

The Report on the State of Food Insecurity in Rural India has been jointly prepared by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF). The Report is corollary to the Food Insecurity Atlas of Rural India that was released in 2001.

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2008 just released by the FAO estimates that India is home to more than 230 million undernourished people, which is 21 percent of the national population. The dietary energy supply (DES) for India has been estimated to be 2,360 kcal per capita per day. The *India State Hunger Index*, released by IFPRI, measures calorie undernourishment by taking a cut-off of 1,632 kcal per capita per day¹. The *Report on the State of Food Insecurity in Rural India* prepared jointly by WFP and MSSRF uses a cut-off point of 1,890 kcal per consumer unit per day², based on the NSS recommended threshold of 70 percent of the international norm of 2700 kcal per consumer unit per day.

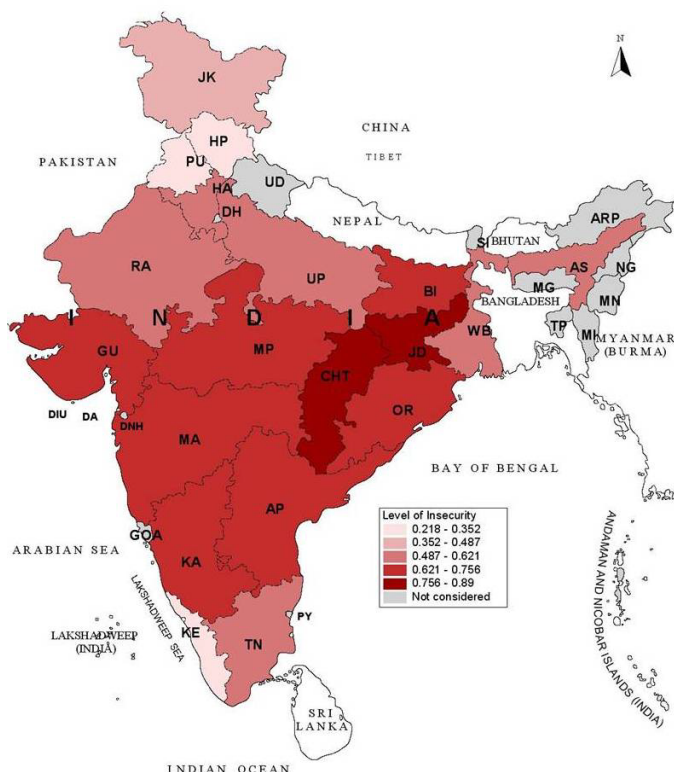
The IFPRI analysis uses three indicators Viz., (i) prevalence of calorie under nourishment, (ii) proportion of underweight children and (iii) under-five mortality rate. This is to maintain uniformity with the Global Hunger Index.

However 'Report on the State of Food Insecurity in Rural India (WFP/MSSRF)' uses seven indicators, which directly or indirectly affect the food security and nutritional status of a person. These methodological differences get manifested in the ranking of the states.

The indicators used for computing the index of food insecurity in rural India are:

- 1) Percentage of population consuming less than 1,890 Kcal /cu/diem
- 2) Percentage of households not having access to safe drinking water
- 3) Percentage of households not having access to toilets within the premises
- 4) Percentage of ever-married women age 15 – 49 years who are anaemic

State of Food Insecurity in Rural India



¹ IFPRI's *Global Hunger Index 2008* reports the calorie-based undernutrition for India to be 20 percent, based on FAO-recommended daily calorie norm of 1,820 kcal per person. As per NSS Consumption-Expenditure data the application of this norm yields a calorie undernutrition rate of 34 percent. To make the *India State Hunger Index* comparable with Global Hunger Index, IFPRI has used a calorie norm that yields a national calorie undernutrition of exactly 20 percent – which leads to a calorie norm of 1,632 kcal per person per day.

² NSS defines 'Consumer unit' as a normative rate of equivalence of a given age-sex specific person in relation to a 'standard' male person aged 20-39 years and doing sedentary work who is taken to be equivalent to one consumer unit. In other words, 'consumer unit' of a normal male person doing sedentary work and belonging to the age group 20-39 is taken as one unit and the other coefficients are worked out on the basis of calorie requirements.

- 5) Percentage of women (15 – 49 yrs) with CED
- 6) Percentage of children in the age group 6 – 35 months who are anaemic
- 7) Percentage of children in the age group 6 – 35 months who are stunted

On the composite index of food insecurity of rural India, states like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are found in the 'very high' level of food insecurity, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat.

The better performers include Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, all of which report an Index value below 0.5³. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Orissa and Maharashtra perform poorly. Even economically developed states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka find themselves in the category of high food insecurity - a reflection perhaps of the manifestation of the agrarian crisis in the states and its consequent negative impact on the health and well-being of the rural population.

The increase in severity of food insecurity can be gauged from following points:

- The proportion of population consuming less than 1890 kcal/cu/diem has in fact increased in the states of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Rajasthan and marginally for Punjab.
- Almost 2/3rd of rural households in Jharkhand did not have access to safe drinking water in 2001.
- More than 90 percent of rural households in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh did not have access to toilets within their premises.
- As many as eight states - Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan – have shown increase in the incidence of anaemia among women in the reproductive age group. The highest increase in anaemia levels has been observed in Andhra Pradesh (51 to 64 percent), followed by Haryana (48 to 57 percent) and Kerala (23 to 32 percent).
- The proportion of women with CED has drastically increased for Assam (28 to 40 percent) followed by Bihar (40 to 46 percent), Madhya Pradesh (42 to 45 percent) and Haryana (31 to 33 percent).
- 12 out of 20 states under consideration have figures higher than 80 percent for proportion of rural anaemic children. Bihar, that already had a high figure of 81 percent, has further increased to 89 percent.
- The proportion of rural stunted children in Karnataka has increased from 39 to 43 percent.

³ A higher index value represents a higher level of food insecurity.