

Making India the Food Basket of the World



Currently, India is the second-biggest producer of wheat and rice, the two staples. India can become the largest food supplier in the world. It has cultivable land, all the seasons for production of all varieties of fruits and vegetables, and an agribusiness system that works. By building an efficient and effective supply chain using state-of-the-art techniques, it is possible to serve the hungry with value-added food while simultaneously ensuring remunerative prices for the farmers.

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The spectre of a global food shortage continues to be a concern. Out of 8 billion people on this planet, 828 million are going hungry every day. A total of 29.6% of the global population does not have adequate access to food. Around 9 million people die from hunger-related causes every year; many are children under the age of 5. Even if we rebound from the economic fallout of the pandemic, the UN predicts that we may fall well short of our goal for Zero Hunger by 2030. At the end of this decade, it is estimated that there will

still be 670 million people facing hunger. Over 122 million more people have been facing hunger in the world since 2019 due to the pandemic and repeated weather shocks, according to the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report published jointly by five United Nations specialised agencies. If trends remain as they are, the Sustainable Development Goal of ending hunger by 2030 may not be reached, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health

Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) warn.

However, amidst this scenario there is much more than a ray of hope—India, which has enough food for its people, is geared up to supply food stocks to the world if the World Trade Organization (WTO) allows, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had told the US President Joe Biden in their virtual meeting recently. “We already have enough food for our people but our farmers seem to have made arrangements to feed the world.” He added that “the world is facing a new problem now. The food stock of the world is getting empty if WTO permits, India is ready to supply food stock to the world from tomorrow.” The global food crisis has already seen Indian traders signing contracts for exporting food grains of about 30 lakh (3 million) tonnes during the April-July period. The official projection suggests another bumper harvest of wheat at over 110 million tonnes this season.

At home, the investor-friendly policies by the Government are taking the food sector to new heights with the creation of an agri-export policy, bolstering a nationwide logistics and infrastructure framework, setting up 100 district-level hubs connecting the district to global markets, and increasing the number of mega food parks from 2 to more than 20. All this has jacked up India's food processing capacity from 12 lakh metric tonnes to more than 200 lakh metric tonnes, which is 15 times more than it was in the last nine years. Prime Minister Modi gave examples of agricultural produce that are being exported from India for the first time and mentioned black garlic from Himachal Pradesh, dragon fruit from Jammu & Kashmir, soya milk powder from Madhya Pradesh, Karkitchoo apples from Ladakh, Cavendish banana from Punjab, Gucchi Mushrooms from Jammu, and Raw honey from Karnataka.

Can India Do This?

Currently, India is the second-biggest producer of wheat and rice, the two staples. It has a stock of over 850 lakh (85 million) tonnes, of which 513 lakh (51.3 million) are with the Food Corporation of India and another 340 lakh (34 million) tonnes of unmilled paddy lying with states have provided a cushion to the government to make an offer to supply foodgrains to other countries. Of this stock, 21 million tonnes are segregated as its

strategic reserve and the Public Distribution System (PDS), which has bettered its reputation during the Covid-19 pandemic by providing food to about 80 crore (800 million) people, as per the Government figures. Indian supplies can also calm down rising commodity prices. India supplies some of the cheapest wheat and rice. India exports wheat to about 70 countries and rice to about 150.

Some of the strengths outlined below underline India's intent to be the world's food supplier:

Millets

- India could help mitigate the world food crisis by offering millets. India is the largest producer of millets in the world. India's two varieties of millets, namely pearl millet (bajra) and sorghum (jowar), will together contribute approximately 19 per cent in world production in 2020. India's pearl millet production accounts for 40.51 per cent followed by sorghum 8.09 per cent in the world production of millets in 2020. The major millet producing states in India are Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. Together, these ten states account for around 98 per cent of millets production in India during the period 2020-21. Six states, namely Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Gujarat, account for more than 83 per cent of total millet production.
- Terming millets as part of India's 'Super Food Bucket', Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out that the nutri-rich coarse grain will reach every corner of



the world just as Yoga did. "In India, we have given it (millets) the identity of *Shree Anna*. Millets are also the most secure crops for small farmers as they are resilient and climate-adaptable in both hot and drought environments. India produces all the nine commonly known traditional Millets, viz., sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, little millet, barnyard millet, browntop millet, and kodo millet. Millet is a common term for categorising small-seeded grasses that are often called Nutri-cereals. Most of the states in India grow one or more millet crop species.

