CHAPTER – 10

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION WITH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

After giving a detail account of the concept of food security and various dimensions of household food security in the second chapter, a trial has been made to give an account of food security of Assam in the third chapter, incorporating the production and availability of food. The fourth chapter makes a brief description of the evolution of major food security instrument of the government (the PDS) of India as well as its functioning in the state of Assam. An account of the production scenario of food as well and distribution of the same through PDS in the study area has been given in the sixth chapter. The subsequent chapters give micro level assessment of food security as well as functioning of the PDS. The study has found acute food insecurity in the study area which can be addressed by suitable designed policy measures. The main purpose of this concluding chapter is to draw up a package of policy measures for eradicating food insecurity in the study area. Since this package must logically follow from the findings of the study, a recapitulation of these findings would perhaps be useful at this point. Thus before drawing up the policy package a summary of principal findings and conclusions is presented here.

10.1 GENERAL OBSERVATION OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS:

i. Majority of the respondents are Hindus. Again, majority of the sample households belong to nuclear family across the area. Majority of households are headed by male. Majority of sample households in all the three blocks are of medium size. Primary occupation of majority of households is farming. There has not been found substantial difference in Per Capita Monthly Income (PCMI) in all the three blocks. Households of Rani block are found with largest land-holding sizes, while households of Hajo block are found with least land-
holding sizes. Although majority of sample households are found with semi-pucca structure across the area, more than forty percent of the sample households of Dimoria block and Rani block are found with kachha structure.

ii. 51.4 percent of sample households have been found with own cultivated source of rice consumption. The highest (73.8 percent) is found in Rani block and lowest (33.1 percent) is found in Hajo block.

iii. On the average, households meet 33.12 percent of total demand from self cultivated rice. Naturally, Rani block have been found with the highest 53.3 percent and Hajo block has been found with the lowest 18.2 percent.

iv. Forests and wetlands have been found to meet a sizable percent of demand for vegetables and fruits (13.2 percent) and fish and meet (25.8 percent) among the sample households.

v. Homesteads are also found as important source of vegetables and even fish.

10.2 FOOD SECURITY IN TERMS OF CALORIE INTAKE:

i. In terms of Per Consumer unit Calorie Intake (PCCI), 48.32 percent sample households have been found to be food secured across the area. Highest incidence of food security (54.40 percent) is found among sample households of Rani block. Lowest incidence of food security is found in households of Dimoria block (41.40 percent)

ii. Per capita per day calorie intake is found as 2014 kilocalories and per consumer unit calorie intake is found as 2452 kilocalories. Per consumer unit per day calorie intake of food secure households is found as 3037 kilocalories and there has not been observed marked variation in all the three locations. Per capita per day calorie intake of food insecure households is found as 1905 kilocalories.

iii. Average deviation from the norm level of calorie intake for the food secure households has been found as 337 kilocaloies for food secure households and 795 kilocalories for food insecure ones.
iv. Across the area, 42.74 percent sample households are found with PCCI below 80 percent of the norm. 34.95 percent (the lowest) of sample households of Rani block are found with below the norm and 48.20 percent (the highest) of sample households are found with above the norm.

v. Sample households are found with much larger consumption of rice. 73.15 percent of PCCI has been found to be come from cereals (mainly rice).

vi. Out of total 12 surveyed villages, Rajapanichanda is found as the most food secure in terms of PCCI, with the highest 61.29 percent food secure households.

vii. Among different social categories, in terms of PCCI, scheduled caste households are found as the least food secure (60.00 percent), followed by other backward class households (55.56 percent).

viii. Among different occupational categories, pensioners are found the most (100.00) food secure, followed by government service holders (90.00). Lowest incidence of food security (28.23 percent) is found among wage labourers.

ix. Female headed households have found more food secured (51.67 percent) than the male headed households (47.31 percent).

x. 68.11 percent of nuclear families across the area are found to be food secured whereas only 21.20 percent of male-headed households have been found food secured.

xi. Households with higher educational attainment among the heads have been found more food secured.

xii. Households with large size of land holding are found more food secured than the households with smaller size of land holdings.

10.3 FOOD SECURITY IN TERMS OF DIVERSITY OF DIET:

i. In terms of diet quality, only 22.10 percent of the sampled households are found food secured. In this respect also, sample households of Rani Block
are found comparatively (24.3 percent) more food secured than households located in other blocks.

ii. Again, in terms of diet quality, there has been found no marked variation of incidence of food security among different social category households.

iii. Among different occupational categories, highest diversity of diet is found among government service holders (80.00), followed by pensioners (70.00). In this respect also, wage labourers are found least food secured (5.88 percent).

iv. Diet of female-headed households is found a little bit diversified than the male-headed ones.

v. Nuclear families are more food secured than the extended ones.

vi. Educated families are more food secured.

vii. No difference is found in terms of diet quality among households with different land holding sizes.

10.4 FOOD SECURITY: DETERMINANTS:

i. Factors bearing significant impact on the level of food security in terms of calorie intake have been found as: per capita monthly income, land holding size, educational attainment of the household head, household size, amount of rice consumption from own cultivated source and type of the family. Food security level of the family increases with increase in per capita monthly income, land holding size, educational attainment of the household head and amount of rice consumption from own cultivated source. On the other hand, it has found that larger the family, greater is the food insecurity. This may be due to large dependency ratio among these families. Again, nuclear families are found more food secure than the joint families.

ii. Factors bearing significant impact on the level of food security in terms of dietary diversity have been found as: per capita monthly income, educational attainment of the household head, and type of the family. Food security level of the family increases with increase in per capita
monthly income, educational attainment of the household head. Again, nuclear families are found with the intake of more diversified diet.

