

Food Security: Production, Nutrition and Prices – Key Findings

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Food Production

- BBS production data seems OK but demand=requirement methodology deeply are flawed
- 10 % deduction for seed, feed, wastage: seems excessive – more like 6-7%
- Projection: By 2015, foodgrain deficit may reach 6-7 m MT (supply around 32m MT while demand close to 38 m MT)

Nutrition Status (September 2007)

- 69 % of population are sedentary (involved in light and below light activity)
- 31 % are active (moderate or vigorous) requiring much more calories
- Dietary energy required (observed body weight): 2076 (males: 2348, females: 1839)
- Dietary energy required (desired body weight): 2187 (males: 2526, females: 1908)
- Male requirements higher by 600 calories, on average!
- Actual food intake average: 681 gm or 1894 calories (HIES 2005 reports 900 gm.)!
- Males aged 10 or more are highly energy deficient (-485 cal) while females are in surplus (based on desired body weight)
- Energy deficit highest among 0-4 age group (747 cal) with males more energy deficient (but declining with age)

Prices

- 2007-08 seems to mark a paradigm shift in the price structure
- Current price upturn began around December-January 2005-06
- Seasonality gave way to sharp continuous upturn
- Public imports and stocks low and response of government took much time to get off
- Private imports too took off only from November 2007

Policy Suggestions

- Short term: food grain stocks need to be held by Government – possibly around 1.5 to 2 m MT, given uncertainty in world market – re-invent PFDS
- Domestic procurement should be the optimal method, especially in the face of the bumper Boro and possible price slump
- Longer term: Need to shift away from rice to other foods – thus must focus on non-rice foods increasingly
- Decrease rice calories from 74 % to 60 % by 2015 and to 55% by 2020
- Requires substantial change in income per capita and poverty reduction
- Incentives and encouragement will be needed