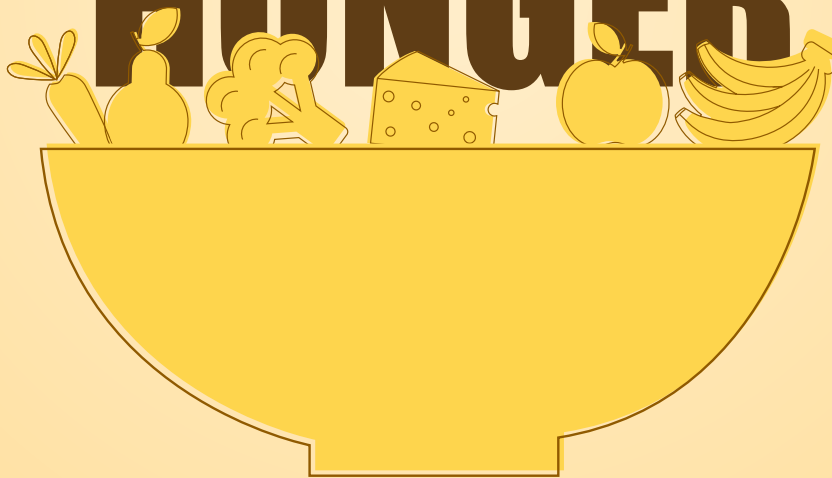


# ZERO HUNGER



TOWARDS A WHOLESOME TOMORROW THROUGH SDG 2



In collaboration with



Indian Network on  
Ethics & Climate Change



## The overview

**SDG 2 seeks to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition while promoting sustainable agriculture.**

**It goes beyond food production and consumption with a focus on the important dimensions of food and nutrition including supply chains and specific social groups vulnerable to hunger. It also talks about sustainable agriculture and the need for conservation of genetic diversity of plants and animals. Emphasis is also placed on making land and other productive resources available to small farmers and food producers. However, the SDG 2 has also received a fair bit of criticisms. For one, it fails to recognise food as a fundamental right.**

Globally, the problem of hunger has been framed mainly in terms of shortage of food and as an essentially rural phenomenon. Recent debates have also factored in nutrition (calorific & micronutrient) dimensions. However, the paper argues that now is the time that the problem of hunger requires multiple considerations, including production through agro-ecological approaches, localising production & supply, nutrition, overnutrition, food safety, hunger in the urban context, preventing food wastage, containing land use for meat production, preventing corporate concentration and hegemony over food and resisting false solutions. Addressing all the dimensions need strong and robust action in a convergence approach. It makes the task of achieving SDG 2 more challenging.



## SDG 2 and India

Despite the fact that India is a food surplus country, India is ranked 55 out of 71 countries as surveyed by the Global Hunger Index.<sup>1</sup> With over 194 million (or 15% of global hunger population) hungry people; achieving goal 2 will be a formidable challenge for India.<sup>2</sup> 51% women between 15-59 years and 44% children are underweight.<sup>3</sup>

While India faces a significant hurdle to overcome traditional triple challenges of production, access and calorific and micronutrient deficiency; newer challenges are also emerging. Significant among those is the disconnect between poverty and malnutrition (many states have shown increasing trends of undernutrition even among the better off communities), and increasing trends of overweight children. India's food security programme, especially food stockpiling programme for implementing PDS has also been challenged under the trade rules of the WTO.



**3000 children die every day from hunger, malnutrition and poor diet-related deaths. India's nutrition profile has been aptly called a silent time bomb.**



## Strengthening National Food Policy framework

The National Food Policy Framework is built around a complex web of several programmes including the PDS, ICDS, midday meal scheme, national social access programme, maternity benefits and MG National Employment Guarantee Programme, cash transfers etc. However, the most important of them is the National Food Security Act, 2013. This Act, also called the Right to Food Act, is aimed at providing subsidised food to 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of India's population. The estimated cost of the implementation of the Act has been \$22 billion, almost 1.5% of the GDP.

**There are a number of factors underpinning achievement of the SDG 2. We provide a summary of issues, challenges and suggestions for achieving SDG 2:**

As highlighted by the CAG Audit, the food policy network needs to be strengthened by removing errors of exclusion and inclusion, expansions of PDS basket to include pulses, coarse grains, salt, sugar and oil, digitisation of records and improved monitoring through participatory mechanisms and redressal platforms. However, it needs to be ensured that mechanisms do not exclude the poorest people. Judicial intervention in the right to food case, which was unfortunately closed in 2017, had significantly improved the monitoring of all schemes related to food and social security. A continued scrutiny will be extremely desirable.



