PREFACE

There is a growing concern about the availability of food to poor and vulnerable communities of agrarian population at all sphere national as well as at the state level. The basic concept of food security refers that it is “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life”. It is not only quantity of food which is available to such underprivileged groups but the quality of food is also the issue of prime concern. In the era of self sufficiency or near to self sufficiency in food grains production, is each Indian getting enough to eat around the year? According to the economic survey 2000-01, it is not so, the per capita availability of major constituents of consumption basket namely cereals, pulses, oils and vegetables are sharply down from preceding year. Per capita production of food grains failed to keep pace with the population growth, population increased at the rate of about 1.84 per cent annually while food grain production increased by just 0.9 per cent, during 1990s. It has been estimated that the food intake for Indian population has been declining across regions, ranges between as little as meager 1 percent in Himachal Pradesh to 11 percent in Rajasthan. The hill state of Himachal Pradesh has diverse agro-climatic conditions, which are varying from low hill regions to high hill alpine regions. This has bestowed the state with vast potential for production of varieties of field crops, fruits (dry and fresh), vegetables, plantation crops and large potential for live stock rearing. The state has attained the distinction of being regarded as model state of hill development in the country, particularly in production of off-season vegetables, seed potato, fruits and vegetable. But there are still doubts about the equitable distribution of grains of development which failed to trickle down up to the last man. Thus under privileged sections may not have gained significantly and their status may have remained more or less same.

The successful implementation of ‘Food Insecurity Vulnerability Information and Mapping System’ (FIVIMS) a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) sponsored programme in the state was appreciated by the official of the FAO. The survey conducted under this programme revealed that the abject lack of exposure to modern techniques of breeding, harvesting and utilization of livestock has resulted in low productivity in case of Gujjars (Community). As many as 213 out of the total 20,
118 villages are vulnerable to food insecurity in Himachal Pradesh, where 58 villages are most vulnerable to food insecurity. Due to heavy dependence on agriculture, miniscule and fragmented land holdings, agro-based economy, the farming sector in the state is characterized by the predominance of marginal and small holdings.

The average holding size in the state is declining continuously due to division of the farming families towards nuclear families instead of joint families. This fact is amply substantiated by the statistics in this regard, which reveals that over the last two and half decade the numbers of marginal holdings have increased at a compound growth rate of 2.46 percent per annum. Whereas small holdings have increased by 1.41 percent per annum. Consequently, average size of holdings in the state has declined from 1.5 to 1.2 hectares. The ever increasing number of holdings and trends toward marginal holdings combined with poor yields on from such holdings is leading towards un-sustainability on these holdings, in terms of means of sustenance. In the State agriculture, generally being practiced on subsistence basis and cereals, oilseeds, pulses and animal husbandry farming are taken up almost on all farms. It has been growing apprehension that the present scenario may be leading to a situation where output from farms may not be sufficient for mitigating food-feed requirements at farms level and may be leading to a hunger gap. Even if these under privileged groups of agrarian population are not food insecure, the present scenario definitely makes them vulnerable to food insecurity in not so distant future. Any slight shock in form of bad weather, adverse input prices, labour shortages or changes in policy regime etc. within no time can push such groups to realms of food insecurity, although they may not be food insecure presently. The miniscule holding size also off-sets the grains of commercial farming (farming diversification) and farmers of commercial farming region Shimla may migrate during harvesting seasons to work on large orchards and to earn livelihood, irrespective of farming system.

Thus there may be prevalence of food insecurity in both the farming regions of the state. The present study is aimed to identify such groups among the agrarian population and surely devise use full input for policy planners and various government agencies to make effective intervention in the form of development programmes not alone in the agriculture sector but also in education, health and rural development etc. to provide gainful employment and mean of livelihood.
In order to work out the status of food insecurity and vulnerability among agrarian population, the present study has been divided into eleven chapters. Chapter-1 includes introduction, brief background of the study, concepts and definitions, importance, government initiatives and objectives of the study while Chapter-2 deals with sample design and coverage of the study area, analytical tools, various cost concepts, concept and definitions and limitation of the study. Chapter-3 represents features of the whole study regions in general and features of subsistence and commercial farming regions particularly. Chapter-4 contains the review of available relevant literature divided into five sections. Chapter-5 reveals socio-economic profile of sampled households whereas Chapter-6 deals with present pattern of households income distribution. Chapter-7 contains pattern households consumption expenditure and the state of food insecurity and vulnerability, with the use of objective and normative measures. Chapter-8 related with household’s availability and access to public and private resources. Whereas Chapter-9 represents a set of coping mechanisms at work in the study region. Chapter-10 deals with the government’s policy and programmes aimed to provide food security net. Chapter-11 represents summary, suggestions and policy issues of the present study.