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**The success of implementing the National Food Security Act depends entirely on the efficient functioning of the Public Distribution System, A review**

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**Abstract**

India is a developing country which characterize by large amount of population and geographical area, unemployment rate, poverty etc. In India there has a system of food distribution through Public Distribution System to solve the problem of starvation, to help the poor rural and urban people. Govt. does this function under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. The Govt. able to success to help poor people by providing subsidized food at a very low price. Through this article we review the effectiveness of Public Distribution System and also show the improvements in Public Distribution System to reach the poor section.

Keywords- Effectiveness of PDS, Improvement in PDS.

**Introduction-**

India is a country which containing 1,210,854,977 with 623, 724, 248 males and 586,469, 174 females population and 3,287,240 sq.km area. In India, there are a huge number of people who struggle daily for food to survival. There are a huge portion of poor people who live in rural area and urban area. There are a huge portion of people live under poverty line. Therefore in this respect, to support them, govt. must help them so that poor are able to free from starvation. The National Food Security Act (NFSA) has great importance in eliminating poverty in India. It came into effect on July 5<sup>th</sup>,2013 aims to ensure food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach by proving adequate quantity of quality at affordable prices to people to live a life healthy. Indian Food Security System established by the Govt. of India under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is to distribute subsidized food and non food items. Major commodities distributed include food grains such as wheat, rice, kerosene and sugar through a network of fair price shops (also known as ration shop) established in several states across the country. This Public Distribution System is Govt. owned corporation and they procures and maintains it. To mitigate hunger and to save poor people from volatile market prices of food, in 1997, the Targeted Public Distribution System was introduced, replacing the almost universal Public Distribution System. It was targeted at poor people below the poverty line who were identified through a BPL (Below Poverty Line) survey. The Targeted Public Distribution System was functional in almost all the states and Union Territories until 2012. In 2013, there was a paradigm shift in the food security programme in India through the notification of the NFSA. It is a transition from a welfare approach to a rights based approach. Through this paper we analyze the NFSA considering PDS.

**Objectives-**

1. To show coverage and outreach of the Public Distribution System considering National Food Security Act (NFSA).
2. To show improvement in Public Distribution System.

**Methodology-**

This paper is descriptive in nature and the data used here collect from the secondary source such as books, e-journal etc.

**Analysis-**Coverage and Outreach of the Public Distribution System considering NFSA:-

The coverage under the NFSA has increased dramatically compared with the Targeted Public Distribution System. The total coverage is 67% of the population. It is 75% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas at the national level. It is even higher in well-performing states such as Chhattisgarh and Karnataka with states initiatives. According to officials of these states, it is 90% and 82% respectively. As coverage is significantly increased, new BPL families are identified from the existing BPL category and the APL category. The eligible beneficiaries are identified using state-specific criteria and termed as Priority Household (PHH). They are allotted to receive food grains of 5 kg per person per month at the issue prices of rs.3, rs.2 and rs.1 per kg of rice, wheat, and coarse grains respectively. However entitlement and coverage has not changed for Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households compared to the previous Targeted Public Distribution System scheme, except for legal protection of their right to food. They will continue to receive 35 kg of food grains per household per month. It is important to note that many States/UTs had expanded coverage of their TPDS by introducing 'State BPL' categories that covered households that were poor but did not meet the central govt.'s BPL cut off. NFSA also simplifies the different categories of beneficiaries from three in the Pre-NFSA TPDS to two by replacing the Above Poverty Line (APL) and Below Poverty Line (BPL) categories with a single 'priority' category and retaining the Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). This is important as one of the major criticisms of the Pre-NFSA TPDS was the high diversion of the food grains in the APL category. According to NFSA, all eligible households shall be entitled at subsidized prices not exceeding INR 3, 2 & 1 for rice, wheat & coarse grains respectively for the first three years since the commencement of the act. After the three periods over, the central govt. may set prices that should be exceed the minimum support prices of each of the three food grains. After implementing NFSA, there were came certain changes in TPDS.

Comparison of TPDS after and before NFSA-

Provisions		Pre-NFSA	Post-NFSA
Coverage (By Central Govt.)		BPL Population (29.5% in 2011-12)	813.4 million (75% in rural and 50% in urban areas)
Selective criteria		Below Poverty Line (BPL) Survey-2012 (rural) and 2007(urban)	Determines by State Govt.
Quantity of Rations	APL	15 KG (depending on availability)	Excluded
	BPL	35 KG	5 KG per member
	AAY	35 KG	35 KG
Price of Food Items	APL	Rice-rs.8.30, Wheat-rs.6.10	Excluded
	BPL	Rice-rs.5.65, Wheat-rs.4.15, Coarse Grains-rs.3	Rice-rs.3, Wheat-rs.2, Coarse Grains-rs.1
	AAY	Rice-rs.3, Wheat-rs.2	Rice-rs.3, Wheat-rs.2, Coarse Grains-rs.1

From the table mentioned above, previous TPDS coverage rates before and after the implementation of NFSA. Coverage rate are calculated by dividing total ration cards (BPL/PHH and AAY) by the total no. of households in each states. The administrative data shows that at the national level, coverage of TPDS increased from approximately 15% to 59%. This is a large increase and reflects the impact of NFSA which aims to increases its coverage to approximately 75% of the rural population and 60% of the urban population.

