



सत्यमेव जयते

डा. रामेश्वर उराँव

अध्यक्ष

(भूतपूर्व सांसद—लोकसभा)

(पूर्व जनजातीय कार्य राज्यमन्त्री)

Dr. RAMESHWAR ORAON

Chairman

(Ex Member Parliament-LS).

(Former Minister of State for Tribal Affairs)

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Dated the 2nd December, 2011

Respected Pradhan Mantri ji,

At the urging of the National Commission for scheduled Tribes (NCST), the Deptt. of F&PD, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, forwarded the Draft National Food Security Bill, 2011, as available in public domain, on 21.10.2011. The views/comments of the Commission on this draft were forwarded to the Ministry vide NCST letter dated 21st November, 2011, requesting them to incorporate the same while finalizing the draft for submission to the Cabinet. The Commission has, however, noted that the revised Bill received on 01/12/2011 (for views/comments of Commission on the same day, as the Bill was slated to be submitted to the Cabinet), did not incorporate views/comments of the Commission forwarded earlier.

2. Food security is a vital concern for the tribals in the Scheduled Areas of the country because problems common to all citizens are exponentially increased by remoteness, lack of development and weak governance in these areas. The Commission is of the view that the following issues need urgent consideration in relation to the Scheduled Tribes:

- i) There should be a separate chapter in the Bill incorporating special provisions for Scheduled Areas, since the problems of STs and the (well- defined) Scheduled Areas are different from those of the rest of the country, and the Constitution of India recognizes the need for adaptation/modification of general Laws to these areas in Schedule V & VI. Food security in Scheduled Areas is especially fragile because of primitive agricultural practices/low production, difficult access, poor infrastructure and logistical services and underdeveloped markets, besides endemic poverty and lack of opportunities for livelihood maintenance. Both availability of food grains and affordability are inter-meshed problems; and food security is not merely a question of subsidizing the prices for the poorer sections of the populace in these areas. Therefore, there is compelling reason to recognize these special characteristics; and have a differentiated approach for Scheduled Areas by way of provision of adequate entitlement of requisite food stocks, strengthening of warehousing and logistics, financial resources and responsibilities in a separate chapter for Scheduled Areas. If the need is self-evident, the objective is better served by incorporating special provisions while drafting the legislation (e.g. Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996] rather than leaving the task for subsequent (and coincidentally rare) intervention by the Governors.
- (ii) In view of the special Constitutional mandate to the Union Govt. for Scheduled Areas, and the persisting poor health and economic standards of tribals, full financial/ logistical responsibility to ensure food security in such areas should vest in the Union Government. It is not appropriate to cast such responsibility on the State Governments, also because they have limited capacity to mobilize

foodgrains from low-production regions, arrange credit and subsidize logistical/distribution costs. [Cl.3]

- (iii) Since remote tribal areas also have acute problems of availability/marketing infrastructure, foodgrain entitlements should not be differentiated according to economic status, which is relevant only for the quantum of eligible subsidy. Food entitlement should be specified on the basis of recommended nutritional requirements to enable purchase of needed quantity at option; or yearly aggregate entitlements may be specified instead, since the average off-take may fluctuate at different times of the year depending upon prices or alternate sources of supply, and may be more relevant for planning subsidy/ logistic requirements.

Special arrangements, including build-up of inventory have to be made for remote, inaccessible areas, so that food availability is not often compromised by logistical failures. It is not sufficient, or desirable, to provide an allowance in lieu thereof because that leaves availability issues unresolved. [Cl.13]

- (iv) The public distribution system must assure reasonable food availability to all residents in Scheduled Areas keeping in view their special problems of availability and affordability. The number of priority households should not be arbitrarily determined; and they should be identified on the basis of discernible wealth/income-related criterion.[Cl. 14, 15]
- (v) Besides, use of information technology for increasing transparency of transactions, the monitoring mechanisms (specially in Scheduled Areas) should be strengthened through reliable reporting systems to enable rapid awareness of related transactions – stocks, movement, issues, etc - at all locations upto fair price shop level, and providing timely feedback for prompt remedial action to rectify logistical failures which imperil food security in remote areas. [Cl.18(2)(b)]
- (vi) The special obligations of the Central Government in Scheduled Areas should include provision of food grains in desired quantity (as per nutritional requirements) for all residents, supplemental logistical arrangements (road/rail transportation, depots/ issue points and increased inventory) as well as priority in food grain allocations, since resort to payment of allowance is not a feasible option because the same will compromise food security. [Cl.29, 30]

3. I request you to have these views of the Commission considered by the Cabinet while approving the Draft National Food Security Bill 2011.

With high regards.

Yours Sincerely,

Rameshwar Oraon
(Dr. Rameshwar Oraon)

Dr. Manmohan Singh,
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Encl: Views/comments of the NCST on the Draft National Food Security Bill 2011