



Food and Nutrition Security in Pakistan

Overview

According to World Food Summit 1996, food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. From this definition, four main dimensions of food security can be identified: physical availability, socio-economic access, food utilization and stability of the aforementioned dimensions over time, which are described as follows:

Physical AVAILABILITY of food	Food availability addresses the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.
Economic and Physical ACCESS to food	An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives.
Food UTILIZATION	Utilizations is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Combined with good biological utilization of food consumed, this determines the nutritional status of individuals.
STABILITY of the other three dimensions over time	Even if your food intake is adequate today, you are still considered to be food insecure if you have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of your nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on your food security status.

For food security objectives to be realized, all four aforementioned dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously.

In Pakistan, factors such as poverty, illiteracy, inflation and price volatility, unemployment, substandard health facilities, economic turmoil, conflicts, climate change and disasters make the task of achieving food security for all a challenge. It is generally considered that almost one-third of the Pakistan population is food insecure in some districts.

Food Production in Pakistan

Green revolution and subsequent productivity enhancement programs have resulted in significant

increase in the production of food crops in Pakistan over time. Today, it is one of the top producers of wheat (23.51 million tons), rice (6.16 million tons), sugarcane (58.03 million tons) and milk (47.95 million tons).

Pakistan government focuses on agriculture as a primary sector to overcome food insecurity as well as an engine of economic growth in the country. Agriculture contributes one-fifth to the national GDP and employs 45% of labor force. Pakistan is the 7th largest wheat producer in the world and has around 4 million tons of surplus wheat annually available for exports. Likewise, most of the rice that is grown in Pakistan is exported. In the current fiscal year, rice crop is expected to earn \$3 billion from exports alone. Sugarcane production also surpassed domestic consumption in 2011-12.





The livestock sector contributes around 11% to the national economy. Its importance in meeting food security at household level cannot be ignored as livestock is considered as poor-man's bank and in times of crisis, rural communities sell their livestock to have income to meet their urgent needs. In addition, a set of animals ensures meat, egg and milk supply at the household level on sustainable basis. Pakistan is the 5th largest milk producing country in the world. Thus on production side, Pakistan is much better off, however, it needs to improve the socio-economic access to food and its utilization on sustainable basis.

It is generally considered that in Pakistan one-third of the production is lost due to poor management practices after harvest, e.g., addition \$ 1.76 billion income could be earned by saving about 15% milk which is spoilt due to lack of cool chain and proper milk collection system. Same is true for the horticulture and other sectors. Thus only the post-harvest management could help ensure food security for a considerable population.

New Threats to Food Security

The climatological data in Pakistan clearly reveals that the effects of climate change are fast unfolding in Pakistan in the form of increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters. The forecasts are there for increased temperatures and changes in rainfall intensity and pattern, which will alter the cropping systems in coming decades, thus will resultantly alter food security situation. This calls for research on developing new varieties and animal breeds which could give same or more production in the changing environment. In Pakistan, already natural disasters in recent years have caused widespread losses to food and cash crops, which plunged poor communities into further poverty and food insecurity. The floods of 2010, 2011 and 2012 caused damage to or complete loss of crops, livestock, and community infrastructure which seriously posed risks of food security for millions of people in South Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh provinces. Likewise, drought in Balochistan from 1999 to 2002, affected millions of people and plunged them to absolute poverty.

Food price volatility and food inflation affects the most to poor and vulnerable groups. Since poverty, inflation and food insecurity are intrinsically linked, poverty and inequality will further result in increased food insecurity. According to the Planning Commission of Pakistan, the average cost of food basket has been increased by 73% since 2007-08. Some studies estimate that the poor spend as much as 70% of their household budget on purchase of food, which results increase in food insecurity as the household income declines due to inflation. Considering that food prices are expected to remain high and volatile globally, millions of more poor people across

Pakistan are likely to become food insecure, if adequate steps are not taken at all levels.

Ministry of National Food Security and Research

Realizing the fact that food security is not merely production of food, the Government of Pakistan created a dedicated Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) in October, 2011 to holistically address the issues of food security. Soon after its establishment, the MNFSR organized a National Food Security Conference in March 2012. Addressing the concluding plenary of this Conference on 21 March, the Prime Minister acknowledged that food insecurity was a serious issue in Pakistan and advised immediate action. He approved school feeding programme in 45 food insecure districts. He also approved special nutrition programmes, in collaboration with the World Food Program [WFP] for pregnant and lactating mothers and for children under five years of age. He announced the establishment of "National Food Security Council" and formulation of the "National Zero Hunger Program", and committed to allocate resources for these initiatives. This historical initiative has guided the Government to launch a programme which aims to reach out to 61 million food-insecure people over a period of five years and thus drastically reduce malnutrition and food insecurity. As a token,



the Government immediately provided 50,000 MT of wheat to the World Food Program for distribution among the food insecure people in the country.

As follow up to the advice of the Prime Minister, the MNFSR decided to tap the international experience in developing and managing zero hunger program. Brazil has achieved remarkable progress in achieving food and nutrition security within a short span of nearly two decades. The Ministry invited Brazilian Government to provide technical assistance in



designing and implementing its National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, establishing National Food Security Council and developing Zero Hunger Program.

