

Food Security in India

Question 1: How is food security ensured in India?

Answer: Food security is ensured in a country when the three dimensions of food security are taken care of. The three dimensions are:

Availability of food – Presence of enough food for all the persons

Accessibility of food – Absence of barrier on access to food

Affordability of food – Capability of all persons to buy food of acceptable quality

Question 2: Which are the people more prone to food insecurity?

Answer: A large section of people suffer from food and nutrition insecurity in India.

However, the worst affected groups are as follows:

- Landless and land-poor households, traditional artisans, providers of traditional services, petty self-employed workers and destitute including beggars (in the rural areas).
- People employed in ill-paid occupations and casual labourers engaged in seasonal activities (in the urban areas).
- People belonging to the backward sections of society, namely SCs, STs and OBCs.
- People belonging to economically-backward states with high incidence of poverty, tribal and remote areas and regions more prone to natural disasters.
- People affected by natural disasters who have to migrate to other areas in search of work.
- Large proportion of pregnant and nursing mothers, and children under the age of 5 years.

Question 3: Which states are more food insecure in India?

Answer: The economically-backward states with high incidence of poverty are more food insecure in India. The states of Uttar Pradesh (eastern and south-eastern parts), Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra account for the largest number of food insecure people in the country.

Question 4: Do you believe that green revolution has made India self-sufficient in food grains? How?

Answer: In the late 1960s, the Green Revolution introduced the Indian farmer to the cultivation of high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of seeds. The HYVs (coupled with chemical fertilisers and pesticides) led to a growth in the productivity of food grains (especially wheat and rice), thereby helping India attain self-sufficiency in food grains. Since the advent of the Green Revolution, the country has avoided famine even during adverse weather conditions.

Question 5: A section of people in India are still without food. Explain?

Answer: Despite large increase in food grain production we find people without food in

India. Poor people suffer from chronic hunger. They find themselves unable to buy food. Over one-fifth of the country's population still suffers from chronic hunger.

Question 6: What happens to the supply of food when there is a disaster or a calamity?

Answer: When there is a disaster or a calamity, the production of food grains decreases in the affected area. This in turn creates a shortage of food in the area. Due to the food shortage, the prices go up. The raised prices of food materials affect the capacity of many people to buy the same. When the calamity occurs in a very wide spread area or is stretched over a long period of time, it may cause a situation of starvation. A massive starvation can take the form of famine.

Question 7: Differentiate between seasonal hunger and chronic hunger?

Answer: Seasonal hunger is related to cycles of food growing and harvesting. This is prevalent in rural areas because of the seasonal nature of agricultural activities, and in urban areas because of the casual labour (e.g., there is less work for casual construction labour during the rainy season). This type of hunger exists when a person is unable to get work for the entire year.

Chronic hunger is a consequence of diets persistently inadequate in terms of quantity and/or quality. Poor people suffer from chronic hunger because of their very low income and in turn, inability to buy food even for survival.

Question 8: What has our government done to provide food security to the poor? Discuss any two schemes launched by the government?

Answer: The food security is ensured in India by the Government by carefully designed food security system. This system is composed of two components:

- (a) Maintaining a Buffer Stock of food grains,
- (b) Through the distribution of these food grains among the poorer sections of the society with the help of a Public Distribution System (PDS).

In addition to the above, the Government has launched several Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) that comprise a component of food security. Some of these programmes are – Mid-Day Meals, Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), and Food-For-Work (FFW) etc.

Two schemes launched by the government to provide food security to the poor are:

- Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY): This scheme was launched in December 2000. Under this scheme one crore of the poorer among the BPL families, covered by the Public Distribution System (PDS) were identified. Twenty-five kilograms of food grains were made available to each of the eligible family at a highly subsidized rate. After about two years, the quantity was enhanced from 25 kg to 35 kg. In June 2003, and August 2004, additional 50 lakh families were added to this scheme twice. In this way about 2 crore families have been brought under the AAY.

- **Food for Work (FFW):** This programme was launched in November 2004 in 150 most backward districts of the country. The main objective of this scheme is to intensify the generation of supplementary wage employment. This scheme is open to all rural poor who are willing to do unskilled labour. In return of the work, the workers are supplied food grains or money as they like.

Question 9: Why buffer stock is created by the government?

Answer: A buffer stock of food grains is created by the government so as to distribute the procured food grains in the food-deficit areas and among the poorer strata of society at a price lower than the market price. A buffer stock helps resolve the problem of shortage of food during adverse weather conditions or during periods of calamity.

Question 10: Write notes on:

(a) Minimum support price

Answer (a): Minimum Support Price (MSP) – This is the pre-announced price at which the government purchases food grains particularly, wheat and rice from the farmer in order to create a buffer stock. This price is announced by the government every year before the sowing season to give incentive to the farmers to raise the production of the desired crop. The rising MSPs have raised the maintenance cost of procuring food grains by the government as well as induced farmers to divert land from production of coarse grains to the production of these crops

(b) Buffer stock

Answer (b): Buffer Stock – It is the stock of food grains particularly, wheat and rice which the government procures through the Food Corporation of India (FCI). The FCI purchases these cereals directly from the farmers of those states where they are in surplus. The price of these commodities is much before the actual sowing season of these crops. The food grains thus purchased by the FCI are kept in big granaries and are called Buffer Stock. Maintaining buffer stock is a step taken by the government in order to ensure food security in the country.

(c) Issue price

Answer (c): Issue Price – In order to help the poor strata of the society, the government provides them food grains from the buffer stock at a price much lower than the market price. This subsidized price is known as the Issue Price

(d) Fair price shops

Answer (d): Fair Price Shops – The food grains procured by the government through FCI is distributed to the poor section of the society through ration shops. The Ration Shops are called Fair Price Shops because food grains are supplied to the poor through these shops at

much reasonable and a fair price than the market price which is often high. Any family with a ration card can purchase stipulated amount of food grains, sugar, kerosene etc. every month from the nearby fair price shop.

Question 11: What are the problems of the functioning of ration shops?

Answer : There are various problem of the functioning of ration shops such as ;

- Ration cards are issued only to those people who have their proper residential addresses. Hence a large number of homeless poor fail to get ration from these shops.
- The owners of these shops sell ration in the open market at higher prices.
- Sometimes shopkeepers make bogus entries in the ration cards.

Question 12: Write a note on the role of cooperatives in providing food and related items.

Answer: The cooperatives are playing an important role in food security in India, especially in the southern and western parts of the country. The cooperative societies set up shops to sell goods to the poor people at lower prices. For example, out of all fair price shops operating in Tamil Nadu, nearly 94 percent are being run by the cooperatives. In Delhi, Mother Dairy is providing milk and vegetables to the consumers at controlled prices which are decided by the Delhi Government. Amul is another example in this regard. It has brought about the White Revolution in the country. There are many more cooperatives and NGOs also working intensively towards this direction.