The act also has a special focus on the nutritional support to women and children. NFSA makes it the central govt. responsibility to provide a free meal through the local anganwadis (children centre) and a maturity benefit of at least INR 6000 for pregnant and lactating (until six months after childbirth) mothers. It also includes provisions for food entitlements for

children aged six months to fourteen years. It entitles all children aged six months to six years to a free meal at the anganwadis and a free mid-day meal for all school-going children up to class eight (or age fourteen). NFSA also states that these schools and anganwadis will have facilities for cooking meals, and providing drinking water and sanitation.

Now to success the implementing NFSA, functioning of the PDS should be improved. To realize the full potential of the food security scheme, the appropriate identification of target households, and modernization of the delivery system and effective monitoring of the food security programme need to be promoted. The identification process needs to be state or region specific since state priorities are different across the country. The success of PDS also depends on the adoption of modern techniques in its functioning. The identification of poor households for the TPDS was a challenging task. Targeting errors arises due to misclassification or non-classification of poor households. Leakage of food grains from the supply chain at various levels is a major concern related to the functioning of the TPDS in India. As a result, though leakage reduced than before, but poor beneficiaries are still deprived of their due and full of potential of the PDS programme.

To be efficiently functioning, some measures need to be taken. Distribution of food coupon should be adopted to stop leakage at the FPS level, the introduction of electronic weighing machines in place of conventional ones to resolve the problems of beneficiaries receiving less than their entitlement of food grains under PDS, the introduction of on SMS alert at the beneficiary level to increases awareness, unbiased inspection of FPS (Fair Price Shop)s by the state department of Food and Civil Supply should be arrange on regular basis, representative from state food departments should meet beneficiaries in villages or urban wards to hear their complaints and address their concerns at regular intervals, the dept. of food in each state should open a special cell on grievance redressed and appoints a officer as the nodal person, state govt. should take initiatives to reconstitute the (PRI) vigilance committee in all villages and urban wards, provision of Panchayati Raj Institutions are mainly intended to bring transparency and accountability into the system. NFSA along with TPDS central board 2015 further has assigned various rules to local authorities including PRIs in the implementation of the PDS.

A vigilance committee is constructed including members from the Gram Panchayat and other representatives from the local village or urban wards. The committee is expected to monitor the activities of the FPS (Fair Price Shop) on a regular basis. Unfortunately this is the almost non-functional in many states. Awareness of vigilance committee is the highest in Chhattisgarh followed by Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and it is extremely low in Assam, West Bengal and Karnataka.

#### Improvement in Public Distribution System-

The National Food Security Act,2013, includes cash transfer and food coupons as possible alternative mechanisms to the Public Distribution System. Beneficiaries would be given either cash or coupon by the state government, which they can exchange for food grains. Such programmes provide cash directly to target group usually poor households. Some potential advantages of these programmes include:

1. Reduced administrative costs
2. Expanded choices for beneficiaries
3. Competitive pricing among grocery stores

Food coupon is a useful solution to the problem of corruption associated with the fair price shop of Public Distribution System. Beneficiaries are given coupons in lieu of money, which can be used to buy food grains from any grocery store. Under this system, grains will not give at a subsidized rate to the PDS store. Instead beneficiaries will use the food coupons to purchase food grains from retailers. Retailers take these coupons to the local bank and are reimbursed with money. According to economic survey 2009-10 reports, such a system will reduce administrative costs. Food coupons also decreases the corruption scope since the store owner gets the same price from all buyers and has no incentive to turn the poor buyers away. Moreover BPL customers have more choice; they can avoid stores that try to sell them poor quality grains.

#### **Conclusions-**

From the analysis we show that Public Distribution System in India does many works to help poor people so that poor area able to get day to day meal. To increase the GDP of an economy its necessary that all working people must work. To

participate in economic activity people must be hunger free, otherwise it will reduce their work capacity by increasing illness. To growth of an economy productivity must be increases and productivity depends on whether they are hunger free or not. Thus Govt. of India, tried to help poor people to make hunger free country. But the Govt. still need to do more to improvement.

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