



Prosperity



Local Food Systems in Rural Areas



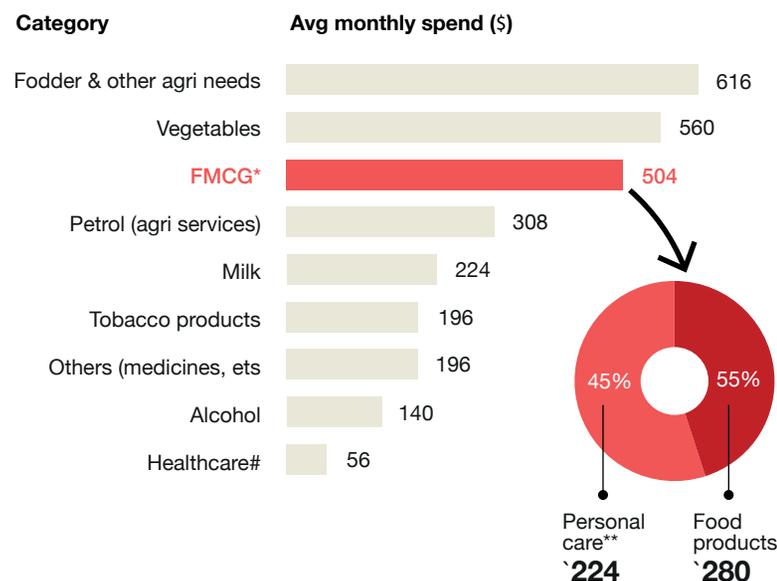
Actionable Area

Focus on developing local employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and maintaining biologically diverse landscapes for sustainable intensification of agriculture by focusing on 3 'I's - Innovations, Incentives, and Institutions - that could help produce more diversified and nutritious food economically and in an environmentally and financially sustainable way.

Issue

- By 2030, India will become the first country to be home to more than 1.5 billion people. Consequently, the proportion of the rural population will decline from 69% to 61% as the urban population is projected to increase more than twice the projected increase in the rural population. While the percentage decline is seen, the rural population and people depending on agriculture will continue the same when it comes to absolute numbers. The landholdings are going to remain small. The transformation of urban industrial production systems towards automation etc also may not generate major employment opportunities. The current internal migration of 100-125 million people will stay and probably increase as the incomes in rural areas go down, and opportunities in urban areas may decrease.
- Along with this, the demand for food is expected to double, and the issue of climate change is projected to become severe in the years to come. These emerging challenges will have to be met, and food and agricultural policies will be molded accordingly.

Rural India's consumption patterns



Source: Rural Establishment Survey, Chrome Data Analytics. 2016

*Primarily soap, shampoo, hair oil, detergent, beauty cream, refined oil

#Includes Chyawanprash

**Skin care forms 16%, or 36, of personal care each month



- The COVID19 pandemic and the lockdown have exposed how a large section of our society is highly vulnerable with regard to food security, while agriculture has shown resilience as a sector. Food systems perform a central role in determining the quantity, quality, diversity, and nutritional content of the foods available for consumption and sustaining the livelihoods of 54% of the people dependent on agriculture in the country. In addition, food systems have a major impact on human health (both positive and negative) through various channels and on our planet's environment, ecosystem, and health.
- As such, how food systems function, the cost and quality of the food they deliver, and their impact on the health of people and our planet, directly and indirectly, impact outcomes of food security and nutrition. Any measure taken towards this must comprehensively consider these issues in design. Unfortunately, there had been a narrow focus on a few approaches since independence without understanding the overall implications and administrative and bureaucratic failures. The situation worsened after the 90s, with India opting for liberalisation and globalisation without strengthening its own support systems and climate change.
- The main problem seems to be the lack of a comprehensive and integrated approach and trying to solve today's and the futuristic problem with yesterday's knowledge. Three of the important challenges to ensure food and nutrition security for all are ecological degradation, climate variability and extremes, and economic slowdowns and downturns, which are exacerbated by the underlying causes of poverty and very high and persistent levels of inequality.

a. Ecological Degradation: Currently, 97.85 million hectares (mha) of land have already been degraded. Of this, 3.32 mha has been added in the 15 years between 2003-04 and 2018-19. Almost 37 mha of the degraded land is what the report classifies as agriculture unirrigated land. And water erosion is the most common reason (80%) for degradation of unirrigated farmland, followed by wind erosion (17%), salinity/alkalinity inland (2%), and waterlogging (1%). Loss of crop productivity, one of many negative impacts of soil erosion by water, has serious consequences for the country's food, livelihood, and environmental security.

b. Climate variability and extremes: These are the key drivers in the recent rise in global hunger. The impact of climate change is often underestimated, and agriculture's contribution to climate change is ignored. In reality, if farmers have to adapt to the changing climate, we need to understand climate change in a broader context of ecological, economical, and socio-political crises which Indian farmers are already undergoing.