Pak-Brazil Seminar and Consultative Meetings were held in Islamabad from 3-5 December, 2012. A high level delegation of experts from different disciplines from Brazilian Zero Hunger Program, participated in the seminar and exchanged their experiences with their Pakistani counterparts. Exchange of multi-disciplinary teams of technical experts and policy makers shall further take place to deeply learn about ways and means of achieving broad based national food and nutrition security.

Establishment of the National Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health Regulatory Authority

Food safety is emerging as a front line concern both in domestic marketing and international trade. The globalization and liberalization have made it imperative for countries to enhance their capacity building in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP),



implementation of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) supported by quality inspection /certification system, based upon an efficient and accredited laboratory analysis system. The countries desirous to export and import food need to have an effective food control system in place with a regulatory infrastructure for quality control and inspection system capable of consumer protection. It has been observed that whereas, the developed countries have implemented strict measures for food safety and quality assurance, the

developing countries like Pakistan to some extent enforced quality control and inspection system for agricultural products, including food safety, food items.

Management of food safety starts from production, transformation, storage and distribution of food for human consumption. The apprehension of consumers regarding food safety is more focused to protect their health. Awareness of the society has sensitized the consumers to the hazards and ill effects of inferior quality food on their health. An essential component of the food control system involves close relationship of the farming community with market forces and industry.

Recognizing the need to protect the health of consumers, the MNFSR has prepared a Bill which will pave way for the establishment of National Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health Regulatory Authority. The Bill will help put in place a coherent and integrated Sanitary and Phytosanitary SPS management and quality control system in the country in coordination with the provinces.

The aim of the Bill is to ensure public health by enforcement of an effective quality food control system, including improving agricultural and animal husbandry practices, application of food technology to reduce chances of food borne diseases and improve the nutrition status of the population.

The strategic approach adopted by the MNFSR is to meet international obligations under WTO agreement on the Application of SPS Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade. The proposed Bill has been prepared in consultation with the federal and provincial authorities engaged in food safety and



animal and plant health. The EU funded TRTA-II Programme implemented by UNIDO has provided technical assistance to MNSFR in preparation of the Bill, to ensure its applicability in the international trade. The Bill will regulate SPS measures in compliance with WTO, strengthen the SPS facilities and quality inspection services in the country, assist establishment of infrastructure of accredited testing laboratories with a goal to ensure supply of safe food to all.



Formulation of National Food & Nutrition Security Policy

In pursuance of the recommendations of the National Food Security Conference, Standing Committee of the National Assembly on Food Security & Research and the directive of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the MNFSR constituted a Core Committee in December, 2012 to prepare a draft of the National Food & Nutrition Security Policy. After a series of meetings, a draft policy has been prepared with the following salient features:

Policy Vision

All Pakistanis, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Target

Halving food insecurity and malnutrition in the country by 2030 from 2012 baseline, and achieving food security for all by 2050.

Strategic Interventions

- **Establishment of National Food and Nutrition Security Council**-to coordinate the actions of Federal and Provincial ministries in fight against hunger and malnutrition and to ensure multi stakeholder dialogues between government and all other relevant actors (civil society organizations, INGO, UN Agencies, private sector & bilateral funding agencies etc.) and at all levels for the implementation of its programs and policies.
- **Launching of the National Zero Hunger Program**-with following proposed interventions:
 - i. School feeding programme in most food-insecure districts.
 - ii. Nutrition programmes for less than 5 year children and pregnant and lactating mothers.
 - iii. Conditional cash/food transfers to the most food insecure households.
 - iv. Cash/food support for vulnerable communities affected by man-made and natural disasters.
 - v. Stimulus programmes to expand farm outputs and market access.
 - vi. Targeted and conditional social safety nets.
 - vii. Rationalization of market prices of food commodities.
 - viii. Food supply and distribution programmes for the poor and highly food insecure people.
 - ix. Improved nutritious quality of food intake (fortified food).
 - x. Diversification of food and habit.
 - xi. Revitalizing processing industry community at sub-national and national level.
 - xii. Food and nutrition awareness and education.
 - xiii. Overcoming malnutrition through health and nutrition programmes; and
 - xiv. Enhanced coordination among various federal and provincial institutions in the spirit of public-private-civil society partnership.
- **Online Monitoring of Food Security and Policy Reforms**-to monitor food security and supply of nutritious food , prices, stocks, trade, food balance sheets and information sharing with stakeholders, and undertake food policy research, proper pricing of inputs and outputs to facilitate millions of small farmers and vulnerable groups.
- **Capacity enhancement of Ministry of National Food Security and Research**- to build capacity of the Ministry to reform its affiliated institutions for implementing the National Food Security and Nutrition Policy, work on new challenges of food security and develop and implement food security programs in coordination with other relevant Ministries, Provinces, private sector and civil society organizations.
- **Establishment of "Food Safety Animal & Plant Health Regulatory Authority"**