## Sustaining agricultural production

Food grain production in India has made rapid strides rising from dismal 51 MT in 1950s to the record production of 265 MT in 2014-15. However, it has failed to keep pace with overall economic growth. The share of agriculture and allied sectors in the total GDP had declined to 12% in 2013-14. However, around 50% of the population is still dependent on agriculture for its livelihood. Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar and Chhattisgarh are the major drivers of agricultural growth.<sup>4</sup>

Agricultural production has diversified over the years with horticulture and livestock sectors doing much better.<sup>5</sup> Livestock, dairy and fishery have also shown and sustained tremendous growth potential.<sup>6</sup> While India's agricultural growth has been much celebrated; regional disparities remain. The policymakers acknowledge, pressures emanating from natural resources constraints, increasing fragmentation of holdings, frequent climatic variations, rising input costs and post-harvest losses, and agrarian crisis as an interplay of all these factors pose an enormous challenge to sustaining agricultural growth.<sup>7</sup>

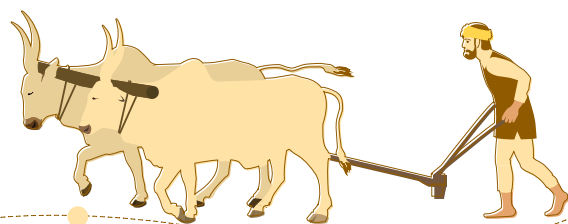
1. Global Hunger Index, 2015 • 2. Global Hunger Report, 2015, FAO • 3. NFHS 4

4, 12<sup>th</sup> FYP document, Planning Commission • 5. While growth in food grain production has been around 3%, horticulture has registered sustained growth of 7%  
6. India is the largest producer of milk in the world, India is the second biggest producer of fruits and vegetables after China, as is India in production of wheat and rice • 7. ibid

The green revolution led to an increase in the area under irrigation, use of fertilisers & pesticide and monoculture;<sup>8</sup> besides, attendant environmental degradation and sharply reduced area under coarse grains.

India has to sustain food production with reduced availability of land, enhanced uncertainty of weather and reduced dependence on agriculture. It requires action on many fronts. Water and land degradation, along with climate change impacts have been major factors behind the slowdown.

Addressing these will require promotion of agro-ecological approaches, natural inputs, identification and promotion of resilient seed varieties and focus on less intensive and short duration crops. Land alienation needs to be stopped and reversed if possible.<sup>9</sup> Also, emphasis will have to be on localising food production, distribution and consumption in the areas that are food sufficient. Availability of timely access to credit and inputs, strengthening rural infrastructure, early warning systems and enabling market conditions should also receive equal attention. Public reinvestment in agriculture is an urgent need.



### Focus on small and marginal farmers

Indian agriculture has an inherent bias towards the big farmers. Only a minuscule proportion of small farmers benefit from the MSP, a majority of the subsidies are also cornered by big farmers. This is the time to identify and reaffirm conviction in the centrality of small farmers and food producers in sustaining food production. Focus on small farmers will entail enhancing income from farm outputs, making non-farm livelihoods available and restoring dignity in agriculture. It will also entail making sure that the small farmers have easy access to credit, procurement, and insurance.<sup>10</sup> MSP itself needs to be fixed in the light of the increasing cost of

cultivation, which also needs to be brought down, something which is long overdue.<sup>11</sup> Loan waivers need to be viewed as a short-term relief rather than as a central strategy to enable remunerative prices to the farmers.<sup>12</sup> The hegemony of companies over seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and technology do not favour small farmers having little bargaining power. Besides, gender concerns in agriculture must be reviewed in the light of feminisation of agriculture. Security of tenure and land rights, appropriate technology, access to credit and other inputs, markets, information, insurance all needs a review from a gender lens.

8. *Ibid* • 9. According to the estimate of the Ministry of Agriculture, more than 3.5 million ha of land went to non-agricultural purposes during 1990 to 2003  
10. One fourth of the small farmers do not have access to credit from institutional source or money lenders • 11. According to the report of the Shanta Kumar Commission, less than 6% farmers avail MSP • 12. Chand et al concluded that per cultivator income increased from ₹16,103 to ₹42,781 during this period. A recent study compared farmers' indebtedness from SAS data between 59<sup>th</sup> round and 70<sup>th</sup> round of the NSSO surveys. After 59<sup>th</sup> Round of NSSO 48.6% farmers were indebted, which increased to 51.9% farmers after the 70<sup>th</sup> round. The average amount of outstanding loans for all India was ₹12,585 after 59<sup>th</sup> round, it rose by four times to ₹47,000 after 70<sup>th</sup> round. A newspaper report says that the average debt per farm household including crop loan, in Punjab works out to be ₹8 lakh

### Nutrition and food safety

Malnutrition among children and women is a major concern in India. An analysis of NFHS 4, reveals that all the states have managed to reduce the percentage of children who are stunted. However, stunting still remains a major concern with many states reporting unacceptably high levels of stunting (ranging between 30-40%) among children below 5 years of age.