The relationship between climate change and agriculture is three-fold -

- Climate change has a direct bearing on the biology of plant and animal growth.
- The changes in the farm ecology – such as soil conditions, soil moisture, pests, and diseases, etc.
- The ability of the existing social and economic institutions, particularly in rural areas, to deal with the challenges posed by global warming. In the larger context of food security and climate change, it is also important to consider other sectors like animal husbandry and livestock, which are closely linked with agriculture.



a. **Poverty and Inequality:** It negatively impacts the nutrition quality of diets. In all its forms, food insecurity and malnutrition are made worse by high and persistent levels of inequality – in terms of income, productive assets, and basic services (e.g., health, education) and, more generally, wealth. Income inequality, in particular, increases the likelihood of food insecurity – especially for socially excluded and marginalized groups – and undercuts the positive effect of any economic growth on individual food security. Structural vulnerabilities, including inequalities related to gender, youth, ethnicity, indigenous people, and people with disabilities, exacerbate poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition during periods of economic slowdowns and downturns or following conflict and climate-related disasters. Furthermore, these levels of inequality are being accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

b. In 2016-17 Government of India set up a committee for Doubling Farmers' Income (DFI) in real terms over seven years (2016-17 to 2022-23). All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey (NAFIS) 2016-17 estimates that an average Indian farming household earned Rs 8931/month (Rs 1,07,172/year) in the agriculture year 2015-16. This is up from Rs 2,115 earned in 2002-03 as per NSSO's Situational Analysis Survey, implying a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of about 12% in nominal terms and 3.7% in real terms (2015-16 base). To achieve the DFI by 2022-23, the Dalwai committee points out that farmers' real incomes need to grow at 10.4% per annum, i.e., 2.8 times the growth rate achieved historically (3.7%) has not been achieved yet. Instead, it went down to less than 3.0% by 2017-18, and the achievement was far lower than the targets.

Initiatives

- Food security exists when all people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. To achieve food security, India has taken a series of approaches, some influenced by developments across the world, some due to advocacy efforts of civil society groups and political parties, and the judicial system in India forces some. All these initiatives can be summarised as follows -

Approaches to Food and Livelihood Security





Vision 2030

- A significant focus on developing local employment and entrepreneurial opportunities can be provided by strengthening the local food systems.
- Maintain biologically diverse landscapes for sustainable intensification of agriculture.
- Focus on the role of Innovations, Incentives, and Institutions that could help produce more diversified and nutritious food economically and in an environmentally and financially sustainable way.

Pathways

POLICY



Rationalise subsidies as current subsidies distort cropping patterns and production practices.

Shift subsidies for more ecologically sustainable models of agriculture.

Focus on Income Security for farm households rather than on increasing yields since the progress of agriculture needs to be measured in terms of growth in incomes of producers than the increase in yields.

Invest in income diversification opportunities for small and marginal farmers.

Strengthen direct income support measures.

Correct price distortions.

Government should announce the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all the crops along with approximate quantities which may be procured, and the states should decide the procurement quantity.

Give food security budgets to states based on the proportion of the targeted population and other criteria.

Strengthen the Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and let them procure and distribute the grain grown within their region.

Pathways

IMPLEMENTATION



Promote multiple cropping models, kitchen (Nutri) gardens etc., to achieve a major local production and consumption goal.

Several changes have to be made in assessing MSPs taking all real costs into consideration as current price support policies are highly skewed.

If the farmers do not get access to the MSP for any reasonable price compensation mechanisms can be followed.

Decentralising procurement by developing state level and district level plans of cropping systems, the food produced, and the foods distributed under PDS.

Use the existing FPOs, women self-help groups, PACS, and other community organisations to procure and distribute the grains under various food security schemes. With this, the costs will go down significantly, and the subsidies and benefits can be passed on directly to the producers as they are the ones in crisis.

Develop a mechanism to compensate for self-consumption of food by the farmer's family, which is about 40%. Otherwise, it forces farmers to sell off what they produce and buy cheaper grains from PDS.

Linking urban food demand with rural prosperity while ensuring environmental sustainability will be essential to ensuring urban and rural food security.

Improve last-mile delivery of support services.

Develop a mechanism to identify actual cultivators since the current identification mechanism used for farmers based on land registration/ownership discriminates against tenant farmers, women, Adivasi farmers, and assigned landowners who may not have 'land records.

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