

Food security in India: Performance, policies and challenges

Harish Kumar K, Mathur V. C and Punit Kumar
Division of Agricultural Economics, IARI, India

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. It has three components, viz., availability, access and nutrition. Food availability is a necessary condition for food security. India is more or less self-sufficient in production of cereals but deficit in pulses and oilseeds production. Due to changes in consumption patterns, demand for fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, poultry and fisheries has been increasing. So, there is need to focus on crop diversification and allied activities. Access to food is another component of food security which can be increased through employment generation and social protection programmes. The nutrition component of food security is much broader than that of access to food. This problem needs a multi-disciplinary approach covering diet diversification including micronutrients, women's empowerment, education, health, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. Government of India through National Food Security bill plans to provide foodgrains at subsidized price to households. Estimation according to the bill shows that, it requires 53 mt of food for distribution through Targeted Public Distribution System and food subsidy will increase to Rs.988 billion. Thus, it raises country's fiscal deficit position. So, in order to reap the benefit of this, nutrition education should combine a rights-based approach for better impact. Also, better governance is very important for effective functioning of food-based programmes.

harish.kallega@gmail.com