

What is NFS?

NFS means creating zones of intensive agricultural production - Green Revolution zones - which generate a marketable surplus of agricultural produce.

NFS means making villages drought-proof. It means making villages food-secure. It means enabling village economies generate their own wealth.

NFS means setting up a public food procurement and distribution system. In India there are those who do not have the purchasing power to buy Green Revolution food from the market. The system is set up for such poor people, to ensure they get food at affordable prices.

BUT

India had a surplus food stock of 51 million tones. But 200 million of its citizens have remained undernourished.

Local Food Security

The Real Green Revolution is about achieving local food security. Which villager wants to depend on.

A local food security approach attempts to help farmers to produce enough for themselves, even if they cannot generate a huge marketable surplus. This means ensuring good agriculture in all types of villages and farms.



Problem Areas:

Large irrigation systems cannot provide kind of food security needed:

Canals do not reach everywhere, and - notoriously - salinise the soil in command areas

Irrigation pumps can only make the groundwater-table fall.

Big dams create only small pockets of Green Revolution-style agricultural production.



Problem Areas: The chronic food insecurity

While India achieved success in combating transient food insecurity caused by droughts or floods, it miserably failed to make much dent in chronic food insecurity as reflected in the low energy intake and high incidences of malnutrition.

The overall improvement in nutritional status has also been very slow. There is chronic under-nourishment in about half of the population, particularly among the vulnerable groups of children, women and elderly from the lower half of the expenditure class.

The proportion of consumption expenditure spent on food is slowly going down even in the households with chronic under-nourishment. Under nourishment in the bottom 30% of the expenditure class is alarming.

While the current growth rate would significantly reduce income poverty by 2010, the chronic food insecurity is likely to persist.

Economic growth, left to it, may not have a dramatic impact on nutritional status in the near future, although it provides greater opportunities for public intervention. Effective and efficient food and environmental interventions are needed until all the citizens are adequately fed.





Several types of programmes need to be targeted exclusively to the poor aimed to-

Eliminating transient food insecurity on account of inadequate access to food in periods of crises

Reducing chronic food insecurity by enhancing their capabilities to participate in the growth process

Reducing malnutrition among pre-school children and women, and

Improving basic services (safe drinking water, health care etc.) to the poor. The portfolio of poverty alleviation programmes (PAP) s should be contextual and suit the specific needs of the poor communities.

The Big Question mark?

The national food security may be politically important for India, but it should understand that the household food security is even more important. If there is no food in village households, it really doesn't matter if the national food security is commendable.

What is also important is getting the food to the child. Even if the child takes the food, his body cannot absorb it unless you provide a clean environment and water. For a country like India, infant growth is as important as economic growth and the politicians should understand that.

The first question one should ask is “how are the children growing?” and not “how is the economy growing?”

