



State Response And Policy Initiatives Towards Food Security

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Introduction:

Food security has been a key developmental objective in India since independence. The genesis of the problem of food security in India can be traced back to the British Raj period, when they only focused on the production of cash crops rather than the food crops. But after independence India immediately address the problem of extreme food shortage by importing wheat and other food items from U.S.A. India encouraged more and more farmers to shift from cash crops to food crops. But the greatest triumph of India over food shortage was the Green Revolution which put emphasis on modern techniques and tools to maximize the food production.

But it is a matter of serious concern that even though India produces surplus food grains but there are still millions of people in India who do not have sufficient access to food. The problem of malnutrition and starvation is still acute in India. According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security exists, when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. It is now well understood that availability of food grains is necessary but not a sufficient condition to ensure food security to the poor. At the same time it is equally important that the poor have sufficient means to purchase food.

The public Distribution System is the major food security mechanism of India which supplies food items at administered prices through fair price shops. Central and State Government jointly managed PDS where Central government is responsible for procurement, storage, transportation and allocation. The states are responsible for distribution of food gains, identification of families of below Poverty Line (BPL), issuing cards, supervision and monitoring.

Objectives of the study:-

- To analyze the working of PDS (Co-operative) to ensure food security with special reference to the Tingrai Gaon Panchayat under Tinsukia District of Assam.
- To find out the real beneficiaries of the PDS.

- To find out the problems to ensure food security by PDS.
- To provide some suggestive measures so that PDS could achieve its avowed objectives to ensure food security.

De-limitation of the study:

- To present study covered only the working of Tingrai co-operative under Tinsukia District of Assam.
- Though a Co-operative society is generally concerned with production, distribution and storage but our study is mainly concerned with distribution and storage of food items.
- Our study only covers the 2011 – 2012 financial years.
- Since there are large numbers of AAY, BPL and MMASY card holder, hence we make random sampling for the study.

Importance of the study:

From a long time India has been trying to address the problem of food security with a wide network of Public Distribution System. But how far the PDS has been successful in ensuring food security is a matter of concern. Issues like identification of real beneficiaries, black marketing, inadequate storage facilities are very much common to PDS. Therefore an attempt has been made in this study to evaluate the working of PDS with special reference to the Tingrai Co-operative under Tinsukia District of Assam.

Site of the Study:

The study has been undertaken in Tingrai Gaon Panchayat under Tinsukia District of Assam. This panchayat touches the boundaries of Lakhpathar Gaon Panchayat in the North and Nazirating in the South. The eastern boundary of this panchayat is the Bogapani Tea Estate and Makum is its western boundary.

Method Adopted:

Survey method has been followed in the present study. The materials for the study have been collected both from primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected with the help of well constructed interview schedule. Secondary data are collected from official records, file materials, printed books and news papers.

To get the real picture of economic status, family composition, occupation and quality of food grains, statistical technique of random sampling was used in which total 50 BPL families were selected randomly.

Analysis and Interpretations of Data:-

1. No. of AAY, BPL and MMASY card holder

| Cards | AAY | BPL | MMASY |
|--------|------|------|-------|
| No. of | 1814 | 1476 | 5697 |

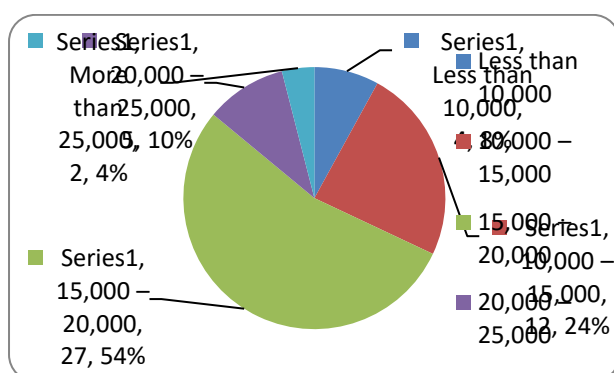
Tingrai Co-operative has 1814 AAY, 1476 BPL & 5697 MMASY card holder.

AAY includes the poorest of the poor.

On 2nd October 2010 chief Minister of Assam Tarun Gogoi inaugurated the Mukhya Mantrir Anna Suraksha Yojana. Under the scheme the BPL card holder will get 10 K.G. rice every month at a subsidized rate of Rs. 6.00 per K.G.

2. Observation of economic status of BPL card holder

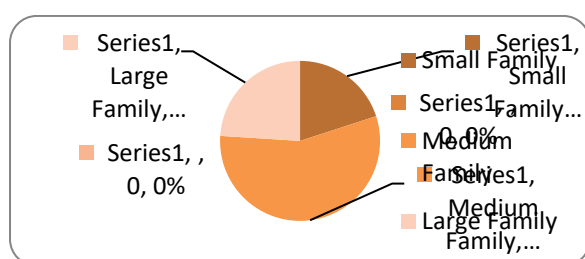
| Income Category (Yearly) | No. of Families | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Less than 10,000 | 4 | 8% |
| 10,000 – 15,000 | 12 | 24% |
| 15,000 – 20,000 | 27 | 54% |
| 20,000 – 25,000 | 5 | 10% |
| More than 25,000 | 2 | 4% |
| | 50 | 100% |



Income is the key factor that determines the standard of living of the people. The majority of the people (54%) under Tingrai co-operative have the annual income around 15,000.00 to 20,000.00. but surprisingly 4% of people who have more than 25,000.00 annual incomes have BPL card and avail the benefit.

