

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS → 19 SEPTEMBER 2023 → THE HINDU:

Food Insecurity in India:

- **Introduction:**

- India may have the largest economy with the fastest rate of growth in the world, but it is also experiencing an increase in food price inflation. The price of food began to rise rapidly in 2019 and has continued to grow ever since. Annual inflation in July of this year hit 11%, which was the highest level in a decade.

- **Nutrition and Food Security Around the World:**

- The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) calculates the percentage of the population in various nations who cannot afford a healthy diet in its report, "State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World."
- An estimated 74% of the population in India in 2021 will not be able to afford a healthy food, which is a horrifying statistic to notice.
- There are roughly one billion Indians, based on a population of 1,400 million.

- **Finding is conceivable:**

- According to a survey, while the cost of making thaali at home has increased by 65%, the average wage for manual labourers has increased by 38%, and the average wage for salaried workers has increased by 28% during this time.
- Given the significant anticipated loss in purchasing power, it becomes fair to assume that food consumption has been harmed.
- This would be consistent with the latest National Family Health Survey conducted throughout 2019–21, which found an increase in the prevalence of anaemia, largely caused by nutrient deficiencies.
- It is estimated that more than 50% of adult women are anaemic. This raises the possibility that the FAO's conclusion—that more than half of Indians cannot afford a healthy diet—is accurate.
- The most crucial objective of economic policy at the moment is to guarantee that Indians have access to a nutritious food.

EVA STALIN IAS ACADEMY – BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

12/24, Muthurangan Muthali St, West Tambaram, Chennai - 600045

<https://www.evastalinasacademy.in/>

Contact Number – +91-8678969915, +91-9940332851

- In this situation, macroeconomic policy has failed to control inflation as expected.
- Since the inflation rate has been consistently higher than the objective for the past four years, the Reserve Bank of India has failed in this mission. Its "inflation targeting" strategy, which reduces output when inflation rates increase, accomplishes nothing to control supply-side inflation in food prices.
- It must be stated that central banks are unable to resolve this issue in any reasonable amount of time. By increasing the yield on land, supply-side intervention is required to guarantee that food is produced at a constant price.
- **The Green Revolution's importance:**
- India, which orchestrated the Green Revolution in the 1960s, has extensive knowledge in this field, but it is not being utilised.
- When there was a severe food scarcity at the time as a result of two consecutive droughts, the government organised a supply-side response by giving farmers access to high-yielding crops, affordable finance, and guaranteed prices through purchase.
- This was a great success. India stopped relying on food imports within a few years.
- If there was a single event that helped India achieve self-sufficiency during the Cold War, it was this one.
- It may be more significant, though, to have orchestrated the Green Revolution in India at a time when it was a horribly underdeveloped nation forced to guarantee food security to an unfathomably vast number of people.
- With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that mistakes were committed, such as the widespread use of chemical fertiliser that harmed the soil and was supported by subsidies.
- Additionally, farm revenues were dependent on procurement costs rather than productivity growth, which fueled inflation.
- Additionally, we note that the policy largely ignored pulses, the majority of Indians' primary source of protein, in favour of grains.
- But rather than complaining about the mistakes made in an incredibly effective economic policy intervention, we ought to be making the necessary corrections right away.
- At the same time, we must concentrate on the specific objective of bringing down the price of food production.
- **Projects to work on:**
- Each of these suggestions needs to be expanded upon. It has been noted for some time that rising public spending on irrigation does not correspond to an increase in the area that is watered; whether this is because of waste or financial misallocation has not been determined.

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- Leasing is a remedy for the continuous fragmentation of already tiny land holdings, which reduces the capacity for capital investment that increases productivity.
- In order for India's network of public agricultural research institutes to once again play the outstanding role they did in the 1960s, they must be revitalised.
- Finally, where formerly the gramme sevak was a well-known character in the community, playing a vital role in the spread of best practises, extension has now more or less disappeared. Reviving it is necessary.
- These projects ought to be integrated into a plan for massively increasing the production of the protein that India sorely lacks.
- The function of States is essential in each of the aforementioned categories.
- **Conclusion:**
- The Green Revolution was responsible for India's initial reduction in poverty. So, this tactic did help the underprivileged. Similarly, no strategy compatible with ecological security must be ruled out in order to guarantee that all Indians have access to a healthy diet on a permanent basis.



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