

## **Issues and Challenges on Food Security Policies - A Study of Telangana State**

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### **Introduction**

Food insecurity in India has been a longstanding and complex issue, despite significant improvements in food production and distribution over the years. Several factors contribute to food insecurity in the country as well as in Telangana state are as follows. Poverty, Unequal Distribution, Price Fluctuation, Agricultural Challenges, Land Ownership, Food Wastage, Malnutrition, Urbanization, Natural Disasters etc, India has made significant progress in improving food security, but challenges still exist. Food Production, India has made remarkable progress in increasing food production, particularly in staple crops like rice and wheat. The Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s played a crucial role in boosting agricultural productivity. Buffer Stocks, India maintains strategic grain reserves, known as buffer stocks, to stabilize food prices and meet emergencies. These stocks are managed by agencies like the Food Corporation of India (FCI). Malnutrition, India has implemented programs to address malnutrition, particularly among children and pregnant women. These programs focus on improving nutritional intake and health outcomes. The government implemented relief measures, including distributing free food grains to vulnerable populations. Nutrition Quality, while food availability has improved, the focus is shifting toward improving the quality of food and addressing issues of hidden hunger, where people lack essential vitamins and minerals in their diet. Sustainable Agriculture, Climate Change Resilience, Building resilience to climate change is a priority for ensuring food security in the face of changing weather patterns and extreme events. Role of Technology, Technology is being increasingly harnessed for better crop management, weather forecasting, and food distribution, which can enhance food security efforts.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), enacted in 2013, is a landmark legislation aimed at providing legal entitlements to food for a large section of India's population. Integrated Child Development Services, Public Distribution System, Antyodaya Anna Yojana, other schemes and initiatives, Eat Right India Movement. POSHAN Abhiyan, Food Fortification, National Innovations Climate Resilient Agriculture, is major initiatives. Support for Women in Agriculture, Reduce Food Loss and Waste, Invest in research and innovation to find solutions to food security challenges, including crop diseases, pests, and climate-related issues. Strengthen governance and transparency in food-related policies and programs to reduce corruption and ensure effective implementation. The Telangana government also taking proper measures for the speedier supplying of food grains.

### **India's Food Security Issues:**

The prevailing situation in the contemporary farming community needs serious attention in order to produce 61.2 million tonnes of food grain. Food and non- food prices have increased significantly in recent years and it's becoming unaffordable for the poor families to cope with the rising price. The expenditure on cultivation has increased extensively but the agricultural income has not increased in proportion with its input. In recent years, real wages in agriculture has increased much faster than the real growth in gross value added in agriculture. During the period

(2007-2011), real farm wages recorded an average growth rate of 6.8% while real growth in agriculture was only 3.3%. This has put serious distress among the farmers. Another equally significant factor is the energy. Energy plays an important role in determining the output of production. The increase in the price of the energy has affected the food prices in two ways. Firstly, the rise in the price of petroleum product motivates the government and the corporate sector to go for producing bio-fuel. The policy for production of bio diesel from Jatropha plant and ethanol from molasses has already been initiated. This will seriously reduce the land area under cultivation for the production of food grain.

Food security plays a crucial role in both human advancement and social equity. It is attained when every individual has consistent physical, social, and financial access to enough, safe, and nutritious food that fulfills their dietary requirements for a vibrant and healthy existence. In India, the issue of food security has become a significant policy focus because of extensive poverty, increasing population pressures, and reliance on agriculture. Telangana, an agricultural state established in 2014, has undertaken considerable initiatives to enhance food security through various support policies for welfare and agriculture. Nevertheless, food insecurity still impacts at-risk segments of the population, primarily small-scale farmers, landless workers, women, and children.

The present study focused on issue and challenges in food security policies in India and Telangana state. Even though, the changing scenario has wider gaps to need suitable suggestion. The government has to focus on certain issues. 1. To launch public awareness campaigns to educate people about balanced nutrition and healthy eating habits. Implement school-based nutrition programs to improve the health and nutrition of children. 2. Expand and strengthen social safety net programs like the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme to provide subsidized food to vulnerable populations. 3. Empower women in agriculture by providing training, credit, and land rights. Recognize and value the crucial role of women in food production and household nutrition. 4. Develop climate-resilient farming practices and provide support to farmers to adapt to changing climate patterns. Promote agro forestry and sustainable land use practices. 5. Implement measures to reduce food loss and waste at all stages of the supply chain, from farm to fork. Encourage food donation and redistribution programs to redirect surplus food to those in need. 6. Invest in research and innovation to find solutions to food security challenges, including crop diseases, pests, and climate-related issues. 7. Strengthen governance and transparency in food-related policies and programs to reduce corruption and ensure effective implementation. Monitor and evaluate food security initiatives to assess their impact and make necessary improvements. 8. Collaborate with international organizations and neighboring countries on food security initiatives, trade agreements, and disaster response. Keeping above issues in view the food security policies in India would give appropriate results.

