CHAPTER - I
Concept of Food Security
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CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

The term "Food Security" came into use since the last thirty years. The World Food Conference convened by FAO in 1974 drew the attention of the World Community for the first time, to the urgent need of devising ways and means for assuring Food Security to the hungry million of the World. It was recognized that assurance of the World Food Security is the common responsibility of the international community. The conference gave call that no child, woman and man go to bed hungry and no human being's physical and mental capabilities should be stunted by malnutrition (FAO, 1974).

Food Security describes a situation in which people do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. Worldwide around 800 million people are chronically hungry due to extreme poverty; while up to billion people lack of Food Security intermittently due to varying degree of poverty. Two commonly used definitions of Food Security were given by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization FAO and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):- Food Security exist 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. Food Security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Food Security is a flexible concept, the initial focus was on the volume and stability of food supplies. Food Security was defined as "availability at all times of adequate World Food supplies of basic food stuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuation in production and prices" (World Food Summit, 1974).

Food security is an integral part of food system in a country, which cannot be maintained without price stability (Shafi M, 1987).
The objectives and concept of Food Security is not restricted to the boundaries of country alone. It is a global problem should be treated at the International level because no country of the world can become self sufficient in all the basic and non basic food items. Therefore different ways and mean should be adopted to fulfill the objectives of Food Security at a global level and the surplus of one region would go a long way in meeting the demand of deficit of regions (Mohammed A 1995).

The concept of National Food Security would require an adequate level of food stocks in a country where agriculture depends on the vagaries of monsoon, as in India and where there are vast fluctuations in agricultural production. Food Security requires stocks to meet situation of short fall in normal production through Public Distribution System (Food Policy in India, p 309).

Food Security ought to be an issue of great importance for a country like India where more than one fourth of the population is estimated to be absolutely poor and half of children malnourished in one way or another. Food Security has a number of dimensions that go beyond the production, availability and demand for food. There has been a paradigm shift in the concept of Food Security from food availability and stability to household food insecurity (Towards Food Secure India, p-11).

Food Security refers to the ability of a society to ensure access to food to its population through a variety of means that include both enhancing production and its equitable and fair distribution. The Public Distribution System is a part of Food Security System (Food Security in a regional perspective, pp190-191).

The Rome Declaration on World Food Security at the World Food Summit held in 1996 states that Food Security "exist when all people at all times has physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". This definition
encompasses multiple dimensions such as availability of food, economic access to food, safe and nutritious food, adequate quality and all time (The paradox of Food Insecurity, P 254).

Food Security has been variously defined in the literature, but the generally accepted definition to that of the World Bank (1986) "access to food for an active healthy life". In a large number of alternative definitions of this term, the emphasis, however remain on just sort of "access to enough food for all, ensured through a right to secured livelihood during normal line and to get compensated for the loss on it during emergency (Toward a Food Secure India, P 207).

It is estimated that about 340 million of people in the World are chronically under nourished and unable to grow or obtain enough food to lead a healthy and active life. An essential element in the Food Security in the Developing countries is to ensure the social security at one hand, where on the hand is the nutritional need of the people may be satisfied. Adequate food may be produced in the country but unless these people have the purchasing power they cannot have access to the food reserves (Shafi, M. 1992).

The vision of free from hunger is easy to think but too difficult to implement. There are mutilator's involves in the entire chain of food from food production and sustainability to Food Security, storage and its distribution at household levels, including food availability, purchasing power etc. Food Security at household level can be achieved only when all people of a household at all times have access to sufficient food for health and production. Thus the issue can be divided into three main component i.e. food production and food availability, food access at household level and food utilization by the poorest people (Mathur, 2000).

The World Food Program (WFP) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nation, become operational in 1963. It provides relief
assistance to victims of natural and man-made disaster and supplies food aid to people in Developing countries with the aim of stimulating self-reliant among communities. It is the second largest source of assistance in the United Nation, after the World Bank Group, WFP(World Food Policy) handles more than 1 quarter of the World Food Aid( The Europa year book 1998).

Food Security thus in true sense which is derived from the Latin word secure means free from care and anxiety and hence implies not only access but right to food. Food Security not only implies availability of food but also its access which is possible by Purchasing Power. The fact is that the world produces enough food to feed everyone but it does not solve the problem of hunger and starvation. It is a question of not only production but attacking the under lying factor that cause hunger. The issue is further compounded by regional disparities and most importantly individual family or intra household food situation. Even within a household women face the burnt of chronic malnutrition as they are affected by age old gender discrimination (Ghosh 2000 p-7).

Food Security is a complex issue having several dimensions such as poverty, employment, famine, gender discrimination, equity, starvation, food and nutrition practices, human growth, political elements and so on. Poverty has been recognized globally both as a cause and consequence of Food Security (Ghosh 2000).

The concept of Food Security has undergone a considerable modification in the recent years. Food availability and stability was considered good measures of food security till the seventies and achievements of self - sufficiency was given higher priorities in the food policies of Developing Countries. Some countries were successful in achieving self sufficiency by increasing their production and to also improve their capacity to cope with year to year fluctuation in production. However they could not solve the problem of chronic household Food Insecurity. In a Policy design a distinction is made between the chronically Food Insecure
households and the transitory food insecure households. Transitory Food Security is associated with risks related to either access or availability of food supply such as those relating drought, flood, earthquake, volcanoes. The problem of chronic food security is associated primarily with poverty and crises due to continuously inadequate diet. The strategy to overcome this problem includes intervention to rise purchasing power of the poor through the endowment of land and non-land assets and generation of employment opportunities as well as long term growth mediated intervention. (Indian Development Report, 2002)

The concept of household food insecurity originated with research among low-income women in United States by Radimer and colleagues in the early 1990s. They identified that the experiences of household food insecurity can have four dimensions e.g. quantitative, qualitative, psychological and social. These four dimensions are closely linked with Food Security. The existence of food insecure households is an example of the absence of universal access to food by all people (Radimer et al., 1992).

