

A Study on Food Security in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. Issues such as whether households get enough food, how it is distributed within the household and whether that food fulfils the nutrition needs of all members of the household show that food security is clearly linked to health. The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. Food security, as defined by the United Nations’ Committee on World Food Security, is the condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains the largest employment sector in most developing countries and international agriculture agreements are crucial to a country's food security. Some critics argue that trade liberalization may reduce a country's food security by reducing agricultural employment levels. Concern about this has led a group of World Trade Organization (WTO) member states to recommend that current negotiations on agricultural agreements allow developing countries to re-evaluate and raise tariffs on key products to protect national food security and employment. They argue that WTO agreements, by pushing for the liberalization of crucial markets, are threatening the food security of whole communities.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the various issues related to food security in Tamil Nadu
- To bring out the schemes and efforts undertaken by the Government of Tamil Nadu for food security

3. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The study focuses on extensive study of Secondary data collected from various books, journals, publications from various websites which focused on various aspects of food security

FOOD SECURITY IN TAMIL NADU

Food security is a major issue in Tamil Nadu with prices running at an all time high. Climate change affects the region resulting in drought, poor soils, water depletion. Farmers need advice, support and information on the latest technological advances to help them cultivate the best crops from the land and to raise healthy animals.

Food Security refers to ensuring a sustainable access to food (both physical and economic) for the entire population, taking into account the dietary needs and food preferences. In other words, food security means ensuring sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all. The household has emerged as the basic unit for assessing food security by measuring the food energy intake (quality and quantity) at the household level.

The Tamil Nadu State Food Policy pursues a Universal Public Distribution System (PDS) to ensure non-excludability, easy access and adequate availability of food grains at affordable prices. The focus is to ensure that genuinely poor households do not get excluded from the PDS owing to administrative infeasibility and errors in estimation and enumeration of families Below Poverty Line (BPL). The PDS in Tamil Nadu is administered by the Commissioner of Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department (CCS&CP). Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) acts as the facilitator in procurement and storing. The Fair Price Shops in the State are run mostly by the Cooperatives and the TNCSC.

FAIR PRICE SHOPS

At present, 33,222 Fair Price Shops are serving 1.98 crore families. Out of 33,222 Fair Price shops, 31,232 are run by the Cooperative Societies, 1,394 are run by the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation and 596 are run by Women Self Help Groups. To improve accessibility to PDS, it is necessary that they are located in close proximity to habitations. Accordingly, it has been proposed to open new fair price shops so that, no card holder walks more than 1.5 km.