### **Food Security Policies in Telangana**

Food security stands as a significant development focus in Telangana, where a substantial portion of the populace relies on agriculture and casual jobs for their income. To guarantee that food is available, accessible, and affordable, the government of Telangana has put into action numerous food security initiatives funded by both central and state resources. These programs intend to not only combat hunger but also to enhance nutritional results and improve the welfare of farmers. Key food security initiatives in Telangana comprise the Public Distribution System, Mid-Day Meal Program, Integrated Child Development, Service Antyodaya Anna Yojana, other schemes and initiatives, Eat Right India Movement, POSHAN Abhiyan.

The Public Distribution System, known as PDS, which operates under the National Food Security Act, serves as a fundamental component of food security in the state of Telangana. This system provides qualified families with subsidized food grains such as rice at very low rates via Fair Price Shops. In an effort to enhance the effectiveness of the PDS, Telangana has implemented digital ration cards, biometric verification, and delivery services to the ration shops. These initiatives have contributed to minimizing wastage and maintaining a steady supply. Nonetheless, the PDS remains primarily concentrated on ensuring calorie availability instead of promoting a variety of nutritional options.

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme serves as a vital nutrition-centered initiative targeting children who attend school. In Telangana, this program offers free prepared meals to those enrolled in government and government-supported educational institutions. This effort enhances student participation and enrollment while tackling issues of hunger and malnutrition among the youth. By guaranteeing at least one nutritious meal daily, the scheme plays a significant role in ensuring food security for children and fostering long-term development of human resources. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) aims to enhance the health and nutrition of young children under the age of six, expectant mothers, and nursing mothers. Through the Anganwadi centers, ICDS offers extra nutritional support, health assessments, and education related to nutrition. This initiative is essential in addressing issues like malnutrition, anemia, and stunted growth, especially in the rural and tribal regions of Telangana. The food security strategies in Telangana showcase a holistic method that integrates food distribution, nutritional assistance, and economic safeguards. Although these programs have enhanced food access and availability, it is essential to place more focus on the variety of nutrition, effective execution, and broad inclusion to secure lasting food security for every segment of the population.

### **Issues in Food Security Policies in Telangana**

Despite the introduction of various food security regulations and welfare initiatives, Telangana still encounters numerous obstacles that restrict the success of these efforts. Programs like the Public Distribution System (PDS), the National Food Security Act (NFSA), and schemes focused on nutrition have increased food accessibility; however, a number of structural and management problems impede their complete effectiveness. Key problems impacting food security strategies in Telangana consist of targeting inaccuracies, losses and dishonesty, insufficient emphasis on nutrition, inefficiencies within administration, and challenges regarding awareness and access.

**Targeting Errors:** Targeting mistakes represent a major challenge in executing food security initiatives. Misidentifying those who should benefit results in both exclusion and inclusion errors. Exclusion errors arise when deserving households, especially migrant workers, the urban impoverished, and marginalized groups, are omitted from assistance programs due to obsolete records or paperwork complications. Conversely, inclusion errors permit households that are comparatively more affluent to still obtain subsidized food assistance. These mistakes diminish the effectiveness of food security efforts and elevate the financial strain on the government, all while not adequately serving those who are the most at risk.

**Leakages and Corruption:** Leakage and dishonesty within the Public Distribution System is an ongoing issue. The rerouting of food supplies, inconsistent delivery, and tampering with inventory logs hinder the goals of food security initiatives. Despite Telangana implementing technological advancements like digital ration cards, Aadhaar-linked biometric verification, and digital oversight, there are still shortcomings in execution at the local level. In isolated rural and tribal

regions, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient oversight persist, leading to leakages that impact food access for recipients.

**Limited Nutritional Focus:** Another significant concern is the overemphasis on calorie consumption instead of the quality of nutrition. In Telangana, food security initiatives mainly provide rice and wheat, which tackle hunger but fail to guarantee proper nutrition. The restricted availability of protein-dense foods like pulses, millets, eggs, fruits, and vegetables leads to issues such as malnutrition, anemia, and lacking micronutrients, particularly affecting women and children. This limited perspective hampers the potential of food security strategies to confront ongoing health and nutrition issues.

**Administrative Inefficiencies:** Administrative shortcomings greatly influence the execution of food security initiatives. Holdups in financial disbursements, poor collaboration across various agencies, and weak oversight measures diminish the effectiveness of policies. A shortage of personnel, restricted capabilities at the local administrative tier, and unsatisfactory complaint resolution processes exacerbate these issues. Consequently, recipients frequently experience delays and inconsistencies in obtaining their benefits.

**Awareness and Accessibility Issues:** A significant concern is the lack of awareness among beneficiaries, particularly in remote, rural, and tribal regions. Numerous households that qualify are not informed about their rights, the process for applications, or how to register complaints. Moreover, inadequate physical access to fair price shops, combined with significant distances and inconsistent operating hours, hampers the effective use of food security services. These obstacles primarily impact elderly individuals, women, and marginalized groups. Although Telangana has made significant strides in enhancing food security through various initiatives, ongoing challenges related to governance, nutrition, targeting, administration, and access continue to hinder their success. Tackling these issues by improving identification systems, implementing nutrition-centered reforms, ensuring transparent governance, and increasing awareness among beneficiaries is crucial for achieving lasting food security in the state.