3. Family composition of BPL Card holder.

| Size of Family | No. of Family | Percentage % |
|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Small Family (1 – 3 members) | 10 | 20 % |
| Medium Family (4 – 6 members) | 28 | 56% |
| Large Family | 12 | 24 % |
| | 50 | 100 % |



In the table we have seen that out of 50 families 20% (10 Families) are small sized and 56% (28 families) are medium sized consisting of 4 to 6 members and remaining 24 % (12 families) are large families.

Family composition is very vital in the study because BPL cards can be very much effective for the small size families than the medium and large size families.

4. Occupation:-

| Occupation | No. of Families | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Small Farmer | 22 | 44% |
| Daily wage earner | 20 | 40 % |
| Businessman | 7 | 14 % |
| Salaried Person | 1 | 2% |
| | 50 | 100 % |

In the study 22 families (44 %) were found to have farming as occupation and most of them even do not have their own land. Beside 20 families(40 %) are daily wage earner. 7 families

on the other hand take business as occupation and lastly 1 family has salaried person whose annual income is around 1,44,000.00.

5. Supply of food grains to Tingrai Co-operative (Official Source)

| Time Period | Particulars | Qty |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 2011-2012 Early per month | 1. Rice | |
| | a. BPL | 481.75 Qtls per Month |
| | b. AAY | 650.63 Qtls per Month |
| | c. APL | 650.63 Qtls per Month |
| | Total | 1612.38 Qtls per Month |
| | 2. Sugar | 190 Qtls per month |
| | 3. Wheat | Nil |
| | 4. Salt | Nil |
| | 5. Others | Nil |

Tingrai co-operative regularly receive food grains from the food and supply department of government. Though supply of Rice and suger is regular but other particulars are not received by it which is a concerning matter.

6. Food items received by BPL card holder

| Time period | of BPL card holder receive Rice | of BPL card holder receive Sugar |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Less than 8 months | Nil | Nil |
| 8 months | Nil | 8 |
| 9 months | Nil | 14 |
| 10 months | Nil | 15 |
| 11 months | 50 | 13 |
| 12 months | Nil | Nil |
| | 50 | 50 |

Study reveals that the entire 50 BPL card holder receive BPL rise for 11 months during the financial year of 2011-2012. But in case of suger there is wide variation. Since there are a large number of fair price shops under the concerned area hence such variation easily finds their way. Apart from that black marketing corruption, lack of cooperation among different bodies play key role in this case.

7. Quality of the food grains:-

| Particulars | Quality | | | |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| | Low | Average | Good | High |
| Rice | 17 (34%) | 30 (60%) | 3 (6%) | 0 (0%) |
| Sugar | 12 (24%) | 33 (66%) | 5 (10 %) | 0 (0%) |

To ensure food security in the real sense, quality must be taken into account. But according to the majority of the respondent the quality of rice and sugar is of average category.

Findings:

1. The fixed criteria for the identification of AAY & BPL families are not adequately followed and hence the targeted groups are not benefitted by it and some affluent families avail the advantages.
2. Though there is regular supply of rice and sugar to the co-operative but the food grains are not adequately distributed among the concerned people. The distributions are made by 93 fair price shops in the area.
3. The regularity of distribution of food items also different from one fair price shop to another.
4. Political influence is seen in the process of issuing BPL and APL card.
5. BPL and APL cards have been issued without considering the family composition.
6. As the cooperatives are loss-avoiding institutions some commodities like wheat are not distributed by them.
7. The storage facility is very poor. The fund provided by government for the construction of warehouse is very inadequate.
8. To ensure food security these items are not sufficient. Along with them some items like cereals and edible oils etc. should also be provide.

Suggestive measures:-

1. There should be simplified fixed criteria for the identification of the concerned families.

2. For the successful identification of BPL & APL families, the villagers should make aware about the process of identification in a meeting of Gram Sabha.
3. In spite of regular supply, co-operative have failed to distribute the food items among the concerned people hence there should be proper monitoring and supervision over its working.
4. In the process of issuing cards family composition should be taken into consideration.
5. Efforts should been taken to make the people aware about the whole system so that they can keep an eye over the working of the system.
6. Since the supply of food grains is not the sufficient condition to ensure food security hence efforts should be taken to increase the purchasing power of the people through micro financing.

Conclusion:-

Every problem has some solution. India has ample resources and surplus food grains but the problem lies in its distribution. If these could be solved then the issue of food security can be solved to a great extent. The food gape can be minimise from the existing food grain stocks in the medium term and by increasing their purchasing power in the long run. There is also a need to improve the efficiency of the various food schemes initiated by the government and make it more available and free of corruption and urban bias.

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