- The Government of India spearheaded the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution for declaring the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets and the proposal of India was supported by 72 countries. Millets are making a resurgence in line with the International Year of Millets declared by the United Nations. These grains, some of the oldest in the world, are rich in protein, fiber, minerals, iron, calcium, and have a low glycaemic index. Their short growing season makes them ideal for multiple cropping systems, both under irrigation and dryland farming, and their long shelf life has earned them the status of famine reserves. Notably, the millet grain varieties are said to be intrinsic to future food security given the exigencies of climate change and the potential impact on high water-usage crops. Millets have been historically grown in the country across different varieties and remain in the comfort zone of farmers. In response to the declaration of the International Year of Millets, the Indian government has prioritised their promotion through the National Food Security Mission and several states are also running their own Millet Missions.
- High-yielding varieties, including bio-fortified millets, have been introduced to increase production, and the Government has recognised the health benefits of millets by including them in the POSHAN Mission and designating them as nutri-cereals. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR) are promoting farmer producer organisations and startups to boost millet production as well as technology and value addition in the segment.

Millet-focused food products are being provided support under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to enhance value addition. The recent budget has designated IIMR as a Centre of Excellence for sharing millet-related best practices and technologies at the international level. Many efforts are being made towards mainstreaming millets into the consumption basket by way of introducing healthier, millet-based value-added products.

Food Processing Industry

The food processing industry has an important role to play while India seeks to create a food basket for the world. This is increasingly being done by linking the farmers to the final consumers in domestic as well as international markets. Food processing combined with marketing has the potential to solve the basic problems of agricultural surpluses, waste, rural jobs, and better remuneration for growers. In the next ten years, food production is expected to double. These products, if processed and marketed smartly, can make India a



leading food supplier in the world. The Government of India has set a vision for the sector to achieve a target of doubling its contribution to the GDP by 2030. The sector's size is estimated to be around US \$ 322 billion, and it is expected to reach US \$ 543 billion by 2025, growing at a CAGR of 14.6%.

Food Supply Chain

Another key area that would go a long way for the country to become the food basket for the world is strengthening the Food Supply Chain. India is one of the largest food and grocery markets in the world, a large consumer of food products, and has a huge opportunity to become a leading global food supplier through the right marketing strategies and an agile, adaptive, and efficient supply chain. India has diversity in terms of its population, with several religious groups with different food habits and cultures. India is well positioned to translate this situation into an opportunity and create food hubs. Some of it could be the organic food hub, the vegetarian food hub, and the sea food hub among others. The food supply chain is complex, with perishable goods and numerous small stakeholders. In India, the infrastructure connecting these partners can be strengthened. Each stakeholder: farmers, wholesalers, food manufacturers, and retailers- all can work together. Also, demand forecasting should be there so that the farmers try not to push what they produce into the market. Data integration, financial flow management, supply-demand matching, collaborative forecasting, information sharing, and goods movement synchronisation through efficient transport scheduling, are very well practised in high technology industries with immense benefits. These best practices should find their way into the food supply chains. Cold chain logistics supply chains are today taking advantage of technology improvements in data capture and processing, product tracking and tracing, synchronised freight transport transit times for time compression along the supply chain and supply demand matching. Also, the supply chain needs to be designed and built as a whole in an integrated manner with the processes of new product development, procurement and order to delivery processes well designed and well supported using IT tools and software.

Food Packaging

Packaging is also emerging as a key ingredient as the country marches towards creating a food basket for the world. Dairy products, edible oils, farm products, sugar, fruit juices, concentrates, preserves, hot and cold beverages, breakfast foods, biscuits, confectionery, and atta are some major foods of daily necessities, and through packaging, India is able to distribute these products worldwide. Packages have become the competitive tool to reach the consumer, and the task assumes increasing responsibility with more and more competitive and substitute products being introduced. This has opened the sector for the introduction of modern technology for processing and packaging and the entry of a host of new organisations from all sectors of the economy, both domestic and overseas. Prime Minister Modi has himself disclosed that since 2014, India has been able to attract Rs. 50,000 crore in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the food and food processing sectors.