### **Challenges to Food Security in Telangana**

Other than matters related to policy, Telangana confronts numerous structural, ecological, and socio-economic obstacles that significantly endanger food security within the state. These obstacles influence the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food, especially for at-risk groups such as smallholder farmers, farm workers, migrants, and disadvantaged communities. Key issues encompass climate change, shortages of water, escalating farming expenses, disparities between regions and social classes, and growing food insecurity in urban areas.

**Climate Change and Environmental Stress:** Climate change poses a significant threat to food security in Telangana. The region often faces inconsistent rainfall, extended periods of drought, and increasing temperatures. Agriculture in Telangana relies heavily on the monsoon season, which renders it very susceptible to shifts in climate. Unforeseen weather patterns result in crop losses, lower production, and erratic food availability. Smallholder and marginal farmers suffer the most, as they do not have the financial resources to withstand losses or implement farming methods that are resilient to climate challenges. The degradation of the environment also jeopardizes the long-term viability of agriculture and the availability of food.

**Water Scarcity:** Water shortage presents a significant obstacle to the sustainable cultivation of food in Telangana. The excessive withdrawal of groundwater via borewells has led to falling water levels in several districts. The strong dependence on water-demanding crops like paddy has

exacerbated the problem. Insufficient surface irrigation systems and unpredictable rainfall heighten the need for groundwater, rendering agriculture unstable and expensive. The lack of water directly impacts crop yield, restricts cropping frequency, and lowers total food production, consequently threatening food security.

**Rising Cost of Agriculture:** The escalating expenses related to agricultural necessities like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, power, and labor have considerably diminished the profitability of farms in Telangana. Small and marginal farmers frequently find it difficult to purchase quality inputs and often have to seek loans from informal lenders with steep interest rates. This growing debt hampers their capacity to invest in productive farming practices and contemporary technologies. The combination of meager returns and elevated costs renders agriculture unsustainable, jeopardizing the livelihoods of farmers and the food security of households.

**Regional and Social Disparities:** Food insecurity in Telangana is not uniformly spread among various areas and social demographics. Regions that are underserved, tribal populations, and areas susceptible to drought suffer from increased hunger and malnutrition rates. Communities that are socially disadvantaged, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, encounter numerous obstacles such as poverty, lack of land, minimal income, and restricted access to social welfare programs. These inequalities diminish the comprehensive effectiveness of food security initiatives and sustain disparities in food accessibility.

**Urban Food Insecurity:** Rapid growth in urban areas has brought forth fresh obstacles for food security within the cities of Telangana. Workers who are migrants, those involved in construction, and individuals in the informal job sector frequently experience inconsistent earnings and unstable job situations. A significant number do not possess appropriate documentation or ration cards, limiting their ability to access subsidized food through the Public Distribution System. Increasing food costs, elevated living expenses, and insufficient social protection heighten the risks faced by the urban poor regarding food insecurity.

**Role of Technology and Governance:** Technology and governance are vital for enhancing the efficiency of food security policies in Telangana. The state administration has rolled out numerous tech reforms including digitized ration cards, biometric identification linked to Aadhaar, online oversight of the Public Distribution System, and direct benefit transfers. These efforts have contributed to minimizing leakage, boosting transparency, and enabling prompt assistance to qualifying individuals. The shift to digitization has also improved the monitoring of food grain allocation and decreased the issue of ration card duplication. Nonetheless, obstacles persist in the successful execution of these reforms. Failures in biometric identification, particularly affecting older individuals and manual workers, frequently result in the denial of essential food supplies. Issues such as digital illiteracy, inadequate internet access, and insufficient infrastructure in rural and tribal regions further hinder access to technology-driven services. To improve the effectiveness of policies, it is crucial to fortify local governance bodies like Panchayats, engage self-help groups in the oversight and distribution process, and set up reliable mechanisms for addressing grievances. These strategies can promote a food security system that is inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

### **Conclusion**

Food security remains a significant developmental hurdle in Telangana, even with the establishment of numerous welfare and agricultural initiatives designed to alleviate hunger and enhance living conditions. Initiatives like the Public Distribution System (PDS), Rythu Bandhu, and various nutrition-focused projects have notably improved access to food, made it more

affordable, and provided income aid to at-risk communities. These measures have played a crucial role in ensuring consistent food access for farmers, families in rural areas, women, and children, particularly those from lower economic backgrounds. Nonetheless, the success of food security programs is limited by ongoing issues such as incorrect targeting, a narrow emphasis on nutritional variety, inefficiencies in administration, and lack of effective oversight. Environmental challenges such as climate variability, water shortages, and increasing agricultural expenses further worsen food insecurity, particularly for small and marginal farmers. Social and regional inequalities, along with the rise of food insecurity in urban areas, underscore the necessity for inclusive and flexible policy approaches. Tackling these challenges necessitates a comprehensive, inclusive, and nutrition-focused method that combines sustainable farming methods, effective social safety systems, and open governance. Enhancing institutional capabilities, fostering better collaboration among various departments, utilizing technology in a responsible manner, and implementing enduring policy changes are vital to guarantee lasting food security and an elevated quality of life for every segment of the population in Telangana.

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