

**Biotica
Research
Today**

Vol 3:1 **081**
2021 **083**

Nutritional Security through National Food Security Mission for an Atmanirbhar Bharat

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Open Access

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Keywords

Atmanirbhar Bharat, National Food Security Mission, Nutritional Security, Productivity

Article History

Received in 26th January 2021

Received in revised form 29th January 2021

Accepted in final form 30th January 2021

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How to cite this article?

Vijayan and Singh, 2021. Nutritional Security through National Food Security Mission for an Atmanirbhar Bharat. *Biotica Research Today* 3(1): 081-083.

Abstract

The era of green revolution has been a boon to Indian Agriculture during 1960's. Nevertheless the quintessential part of nutritional security of the masses was always forgotten during policy implementation. The same is addressed by the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) in various fronts. Moreover India is treading a path to be Self Reliant (Atmanirbhar). NFSM mainly focuses on increasing productivity and nutritional security. NFSM addresses this issue with its various programme components. Keeping abreast of these trends, an effort has been made to analyze whether the programme implementation dovetails with the aspirations of farmers and masses, in terms of agricultural input and market requirements of farmers and nutritional security of the masses. This article also throws light on the programmes on the anvil which would be incorporated with NFSM to make a India nutritionally secure country. It is already high time to make a transition from food security to nutritional security.

Introduction

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed.” Mahatma Gandhi rightly quoted this to ensure that each person in India has the right to access to food. The poignant point is that, in modern times, it should be not mere access to food, but the access to the same should ensure nutritional security too. The article throws light on the ways and means by which the GOI's National Food Security Mission fulfills the same.

Genesis of NFSM

On 29th May, 2007, the National Development Council (NDC) in its 53rd meeting adopted a resolution to launch a Food Security Mission to augment the annual production of rice, wheat and pulses. In October 2007, National Food Security Mission (NFSM) was eventually launched. It was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at increasing the production of rice by 10 MT, wheat 8 MT and pulses 2 MT by the end of 11th FYP.

The increase in productivity was to be achieved through- (a) area expansion and productivity enhancement; (b) restoring soil fertility and productivity; (c) creating employment opportunities; and (d) enhancing farm level economy. Achieving the targets as aimed, the Mission was continued during 12th Five Year Plan with new targets of additional production of 25 MT of food grains comprising of 10 MT rice, 8 MT of wheat, 4 MT of pulses and 3 MT of coarse cereals by the end of XII Plan. Beyond the 12th Plan, the mission is being continued with new additional target of 13 MT of food grains from 2017-18 to 2019-20. The country achieved bumper

production of food grains during 2017-18 at 285.01 MT. As per 4th Advance Estimates total food grains production achieved during 2018-19 is 284.95 MT.

Pivot to Nutritional Security

At present NFSM is being implemented in identified districts of 29 states in the country which dovetails with the government’s mission of Doubling Farmers Income too. The major crops components covered under the programme are: Rice, Wheat, Pulses, Oilseeds, Coarse Cereals and Commercial Crops. Major activities undertaken for each specific crops include Demonstration, seed distribution, soil management (INM), Plant Management (IPM), Farm implements and equipments, water application tools/ pump sets, water carrying pipes, cropping system based trainings.

The paradox is only 16% of Indian farmers know about MSP according to Shanta Kumar committee. Among the 16% majority are large farmers. The beneficiaries of NFSM are farmers, aimed at mainly at mainly at (1) Sustainable increase in the production of targeted crops through area expansion and productivity enhancement, (2) Restoration of soil fertility and productivity at the individual farm level, (3) Rise in farm level net income. The third component of NFSM is in tandem with the government’s initiative to double farmers’ income by 2022. Hence NFSM caters to a plethora of targets aimed at farmers. The Government is aiming at an Atmanirbhar Bharat by introducing one nation one ration card initiative. It addresses the multitude of problems in accessing of food by inter-state migrants, as 37% of the Indian population are migrants according to 2011 census. One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) plan is one of the top priorities of Government of India to provide an option to all eligible ration card holders/ beneficiaries covered under NFSA to access their entitlements from anywhere in the country. Hence NFSM is *sin qua non* for an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Figure 1 depicts the physical targets and physical achievement of demonstrations conducted with respect to four major NFSM crop components. The figure reveals that the proposed physical targets were almost met with respect to the major NFSM crop components viz. rice, wheat, pulses and coarse cereals.