Food Security means that food is available at all times that all persons have means of access to it; that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety; and that it is acceptable within the given culture. Only when all these conditions are in place can a population be considered "food secure" (FAO, 1996).

All people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life (World Food Summit, 1996).

Community food security is a strategy for ensuring secure access to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate food for everyone, produced in an environmentally sustainable way, and provided in a manner that promotes human dignity (Ontario Public Health Association, OPHA, 2002).
Community food security exists when all citizens obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance's and equal access for everyone. (Public Health Association of Columbia, PHABC, 2004)

Most of expert defines food security as an access to enough food by all people at all times to lead healthy life. Food security is primarily a matter of ensuring effective demand rather than a problem relating to food supply. With such realization, inter-relationship between poverty, hunger and food supply is gaining international recognition and serious attempts are made to identify people at risk. Thus, it was clearly emphasized that satisfactory production levels and stability of supplies should be matched by a reduction in poverty and an increase in the effective demand to ensure economic and physical access for the poor (FAO, 1987, page 2).

The concept of food security is interlinked with a number of related factors such as agriculture policy, nutritional policy, access to education, health care, social security and the system of public distribution through fair price shops.

Food Security is an issue of considerable importance for developing Countries like India where million of people suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Food Security is not confined only to production, availability and demand of food ultimately, the key question is that of the ability of the people to access food and utilize it effectively at all times, to lead a healthy life. Nutrition Security is an important dimension of Food Security (Toward Food Secure India, p7).

Three Non-Government Organization (NGO) networks handing food aid has enlarged the World Bank definition as follows:
Access to food

Availability of food is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for ending hunger. People require assured access to food.

"By all people"

Food Security at the national or regional level does not necessarily indicate Food Security at the local or personal level. There is great disparity in Food Security among region, communities, household and individual. The NGO networks approach is to target population at the household level.

"at all times"

A food-secure world requires a peaceful and stable environment civil and external conflict as well as natural disasters seriously abrupt food production.

"enough for an active, healthy life"

Food Security means that individual and households have access to sufficient food both in quality and quantity to meet their nutritional requirements. However, adequate food supply is not the only condition for ensuring an active and healthy life and unless there is access to proper health care, water supply and other basic services, the food will not be efficiently used.

Food Security has to be ensured at the micro level, that is, to each individual. The two main pillars of any strategy of Food Security must be ensuring adequate economic and physical access to food. The household is the basic unit of residence and consumption expenditure, a well-functioning system public distribution system can be the means to ensure adequate physical access to food at affordable prices at the household level(Food and Nutrition insecurity may 2007).

India at present finds itself in the midst of a paradoxical situation, endemic mass-hunger co-existing with the mounting food grain stocks. At present an
estimated 214 million people are under food and 50 million on the brink of starvation resulting in starvation deaths. Recent years have seen the economy booming and growth rates have been among the highest in the world. In every five Indians suffers from over to convert hunger 'Hunger' as started by Amartya Sen and Jen Dreze is "intolerable in the modern world" because it is so unnecessary and unwarranted. India is a poignant example of now foods suffering at the aggregate level have not translated into Food Security at the household level. About 214 million people are chronically food insecure. About 50 per cent of children are undernourished and stunted, 23 per cent have a low birth weight and 68 out of 1000 die before the age of 1 year.

The concept of Food Security has evolved and expanded over time to integrate a wide range of food-related issues and to more completely reflect the complexity reflect the role of food in human society. Early definition focused almost exclusively on the ability of a region or Nation to assure on adequate food supply for its current and projected population. The emphasis was on secure access to food for a population, with a singular focus on the role of food as a vehicle for nutrition. However, food holds much more significance to human that just its nutritional value. It can also have important symbolic, cultural, social and political roles. Food Security, as a conceptual goal has expanded to explicitly include more and more of these roles. The evolution of thinking reflects an attitude that society's goals should reach beyond the ability of a country to produce and import enough food. Issues related to its production, distribution, availability and acceptability have become equally important.

The core of Food Security as a bivariate concept composed of anti-hunger or poverty elimination goals on the one hand and goals related to food system issues on the other. The two dimension of the concept essentially relate to food access goals in terms of quantity and quality. Anti- hunger or anti- poverty
approach argues that people should have a sufficient quantity of food and / or enough income to access a sufficient quantity.

The conceptualization of Food Security goals goes beyond the adequacy of food quantity and quality and extends to the four 'A's: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adequacy. Food Security requires that a sufficient supply of food be available (quantity) and that it be accessible to all equally. Acceptability addresses Food's cultural and symbolic value the food available and accessible should respect 'individual' cultural traditions. A sustainable food system should help to satisfy basic human needs, without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs.

Different concepts of Food Security differ in the way that their authors answer the following five questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who should get the food?</th>
<th>Everyone/all people(Universality)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When?</td>
<td>At all times/sustained access(stability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td>Through normal food channels/ not from emergency food assistance programs (dignity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much food?</td>
<td>Enough for a healthy active life (quantity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of food?</td>
<td>Safe and nutritious (quality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culturally appropriate (quantity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Produced in environmentally sustainable ways that promote strong communities (quality)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Global Food Security would look at the ability of the World’s food producers to meet the statistically calculated caloric needs of the Earth’s six billion residents and also concern itself with threats to the long- term sustainability and issues of genetic modification, corporate dominance of food production and threats to biodiversity.
REFERENCES


