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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by "ECO-FAWN" (Environment Conservation Organization - Foundation for Afforestation Wild Animals and Nature), a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Food Security and Support to Combat Hunger and Malnutrition Under Various Incentives By The Successive Governments In India

A nation's prosperity and wellbeing is assessed on the hunger index and percentage of malnutrition of its citizens. India lagged synonymous for hunger deaths and malnutrition in the early 1960's and became self-sufficient in food-grain in late 1990's and at present, India is not just self-sufficient but grown herself into a surplus nation with export potential in food grains like rice, wheat, pulses, grains and oilseeds. A vast extent of other lands was also brought under cultivation to meet consumption and growing demands, hence increasing the agricultural output. The journey was not short, inexpensive or experimental for economy of agricultural backbone.

The green revolution adopted, inevitably stressed for application of hybrid and high yielding varieties in agricultural sector where as blue and white revolution promoted fish and dairy products to compete with commercial platforms respectively. In the above sectors too there was trade export. The rise in export trade of food grains and other edibles only corroborate the fact that the country has grown into a surplus. The country's accumulated buffer stocks could support continuous supply of food-grains despite extreme weathers, natural disasters and recent pandemic which otherwise played tantrums with the farmers and the poor.

Food Security Act 2013: The government of India promulgated Food Security Act, the primary concept of food security is to ensure that people get access to the essential food for their active and healthy life and is characterized by availability, access, utilization and stability of food. Though the Indian Constitution does not have any explicit provision regarding right to food, the fundamental right to life enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution may be interpreted to include right to live with human dignity, which may include the right to food and other basic necessities.

Though the issue of 'food security' at the household is continuously being addressed by the Government since long, through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Targeted Public Distribution System, the enactment of the National Food Security Act, (NFSA) 2013 on July 5, 2013 marks a paradigm shift in the approach to food security from "welfare to rights based approach". The Act legally entitles up to 80% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food-grains under Targeted Public Distribution System. About two thirds of the population therefore is covered under the Act to receive highly subsidized food-grains. As a step towards women empowerment, the eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is mandated to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing of ration cards under the Act.

The Act is implemented in all the states/UTs, out of maximum coverage of 81.34 crore persons, around 80 crore persons have been covered under NFSA at present for receiving highly subsidized food-grains. The identification of beneficiaries by states/UTs is a continuous process, which involves exclusion of ineligible/fake/duplicate ration cards and also exclusion on account of death, migration etc. and inclusion on account of birth as also that of genuine left-out households. Public Distribution System (PDS) is a government managed process of ensuring that food, staples, grains and other necessities are being provided to the poorer sections of the society in India. Food and some non-food items are provided at a subsidized rate through a chain of Fair Price Shops (FPS) or Ration Shops.

Direct Cash Transfer in food was started in UTs of Chandigarh and Puducherry from the month of September, 2015 and part of Dadra & Nagar Haveli from March, 2016. In these UTs, NFSA is implemented in cash transfer mode under which cash equivalent of subsidy is transferred directly into the Bank accounts of eligible households to enable them to purchase food-grains from open market.

One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) was implemented to benefit about 81 Crore beneficiaries ensuring food security for migrants as well. Through this facility, while a migrant beneficiary is enabled to get his/her ration through portability in the destination State/UT, at the same time, the family back home is also allowed to get their part of the entitled ration to support itself. The usage of portability can be seasonal or long-term.

There are high instances of food grains diverted or sold to others/markets, only substantiate better standard of living preferred by the poor and the middle class families, there are many news reports of PDS food grains diverted to others purpose, for having excess food grains in the homes hence this point substantiates food grains self-sufficiency of households but don't want to give up subsidized food grains only to the fear of losing other benefits which are linked to ration cards.

There were instances of old men and women getting engaged in farm works during crop seasons for driving off birds in sorghum fields, watering paddy fields, looking after crops and cattle, these days no old men or women find such work necessary, elders get old aged pension from the government and food grains under PDS hence there is shortage of labor. The government spends lot of budget on PDS to ensure food security for its citizens, there are no hunger deaths or starvation deaths as contrary to some international misrepresentations, news reports or fund raisers. There is dearth in farm labor of late, laborers in rural pockets migrate to nearby towns and cities to earn better and support the children and elders who are aback in villages.

Malnutrition:

Although the county boasts of no hunger deaths, the maceration effects of malnutrition still persist with dwindling signs in very few areas. Malnutrition, confined to some rural pockets attenuated with efforts of successive governments. It should be laudable that new cases of malnutrition is low and there is gradual abatement except in deep pockets of primitive tribal or Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Irrespective of caste, creed, religion, social status, every identified pregnant lady is supplemented with dietary protein needs, provided with eggs, milk and supported with health diet, timely weighing of both mother and child at frequent intervals. Diagnosis is done with sophisticated machineries, so that the issue of pre-natal post-natal medicare are made available in advance and malnutrition is addressed at root level. The government spending on sophisticated equipment's, encourage to have pre and postal care in government hospitals, its spending on protein, dietary plans, immunizations are all contributed to keep malnutrition in rural and urban areas at bay.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS): One of the guiding principles of the Act is its life-cycle approach wherein special provisions have been made for pregnant women and lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years, by entitling them to receive nutritious meal free of cost through a widespread network of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres, called Anganwadi Centres under ICDS scheme and also through schools under Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme. Higher nutritional norms have been prescribed for malnourished children up to 6 years of age. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are further entitled to receive cash maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000 to partly compensate for the wage loss during the period of pregnancy and also to supplement nutrition.

Lr.No. 15/1/2019-EP(Agri-III), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India, Letter to ECO FAWN Society, dated 7th Aug 2019.

Statistics of Export of Agricultural Commodities 2018-19, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Governemnt of India

Lr.No. P&R/7(1)/2019/35(2), Food Corporation of India Letter to ECO FAWN Society, Dated: 22.07.2019

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