10.5 FUNCTIONING OF PDS IN THE STUDY AREA:

i. There has been found 68.4 percent PDS coverage across the area. Lowest coverage is found in Dimoria block (58.6) and highest coverage (74.1 percent) is found in Hajo block.

ii. 22.42 percent of average requirement of rice of the households across the area has been found to be met by the PDS. It is 58.43 percent for sugar, 33.95 for atta and 66.15 percent for kesosene. For only 5 percent households PDS meets 100.00 percent average requirement of rice.

iii. The mis-match between wide coverage of PDS and low average procurement clearly indicates leakage or diversion of PDS grains. Except wage labourers and marginal farmers, other beneficiaries have been found avoiding PDS rice. However, most of the FPS holders reported that they help even the non-card holders out of the left out amount.

iv. Again, PCCI of non-beneficiary households is found lower than the average calorie intake of above poverty line households.

v. 45.71 percent beneficiary households are found food secure, whereas it is 53.99 percent for non-beneficiary households. This means that in spite of support, food insecurity prevails among beneficiary households.

vi. Among the beneficiary households, APL households have been found as the most food secure (69.23 percent) than that of the non-beneficiary households as well as of other beneficiary households. However, it can be concluded that in spite of support, APL beneficiaries are not hundred percent food secured. AAY beneficiaries have been found least food secured (8.16).

vii. 27.61 percent pacca householders have got BPL ration card. Again 41.11 percent kacca householders have got only APL ration card; and 23.43 percent of these householders have no card.
viii. 31.31 percent ST households and 45.71 percent SC households do not qualify for a BPL card. Moreover 29.29 percent ST as well as 25.71 percent SC households do not qualify for getting a ration card.

ix. Regarding services of PDS 67.76 percent are found to be dissatisfied.

x. In terms of quantity of PDS items majority of households expressed inadequacy of PDS amount as per requirement of the household. These households also include those who do not avail PDS benefit.

xi. Regarding the quality of PDS items, 65.31 percent sample households are found dissatisfied.

xii. Most of the FPS owners expressed satisfaction with the cardholders as well as with “adequacy” of items allotted.

xiii. At an informal way they confess influence from local influencing people in their functioning.

10.6 CONCLUSIONS WITH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The researcher wants to conclude that there has been found acute food insecurity in the study area both in terms of quantity as well as quality. The results are too serious among farming community as well as among wage labourers. Solution to the problem of household food insecurity depends on the policies taken outside the household level. According to Borka, S. (2002)\(^1\), there is a need for “twin-track approach” to hunger and poverty reduction. This approach measures to promote rural development through growth in agriculture and rural off-farm activities with measures to provide direct and indirect access to food for the most needy. If the income from agriculture is spent locally and growth of rural off-farm activities are promoted, it will have strong impact on the incomes of the poor. On the basis of the present study, given the background information of the area, following can be suggested.

i. Interventions for increasing food production in the rural area should be implemented and these should aim at preserving and expanding irrigation

\(^1\) S. Borka (2002) : “Food Insecurity, Poverty and Agriculture”- a concept paper published in Agricultural and Development Economics Division Publications, FAO.
system, making unused land productive, preventing conversion of productive lands for other purposes and extending soft loans to farmers. Also, the state should emphasise in increasing production and enhancing productivity of other food crops along with rice, so that they become available for common people at lower prices.

ii. The government should provide better storage facilities to farmers, and thereby prevent from selling grains just because of loss during storage. It has been found that lack of storage facilities made the marginal poor farmers to sell their grains immediately after harvest.

iii. Agricultural extension services are needed to disseminate knowledge on the income generating potential of rural people. They need to be advised on low labour requirement crops, and crops need minimum land preparation, weeding techniques and sources of irrigation.

iv. For increasing economic accessibility of food, employment guarantee schemes should be implemented successfully.

v. Micro-credit facilities should be examined as an effective and sustainable strategy for supporting livelihood, which would have direct bearing on the nutritional status of the family.

vi. Community afforestation programmes could be an important policy measure to increase the availability of traditional food as well as firewoods.

vii. Edible oil and more amount of sugar should be made available under PDS like other states of the country.

viii. Moreover, problem of irregular supply, supplying bad quality PDS items in remote areas should be addressed properly.

ix. Existence of a large number of food insecure households among the non-beneficiaries should be taken seriously. In fact well-functioning Panchayat Raj Institutions is a must for avoiding these type of malfunctioning.

x. Tools used for subjective food adequacy in surveys of NSSO should be matched with objective food adequacy.
Operationalisation of the concept of food security still faces many challenges, in spite of having apparent empirical strength. As such, there has been found considerable difference in methodologies and methods of assessment. Multipurpose households surveys generally measures living standards, not just food security. The researcher feels the necessity of a food intake survey at national level for identifying the actual food insecure population, although it is more costly and needs human expertise.

10.6 AN EPILOGUE:

The present analysis is entirely based on measurement of per consumer unit calorie intake and its comparison with a certain recommended level. In fact, requirement of food differs from person to person depending upon the body weight, age height and activity level, a healthy diet is a must for everyone. Not only so, requirement of food differs at different point of time for the same individual. Again we may get variation of results if it were undertaken in different pockets of the state.

Food security is a multidimensional concept. Intra-household issues, subjective food adequacy as well as other issues associated with household of food security have not been addressed in the present study. In addition to these, PDS is only one wing of entire food management policy of the government. So, policy prescription based on this study may also vary and it may be location specific. Besides, there involves sampling bias.