Standards

Standardisation is a powerful tool for improving supply chain efficiency, which the Government is fastidious about. There are two kinds of standards in the food supply chain. The first one is the food standard, which concerns itself with the content, the manufacturing process, the packaging, etc. There are several such standards for dairy, poultry, etc. The second standard concerns logistics and IT systems like standardisation of cartons, pallets, and IT software so that seamless transfer of goods and information is possible. This assumes significance as food safety and hygiene are growing concerns across the world. There is an increasing need to provide greater assurance about the safety and quality of food to consumers. The increase in world food trade and the advent of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement under the World Trade Organization (WTO) have led to increasing recognition and adoption of food safety measures. The capacity of India to penetrate world markets depends on its ability to meet increasingly stringent food safety standards imposed in developed countries. Food standards are expected to acquire greater importance given increasing concerns on food safety on the back of breakout of diseases.

Conclusion

India can become the largest food supplier in the world. It has cultivable land, all the seasons for production of all varieties of fruits and vegetables, and an agribusiness system that works, although it needs to be improved. Shortcomings that need to be addressed are mostly in the area of supply chain management. By building an efficient and effective supply chain using state-of-the-art techniques, it is possible to serve the hungry with value-added food

while simultaneously ensuring remunerative prices for the farmers. The surplus of cereals, fruits, vegetables, milk, fish, meat, and poultry can be processed as value-added food products and marketed aggressively both locally and internationally. Investments in cold chain infrastructure, applied research in post-harvest technologies, the installation of food processing plants in various sectors, and the development of the food retailing sector are mandatory for achieving gains in this sector. □

PM-JANMAN

Towards Benefiting the Tribal Community

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the first instalment to 1 lakh beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) under Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) via video conferencing on 15th January, 2024. He also interacted with the beneficiaries of PM-JANMAN.

Shri Modi said, the goal of PM-JANMAN Maha Abhiyan is to benefit every member of the tribal community through the Government schemes. He informed that within two months, PM-JANMAN mega campaign has achieved the results that others could only dream of.

Recalling the challenges during the inauguration of PM-JANMAN on the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, Shri Modi mentioned the difficulties in taking the benefits to far-flung, remote and border areas of the country which are home to tribal communities.

Explaining why the scheme was called JANMAN, the Prime Minister said, “‘Jan’ means the people and ‘Mann’ means their ‘Mann Ki Baat’ or their inner voice.” He reiterated that all the wishes of the tribal communities will now be fulfilled as the government plans to spend more than Rs. 23,000 crores on PM-JANMAN mega campaign.

Talking about providing pucca houses to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), he said, money has been transferred directly to the accounts of tribal beneficiaries. They will get 2.5 lakh rupees for a pucca house which will be a source of dignified living with electricity, gas connection, pipe water and toilet. He said, these one lakh beneficiaries are just the beginning and the government will reach each and every deserving candidate.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs also generating awareness regarding PM-JANMAN.

The Background

In line with the Prime Minister's efforts towards the vision of Antyodaya to empower the last person at the last mile, PM-JANMAN was launched for the socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) on 15th November 2023, on the occasion of Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

PM-JANMAN, with a budget of approximately Rs. 24,000 crores focuses on 11 critical interventions through 9 Ministries and is aimed to improve socio-economic conditions of the PVTGs by saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, electricity, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

(Source: PIB)

Cabinet Decisions
29th Nov 2023

Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (JANMAN)

Elevating PVTG* socio-economically
in 18 States & Andaman-Nicobar

Benefits to more than 28L+ people
in 22.5K+ habitations
across 220 districts

11 critical interventions
for essential amenities -
pucca house,
road connectivity,
piped water supply etc

*Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

Financial Outlay: ₹24,104 crore