FAIR PRICE SHOPS IN TAMIL NADU

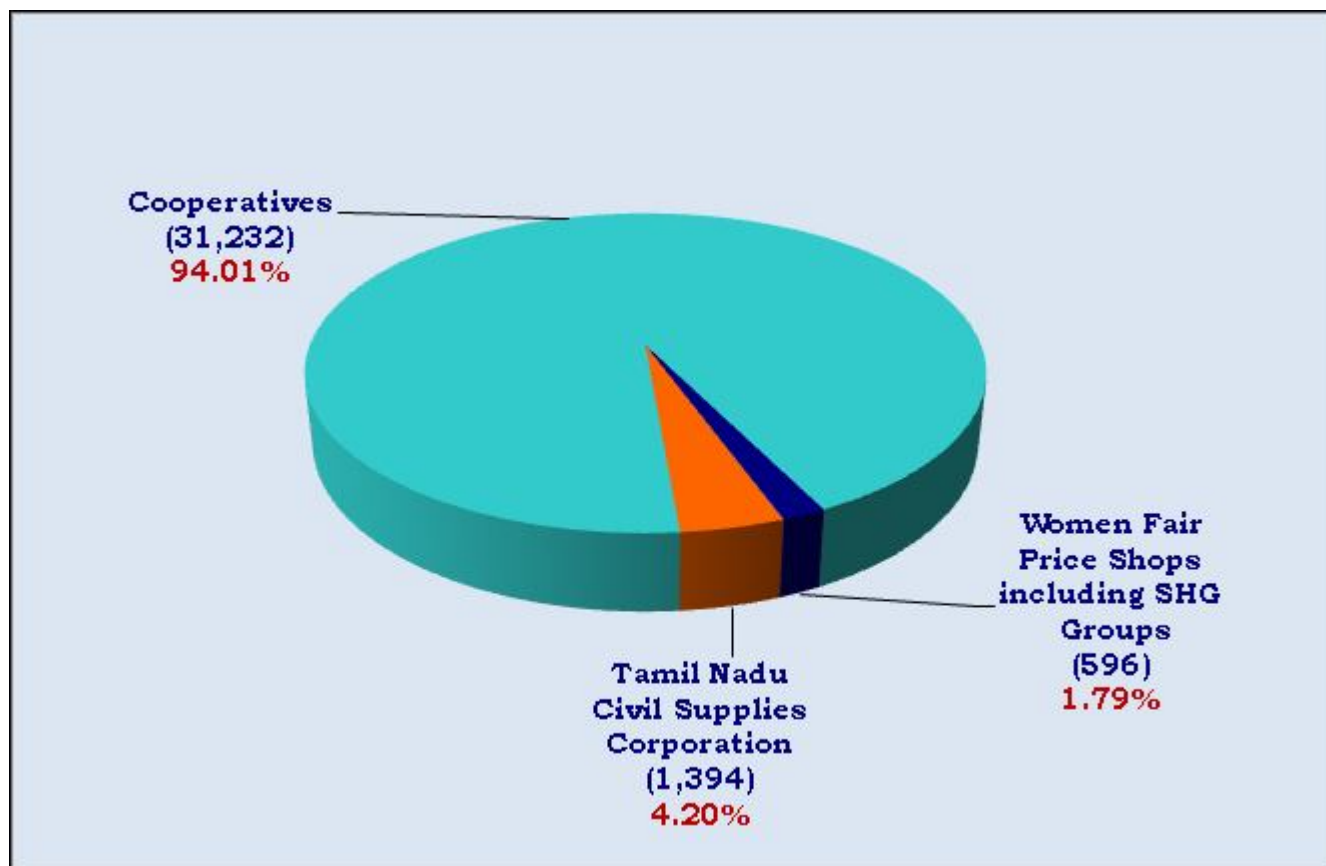


FIG NO 1

Source: Dept. of Co-operation, Food and Consumer Protection, GoTN.

FAMILY CARD

Family Cards are issued to the people of the State based on their needs and preferences. The family cards are segregated as Rice Cards (rice with all other commodities), Antyodaya Anna Yojana Scheme Cards, Sugar Cards (additional sugar in lieu of rice and all other commodities) and No Commodity Cards (cards for identification purposes). Besides, Police personnel are issued with family cards in distinct colour. Transgenders living in a house as a group are treated as family and family cards are issued to them. A total of 1.98 crore Family Cards have been issued to the citizens in Tamil Nadu.

Under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) Scheme of the Government of India, which targets the poorest of the poor, the Government of Tamil Nadu provides 35 kg rice per month to all the AAY family cards in the State. The essential commodities supplied through the PDS in Tamil Nadu include rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene. The Special PDS which was initiated to protect people from steep increase in prices of essential commodities includes pulses like Toor and Urid dhal, Palmolein oil and Fortified Flour.

Tamil Nadu is a pioneering State with regard to successfully applying Information Technology based transparency measures to the PDS. The Department of Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection has put in place a system to monitor the stocks of PDS commodities at each fair price shop. The department has also established a very effective and well functioning Grievance and Redressal Mechanism.

REVIEW OF ELEVENTH PLAN

During Eleventh Five Year Plan, Government had introduced Special Public Distribution System. Under the scheme, Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation procured essential commodities like toor dhal, urid dhal and palmolein oil in open market and supplied them under highly subsidised prices under Special Public Distribution System to card holders. An outlay of `84.40 crore was allocated during the Eleventh Plan and the actual expenditure incurred was `1,697.00 crore. The major chunk in the expenditure is due to the supply of LPG connections, Fans/ Induction Stoves, Mixies and Grinders.

TWELFTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

OBJECTIVES

- Complete elimination of hunger in the State through a Universal PDS.
- Devising ways to stabilise food prices.
- Providing adequate nutrition through fortification of PDS commodities.

THRUST AREAS AND STRATEGIES

- Ensuring availability of all essential commodities under PDS in adequate quantity and of good quality.
- Construction of direct purchase centres, new scientific godowns and new fair price shops.
- Elimination of bogus cards and diversion of essential commodities meant for the PDS.

- The rise in food prices hits the poor the most and contributes to increase in hunger. During the times of high inflation, the prices of commodities can be stabilised by effective implementation of relevant Acts to prevent hoarding, speculation and black marketing.
- Awareness creation on consumer rights.

TWELFTH PLAN SCHEMES**CONSTRUCTION OF NEW GODOWNS**

The Policy followed by the Government of Tamil Nadu is that each taluk should have its own operational godown. The godowns will be constructed in taluks in a phased manner where there are no godowns owned by TNCSC. An amount of `11.00 crore has been proposed for the construction of 11 new godowns during the Twelfth Plan period.

