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FOOD PROBLEM OF INDIA

Q. No. → (1) Explain the food problems of India?

Ans.

India is the second most populated country of the world. India's food problem, properly speaking, dates back to the separation of Burma from India in April, 1937. The separation of Burma and the partition of the country in 1947 deprived India of much of the earlier rice and wheat growing areas. The fast growing population of the country, as also the poverty and unemployment problems have further complicated it. Being so, food requirements of the country are increasing day by day. Food problem in India covers the major aspect and problems :-

* NATURE OF FOOD PROBLEM :-

(A) Quantitative Aspects :- Quantitative aspects of food problems are related to the demand and supply of food grains. Production of food grains has been less than their demand for a long period. Though in the last few years, domestic production of food grains has increased considerably, yet the country has to import food grains in large quantities from time to time.

(B) Qualitative Aspects :- Qualitative aspect of food problem is related to nutritive elements in food. Proteins, vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates etc. are the important elements of a balanced diet but these elements are not available in sufficient quantities to most of the Indian people.

(C) Distributive Aspects :- Distributive aspects of food problems are related to the system of marketing of agricultural products. Due to defective system of distribution, most of the persons do not get food grains in sufficient quantities, at right time, and at fair prices.

(d) Economic Aspects :- Economic aspect of food problem are related to purchasing power of people. National income and per capita income of India are very low. The result is that most of the people in India are not in a position to afford the purchase of nourishing foodgrains in sufficient quantities.

* CAUSES OF FOOD PROBLEM IN INDIA :-

Food crisis simply means a large excess of demand over supply. During certain years there has been a great shortfall in production due to failure of rains or floods in various parts of the country. The total demand for energy in irrigated areas like Punjab, Haryana and UP. has increased significantly which adversely affects agricultural production. Coming to the demand side, we see that while the food production has been fluctuating over the years, there has been almost a continuous rise in demand of food products. The various causes of the food problem are given below —

(a) Huge Development and Defence Expenditure → One of the reasons for the increased demand for foodgrains in the huge developmental and non-developmental expenditures which have increased the supply of money in the economy, particularly during the plan period. With an increase in government expenditure, the demand for foodgrains increases. If there is no commensurate increase in their supply, foodgrain prices are bound to rise in that situation.

(b) High Income Elasticity of demand for food :- In a low-income country like India, income-elasticity of demand for foodgrains is high. When income increases in the initial years of economic development, the demand for foodgrains increases rapidly, as a high proportion of increased income is spent on foodgrains.

(c) Panic Among Consumers :- During the period of food scarcity consumers start hoarding foodgrains to meet their future requirements. This aggravates the food crisis. National Public Distribution System for foodgrains can mitigate this evil to some extent.

(d) Shift in the Consumption pattern of food: → Another factor causing food problem is shift in the consumption pattern of foodgrains by the people. With the increase in the incomes there has been a shift towards the consumption of wheat and rice (higher variety of foodgrains) and away from coarse foodgrains on the part of the poor people. Moreover, the output of coarse grains like Jowar, bajra and maize has not increased at satisfactory rate during the plan period.

(e) Population Explosion: — The population explosion in India has further aggravated the food problem. The growth rate of population during 2001-2011 has been of the order of 17.64%. Every year about 1.80 crore people are added to the existing population of the country. This means that the consumers of foodgrains increase rapidly every year.

(f) Hoarding of foodgrains: — The psychology of the traders in conditions of short supply, is to hoard foodgrains and accentuate shortages in a bid to push up prices further and reap benefits of exorbitant prices. There is an increasing tendency on the part of middle and large farmers to hoard foodgrains and sell them when prices are high.

(g) Corrupt administrative machinery: — The administrative machinery controlling to check undue price-rise of foodgrains and regulate its supply, is also inefficient and corrupt.

(h) Inadequate increase in foodgrains output: — With the adoption of new agricultural strategy during mid sixties, it has resulted in significant increases in foodgrains supply and output reached a mark of 18.25 million tonnes in 1991-92, whereas it was only 63.94 million tonnes in 1955-56. Yet the annual rate of increase of foodgrains production has remained at a very low level.

Food policy of government of India soon after independence, the government took the problem of shortage of foodgrains seriously. Several important measures have been taken by government to solve this problem.