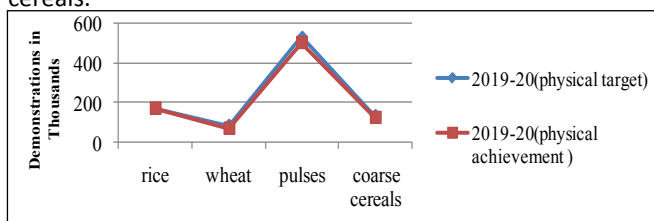


Figure 1: Physical targets and Physical achievement of demonstrations conducted with respect to four major NFSM crop components (Source: 2019-20 NFSM progress report)

Figure 2 depicts the physical target and achievement of the seed distribution component of NFSM crops. As quality seed is one of the important inputs for better production potential, NFSM tries to cater to the requirement of quality seed as well. As it is evident from the figure 2 that the physical achievement of seed distribution are not in syn with the physical targets which explains the *raison d’être* of farmers dilemma. Inadequate quality seeds force farmers to cultivate with what is accessible and available.

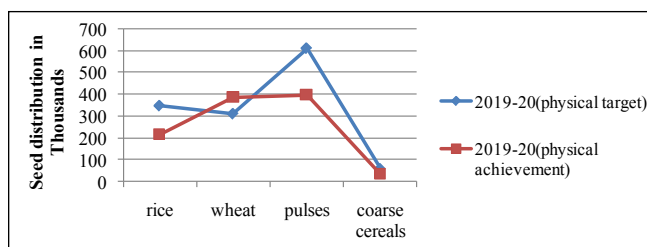


Figure 2: Physical targets and Physical achievement of seed distribution components of NFSM crops (Source: 2019-20 NFSM progress report)

National Food Security Mission encompasses all the components required for Atmanirbhar Bharat, be it accessibility of nutritious cereals and pulses, initiatives to double farmers income, initiatives to address migrant problems. Another grave problem is, albeit the programme is being implemented from 2007, the percentage of stunting and wasting among rural population is still high. The problem is severe among children aged 6 and below. According to Global Nutrition Report (2020) India has made no progress towards achieving the target for wasting, with 17.3% of children under 5 years of age affected, which is higher than the average for the Asia region (9.1%) and among the highest in the world (Figure 3).

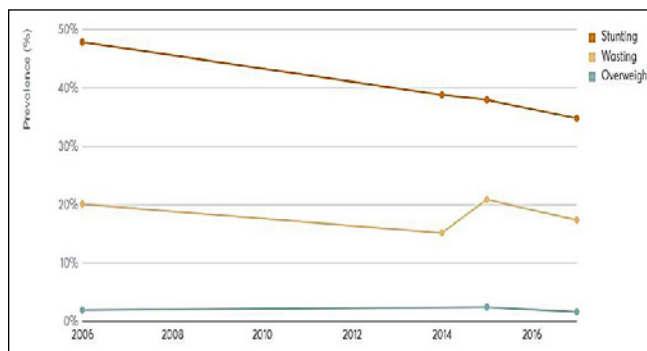


Figure 3: Percentage of stunted, wasted and overweight children in India under the age of 5 [Source: UNICEF/WHO/ World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates: Stunting, Wasting and Overweight (July 2020)]

Figure 3 portrays the rural–urban gap existing in India with respect to accessibility to food. As it is evident that stunted and wasted children are from the rural areas where there

should be strict implementation of mid-day meal scheme under National Food Security Act.

Conclusion

There are a plethora of components under NFSM in the form of National Food Security Act, Targeted Public distribution, NFSM crop components, Mid-day meal scheme under NFSA act, one nation one ration card (ONORC) Scheme etc. Nevertheless proper implementation is the crux of any developmental programme which requires the efficient participation personnel involved in the same. Efforts must be

unleashed in the arena of personnel training so as to fulfill the required targets of NFSM.

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