Underweight women are also a cause of major concern as far as nutrition is concerned. Almost half of the states have 1/5<sup>th</sup> women underweight. With regard to anaemia among all women (15-49 years), DNH and Chandigarh tops the list with 79.5% and 75.9% anaemic women respectively.

**An important feedback from the Food Security Atlas of Urban India, reduction in food grains consumption among the poorest decile, which is a concern since food grains are the only source of nutrition for a majority in this segment. The current proposals to replace cooked food with packaged food will only benefit the companies. Besides, nutrition, food safety is another concern in rural as well as urban areas.**

**Increased use of chemical inputs in food production and processing, contamination of food and water, genetically modified food entering food market without warning and labeling etc. make food safety a real concern.**

### Urban hunger and malnutrition

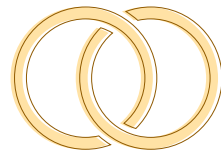
Hunger and food security have been perceived as a situation of scarcity in rural areas. Policy responses have focused on maximising production and enhancing social security support. Very little emphasis has been placed on urban food insecurity. Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India (2002) for the first time brought significant attention to malnutrition in urban areas.<sup>13</sup> It indicated that more than 38% children under the age of three in India's cities and towns are underweight and more than 35% children in urban areas are stunted.

The nutritional status of children in urban areas is also impacted by non-food factors like housing, drinking water and sanitation, education and health services. The MSSRF and WFP together reported about the state of food insecurity in urban India in 2010.<sup>14</sup> The report argued that urban food security deserves serious attention. It also confirmed debilitating trends. It said that about half the women in urban areas are anaemic and undernutrition among women, indicated by chronic energy deficiency, is increasing.

13. Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India, MSSRF and the WFP, 2002 • 14. Food Insecurity in Urban India identifies hunger hotspots across the country, WFP, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2010

NGO Child Rights and You (CRY) found in a survey in 2016 that Delhi, India's capital bears the shame of having 47% of its children (urban poor) diagnosed as malnourished.<sup>15</sup> The IFPRI in its 2017 report showed that India is caught in a paradox situation, its rapid economic growth is coupled with a much slower decline in undernutrition.<sup>16</sup> The report said that in India, where 17% of urban dwellers or 65 million live in slums, the problem of malnutrition is glaring.<sup>17</sup>

**Identification of food insecurity and hunger hotspots in the cities, strengthening food safety including food for work programme in urban areas, making basic services of education, health & hygiene, water & sanitation, supplementary nutrition to pregnant and lactating mothers etc., must be weaved in a programme coordinated by different agencies. Involving people & residents in the planning & implementation, monitoring & improvement in programme design and outreach is equally critical.**



### Interlinkages with the other goals

The SDGs framework and all the goals are interlinked and interdependent, and therefore, action is needed across goals rather than linear focus on any particular goal. To achieve SDG 2, it is important that there are comparable actions on SDG 1 (poverty eradication), SDG 3 (health & well-being), SDG 4 (education), SDG 5 (gender), SDG 6 (water), SDG 7 (energy), SDG 8 (decent work & economic growth), SDG 9 (resilient infrastructure & sustainable industrialisation / urbanisation),

SDG 10 (inequality), SDG 11 (sustainable cities) SDG 12 (sustainable consumption & production patterns), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 14 (life underwater), SDG 15 (life on land) etc. While robust action on SDG2 will have co-benefits in successfully achieving other goals, poor action on these interrelated goals will have the potential of reversing the gains made in eradicating hunger & malnutrition. This is equally relevant in the global as well as in the national context.



### Investing in agricultural R&D

There hasn't been any major breakthrough in agriculture research for quite some time as agricultural research is highly constrained financially. While India spent 31% of its agricultural GDP on research and development in 2010, China spent almost double the amount, with even Bangladesh spending more on agricultural R&D than India.<sup>18</sup> The gap between India and China has been increasing. Now, China spends four times more in agricultural research.

**India needs to triple its investment in agricultural R&D to reach anywhere close to China.<sup>19</sup> Many of the State Agricultural Universities are in such a deplorable financial condition, that it is alleged that finances meant for research are spent on salaries of staff.**

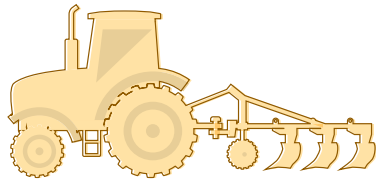


### Zero tolerance to hunger deaths

In many countries including India, the government never acknowledges hunger death. In the PUCL case, the Supreme Court (2002) stated that it is the duty of all the states to prevent hunger deaths. It also said that Chief Secretaries should be held responsible for any hunger death taking place in the state.<sup>20</sup> It is high time that the country should have a zero tolerance policy for hunger death.

