



Right to Food Campaign

Secretariat

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16th March, 2022

Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Subject: Urgent steps required for ensuring universal access to food security

Dear Shri Narendra Modi,

The COVID pandemic has had a devastating effect on the livelihood of the vast majority of people in the country, especially those in the informal sector who constitute 90% of the workforce. A national survey by the Right to Food Campaign titled 'Hunger Watch' carried out in the months of December 2021 & January 2022 across 14 states captures the crisis in terms of income decline and severe food insecurity especially among the economically weaker and marginalised sections of society:

- 66% people stated that their income had decreased compared to the pre-pandemic period
- 80% reported some form of food insecurity while 25% reported severe food insecurity in terms of having to skip meals, eating less than usual, running out of food, not being able to eat for a whole day and going to bed hungry due to lack of money or other resources.
- 41% said that nutritional quality of their diet deteriorated compared to the pre-pandemic period.
- 67% could not afford cooking gas in the month preceding the survey.
- 45% of households had outstanding debt.

The survey found that the PDS and the additional grains supplied under the PMGKAY became a lifeline and often the sole source of food during this period of crisis. However, the benefits were limited to those who possessed ration cards. A summary of the survey findings is enclosed.

With the additional grains under PMGKAY also set to stop after March 2022, the hunger crisis is likely to exacerbate in the country. While the latest COVID wave is now subsiding

and restrictions/ lockdowns have been lifted, the economy and peoples' incomes and consumption are nowhere near pre-pandemic levels.

We therefore demand that the Government of India immediately take the following steps to ensuring universal access to food security during this time of unprecedented crisis-

1. Extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana to provide additional foodgrains to the nearly 80 crore ration cardholders in the country. The scheme must carry on till such time that the pandemic continues and other than wheat and rice, all households must also be provided edible oil and pulses which have become unaffordable for people due to inflation.
2. Expansion of Public Distribution System towards universalisation – State-wise quotas for issuance of ration cards under the NFSA have not been revised since the 2011 census despite the increase in population leading to exclusion of more than 10 crore persons. The Government of India must immediately expand and revise the coverage of the Public Distribution System on the basis of the population projections for 2022. This would be in keeping with the judgment of the Supreme Court in the Migrant Workers case wherein the government was directed to re-determine the total number of persons to be covered in rural and urban areas in states for issuance of ration cards.
3. Ensure immediate implementation of the June 29, 2021 judgment of the Supreme Court, in the Migrant Workers case (Suo Motu WP(C) 06/2020), wherein the Court directed that dry rations should be provided to all migrant workers being non ration card holders and that community kitchens should be opened to provide cooked food to people in need till the pandemic continues.
4. Hot cooked meals under ICDS and midday meals should be revived immediately. The budgets for these programmes should make adequate provisions for inclusion of eggs and nutrient dense diet in the meals. Hot cooked meals should extend to children under three years of age through crèches and to pregnant and lactating women through community kitchens.

Sincerely,

Gangaram Paikra, Aysha, Kavita Srivastava, Dipa Sinha, Anuradha Talwar, Mukta Srivastava, Amrita Johri

(On behalf of the Right to Food Campaign)

Enclosed: Summary on the [Hunger Watch survey](#) findings