CONSTRUCTION OF DIRECT PURCHASE CENTRES (DPC)

At present, 250 Direct Purchase (Collection) Centres are functioning in the buildings owned by TNCSC and 1,371 DPC are in private or rented buildings with inadequate infrastructure facilities. It is proposed to improve the infrastructure of the DPC in a phased manner. During the last Plan period, the TNCSC constructed 28 DPCs. It is proposed to construct 10 DPCs during Twelfth Plan period.

CONSTRUCTION OF FAIR PRICE SHOPS

The TNCSC operates 1,394 fair price shops, out of which 911 shops are functioning in private buildings on rental basis. During the Twelfth Plan, it is proposed to construct 50 Fair Price Shops. An amount of `15.00 crore has been proposed for this purpose.

ISSUANCE OF SMART CARDS

The Government of Tamil Nadu has declared that SMART family cards will be issued in lieu of existing family cards. It has also been mentioned that the Director of Census Operations under the National Population Registry is conducting bio-metric capturing of 10 finger prints, two Iris and face scan of citizens to issue Unique Identification Number. After completion of this process of bio-metric capturing, it has been proposed to adopt this data to issue bio-metric SMART family cards. The advantage is that, since it is based on unique identity, the data duplication of members and bogus cards can be eliminated. Further, in the fair price shops, bills can be drawn only if the cards are physically brought to the fair price shop and hence, bogus billing can also be eliminated. During Twelfth plan, it is proposed to issue bio-metric based SMART family cards at an expenditure of `800.00 crore (Out of which `400.00 crore will be the assistance from the Government of India).

INSTALLATION OF IP VIDEO CAMERA IN FAIR PRICE SHOPS

As a trial run, surveillance cameras have already been installed in four FPSs functioning in Chennai city and this yielded good results such as reduction of rice and kerosene off-take, reduction of outsiders menace, improved cleanliness in shops and improved behaviour both on the part of salesman and public. This facility will be extended to all the FPS in Chennai city at a cost of `2.25 crore.

ELECTRONIC WEIGHING MACHINES IN FAIR PRICE SHOPS

The Government has supplied electronic weighing machines to all the cooperative and TNCSC fair price shops in the State with a Digital Display Board that can be seen from both the sides. This has enabled the cardholders to see the display of weight and ensure commodities are supplied in correct measurement to them. After the introduction of electronic weighing machines in the FPSs, correct measurement has been ensured. An amount of `0.36 crore has been proposed for this scheme.

STOCK MONITORING SYSTEM THROUGH SMS

The State Government has introduced online monitoring of stock position of essential commodities in the Fair Price Shops through SMS Monitoring System. Under this system, the salesman of the FPS has to send a SMS message to the Central Server on the closing stock position on a daily basis. Officials can monitor the stock position of essential commodities online at any time and move stocks to FPSs which are running out of stock of essential commodities or which have a critical stock position. Public can also access the shop's stock data through their mobile phones. After the introduction of this system, the stock position of essential commodities in the FPS has drastically improved. An amount of `0.15 crore has been proposed for this purpose.

SUPPLY OF MILLETS THROUGH PDS

A major challenge to food security comes from dietary diversification of the poor. It is suggested to provide 3 kg of any one of the available millets to all family card holders. The family card holders eligible for rice will be provided 3 kg of millet per month which is provided on 100 percent subsidy basis. The second category of family card holders will be provided with 3 kg of millets at subsidised rate. The total requirement of millets for 1.98 crore family card holders will be 59,100 tonnes/month. The total requirement per annum is 7 lakh tonnes. If cereal pricing is left to the market forces with Government playing only a facilitating role, land will be released from rice and wheat cultivation to meet the growing demand for non-cereal crops such as oilseeds, fruits and vegetables in accordance with diet diversification. This policy would facilitate agricultural diversification in tune with emerging demand patterns. In order to ensure a long term food security, it is necessary to promote research inputs with regard to production technology of non-cereal food and nutritious food. Also, technology access to the poor small producers should be promoted.

4. CONCLUSION

Economic growth is only sustainable if all countries have food security. Without country-owned and country-driven food security strategies, there will be obstacles and additional costs to global, regional, and country-level economic growth. Food security needs to encompass women and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Over the coming decades, a changing climate, growing global population, rising food prices, and environmental stressors will have significant yet highly uncertain impacts on food security. Adaptation strategies and policy responses to global change, including options for handling water allocation, land use patterns, food trade, post-harvest food processing, and food prices and safety are urgently needed. These policy responses will be vital to improve the living conditions of farmers and rural populations across the globe.

5. REFERENCES

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