps to realize the desired objective of food security.
- 3) **Opportunities of employment:** opportunities of employment can be created by removing unemployment, underemployment, and disguised unemployment in rural sector.
- 4) **Elimination of defects in agricultural marketing:** this can be provided by adequate technical support for maximum utilization of natural resources in the country which is unutilized, underutilized or mis-utilized.
- 5) **Education:** the government should educate rural India regarding the access to food and also by conducting food security awareness programmes.
- 6) **Reducing food wastage:** lots of vegetables, fruits and ready-to -eat food get wasted in hotels, and social gatherings. This wastage has to be reduced.

**7) Protection:** providing protection to children, women, aged and disabled by ensuring proper access to nutritious food.

### **Objectives of the Study:-**

This paper has been developed by keeping the following objectives:

- 1) To highlight the role of public distribution system in providing food security,
- 2) To prevent food wastage for eradicating poverty and maintaining food security.
- 3) To value the scope of technology/ Bio-technology for providing food security

The above objectives are discussed, as follows:-

***The role of public distribution system in providing food security:-*** Public distribution system is one of the strategies to eradicate poverty in India. With the network of more than 4 lakh fair price shops, public distribution system in India is perhaps the largest distribution machinery of its type in the world. PDS is said to distribute each year commodities worth of about more than 15 thousand crores to about 16 crores families.

The main purpose of PDS was to act as price supporting programmes for the consumers during the periods of food shortage. It also acted as instrument of price stabilization and became a countervailing force against private traders who were trying to exploit the situation of scarcity of food.

The policy of liberalization has resulted in falling income and employment of the vulnerable segments of population and second, the PDS and other safety measures for the poor were less efficient. It can be summarized as the reasons for recent increase in trends in food insecurity are:-

- Falling income and employment of the poor
- Failure of the public distribution system.

Green revolution added additional importance to Public distribution system after which the north Indian states of Punjab, Haryana increased agricultural production and productivity.

To stabilize the prices of food grains, the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** was established in 1964 to facilitate the procurement of food grains, maintenance of buffer stock and distribution of food grains through fair price shop. Under the PDS, mainly wheat and rice, the two principal food crops in India were issued by the central Government.

### **Progress of Public Distribution System (PDS):-**

Till 1996 the PDS in India was universal i.e essential food grains were distributed to everyone irrespective of level of income. In spite of many flaws the PDS in India till 1990's helped stabilization of food grain prices all over the country and avert food crisis. During the severe drought of 1987 and 88, PDS helped in providing food security by averting famine and death.

### **Failure of Public Distribution System in providing food security:-**

During the early 1990's PDS system was criticized on the ground that its marginal impact on food security was not satisfactory. further because of the high price of the food subsidy in 1997, the universal PDS was

replaced by targeted PDS. The new system attempted to divide the population into two categories i.e Above poverty line (APL) and Below poverty line (BPL). Only BPL families were entitled to receive food grains at lower prices through fair price shops. Introduction of Targeted Public distribution system (TPDS) created more problems than it solved and PDS system became more inefficient.

According to NSS report on PDS **58** percent of subsidized food grains do not reach BPL families. As **22** percent reach above poverty line families, while **36** percent are sold in black market. Only **57** percent of below poverty line household families have ration cards.

After 1991 intense pressure from IMF and World Bank to reduce the budget deficit brought a sharp rise in the prices of food grains unmatched by higher prices for farmers. Again, with the introduction of TPDS in 1997, *within ten years all that had been gained over a generation was lost.*

### ***Prevent food wastage for eradicating poverty and maintaining food security:-***

Prevention of food wastage is essential for food security. Cooking has both beneficial and adverse effect on nutrition. On the one hand it improves taste and digestibility of food items on the other it leads to loss of nutrients. Cooking food above 70°C for long destroys the proteins contained in the food. Prevention of food wastage helps in ensuring food security.

To prevent wastage of food the following steps should be followed:-

- To increase the yield of food grains fruits and vegetables, harmful insects and weeds should be controlled
- Suitable pesticides should be used to keep of pests
- Keep in mind the nutritive value of food articles in mind while buying them.
- Food should not be wasted in social and religious functions.
- One should buy limited quantity of food which can be either consumed or kept safely at homes.
- It is better to avoid undesirable cooking practices like:-
  - a) Do not cook in open pans used pressure cooker for cooking.
  - b) Fruits and vegetables should not be washed after cutting or peeling as it washes away many soluble vitamins.
  - c) Baking soda should be avoided as it destroys vitamin –c and vitamin B complex

### ***Scope of technology/bio-technology for providing food security:-***

Technology use in agriculture has brought substantial changes in quality and quantity of agricultural production by increasing the level of output on the one hand and enhancing the quality of output on the other. Technology provides food security by increasing agricultural production. Few of them can be mentioned below:-

- a) Use of machinery in production
- b) Improving crop yields.
- c) Better transportation facilities for example consumers on Dubai will consume fresh carrot from Africa on the same day.
- d) Modern cooling facilities- perishable fruits and vegetables are preserved for a long time
- e) Introduction of high yielding variety of seeds.

f) Irrigation facilities

The essence of Bio-technology is important in genetic research. Genetic engineering has application in agriculture. Synthetic biology is gaining great prominence in developing value added nutritional and food ingredients. Food security is provided by using bio-technology for conservation of natural resources and stimulating agricultural production.

### Conclusion:

The observation of the discussed facts helps us in making analysis on food security for eradication of poverty. The findings are:

To improve public distribution system an improvement in the functioning of fair price should be made by removing in-efficiency and corruption. It is also suggested that reduction in wastages and unnecessary costs of food Corporation of India enhances food security and eradicates poverty.

Food wastage should be prevented by proper storage of food grains, fruits and vegetables to be protected from them damage due to abiotic factors like temperature and humidity. Well ventilated godowns clean and dry containers should be used for storing purposes. This increases food production and reduces poverty.

Bio-technology can play a significant role in meeting economic challenges in the years to come. With oil demand expected to grow by 40 percent over the next decade, bio-fuels offers an attractive opportunity to conserve and economize the use of conventional fuels like petrol and diesel which indirectly help to transport agricultural goods from field to markets. Bio-technology helps to eradicate poverty by increasing protein and vitamin supplements derived from genetically modified plants and microbial fermentation.

