

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4593

ANSWERED ON:07.12.2010

FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

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Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether recent reports by the World Food Programme of the United Nations and the Swaminathan Research Foundation have indicated that urban food security situation in the country has worsened and the Public Distribution System (PDS) has failed to achieve its objectives;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(c) the steps taken to revamp PDS and improve the food security situation?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

(a) to (c) : World Food Programme(WFP) and M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) have jointly released a Report on the State of Food Insecurity in Urban India in September, 2010. The Report is based on 11 indicators to capture access and absorption dimensions of food security and has attempted an analysis pertaining to urban areas of 18 States for the period 1998-2000 and 2004-06. The Report has concluded that there has been improvement between 1998-2000 and 2004-2006 in the food security situation in urban India as measured by any of the six variants of the composite index.

The Report inter-alia states that the Public Distribution System(PDS) has played a crucial role in ensuring access to foodgrains for a significant proportion of the population that would otherwise have gone hungry. It has recommended among others implementation of universal PDS alongwith measures to improve the functioning of PDS. However, the Report has not stated that the PDS has failed.

The Government is not considering to introduce universal PDS as the focus on poor will get diluted. It would require procurement of huge quantities of wheat and rice which would result in less availability of foodgrains in the market, leading to rise in open market prices. If the same quantity of foodgrains is distributed equally among all, then the scale of issue will have to be reduced. Further, in order to manage the level of food subsidy, the issue prices of rice and wheat may have to be increased substantially from the present Central Issue Prices (CIPs) which have not been revised during the last eight to ten years. This may result in BPL and AAY families getting reduced scale of foodgrains and paying higher prices.

The strengthening and streamlining of Targeted Public Distribution System(TPDS) is a continuous process. To improve functioning of TPDS, Government has been regularly requesting State/UT Governments for continuous review of lists of BPL and AAY families, ensuring timely availability of foodgrains at fair price shops, ensuring greater transparency in functioning of TPDS, improved monitoring and vigilance at various levels and introduction of new technologies such as Computerization of TPDS operations at various levels.

In order to address the issue of food security in the country, Government implements various schemes/programmes in partnership with State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. Government allocates foodgrains at highly subsidized prices to States and Union Territories under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) for Below Poverty Line(BPL), including Antyodaya Anna Yojana(AAY) families every month. Allocations of foodgrains for Above Poverty Line (APL) category are made at subsidized prices depending upon their availability in the Central Pool. Government is also implementing food based other welfare schemes like Mid-day-Meal(MDM) Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), Annapoorna Scheme, Village Grain Bank Scheme, etc. Further, the Government proposes to enact the National Food Security Act to entitle by law every family below the poverty line to a certain quantity of subsidized foodgrains each month.