15. Capital Shame: hunger gnaws at them, Bindu Shajan Perappadan, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2016, the Hindu, Delhi • 16. Its October 2016 report ranked India 97 among 118 countries on Global Hunger Index, India fared worse than almost all its neighbors', China, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, Only Pakistan was ranked lower at 107  
17. India's economy is growing but distress migrations ensure that children are not, Anindito Mukherjee/Reuters, and Priyanka Vora, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017, scroll.in

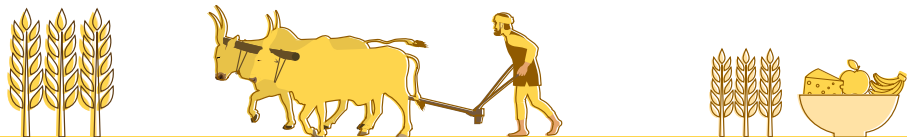
18. What is the future of agriculture in India, Vishwajeet Choudhary and Gursharan Singh, 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, thewire.in • 19. India needs to triple investment in agricultural research; IFPRI, The Hindu Business Line Bureau, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/india-needs-to-triple-investment-in-agricultural-research-ifpri/article9693679.ece>  
20. Chief Secretary liable for any hunger death in the state, says SC, Times News Network, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2002, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Chief-Secy-l-ble-for-starvation-deaths-says-SC/articleshow/26705652.cms> • 21. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is a \$400 million dollar enterprise funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and has the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan as the Chairman of the Board. It is instructive to note that both AGRA and USAID top positions are filled with people that come from Monsanto and Dupont, AGRA's Technology Push in Africa, A commentary by Marrien Bassey, Friends of the Earth International, <http://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/AGRA-Technology-Push-in-Africa.pdf> • 22. Concerns about the role of business in scaling up nutrition, International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2012, <http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/9868> • 23. Activists: Don't join SUN, a nutrition drive, Times News Network, Times of India, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017, Delhi • 24. ibid • 25. What's wrong with "climate smart agriculture" Ben Lillistun, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2015, IATP, <https://www.iatp.org/blog/201509/what%E2%80%99s-wrong-with-%E2%80%99Climate-smart%E2%80%99D-agriculture> • 26. GM Crops will not solve India's food crisis, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2013, Wall Street Journal, <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiaera/time/2013/09/22/gm-crops-wont-solve-indias-food-crisis>



## Resisting false solutions

The narrow framing of hunger and malnutrition has allowed a host of agribusiness companies, hedge fund managers and private profiteers not only to enter the discussion but occupy significant policy space at all levels. Post-MDGs and after the food crisis of 2008-09 saw a flurry among agribusiness companies to support food security through large-scale industrial agriculture projects in Africa viz. Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Monsanto have significant stakes in AGRA in which they seek to sell their technology and monopolise seeds and other inputs.<sup>21</sup> SUN is a platform representing countries, CSOs, UN agencies, business and donors. While SUN claims that these platforms should be 'government-led', it does not have adequate safeguards in place to stop corporations and their front groups gaining unprecedented opportunities to influence nutrition policies and promoting unsustainable market-driven strategies. Critics have raised a number of issues with regard to SUN's strategy.<sup>22</sup> SUN encourages governments – especially the world's most poorly resourced – to set up multi-stakeholder

'platforms' with the SUN Business Network, which includes food corporations like Pepsi, Cargill, Nutriset, Britannia, Unilever, Edesia and many others.<sup>23</sup> In these circumstances, no one can deny conflict of interest in improving nutrition and promoting business interests of these food giants. Of the 58 countries in this network, 40 are from Africa. India is being lured to join this network. However, activists have recommended the Government, not to join the network, even though some of the states (Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand) have already joined the network.<sup>24</sup> Similar conflict of interest is being alleged against the Global Alliance on Climate Smart Agriculture, which seeks to provide triple bullet solution to reduce carbon emission from agriculture, enhance food security and increase farmers income. It is being promoted by CGIAR, IFAD, World Bank, UN agencies in collaboration with agribusiness giants like Monsanto, Walmart, Syngenta and Yarra. Despite the fact that the results have been close to zero, it is gaining currency in many countries including Africa.<sup>25</sup> Genetically Modified Crops are also being sold as solutions to sustain agriculture and food production in changing climatic conditions.<sup>26</sup> These false solutions rather exacerbate hunger and malnutrition.



**HEAD OFFICE:** Laya Resource Centre, Plot No. 110, Yendada, Near Senora Beach Restorts, Visakhapatnam - 530045. Andhra Pradesh, India. [www.laya.org.in](http://www.laya.org.in) | [layarc@gmail.com](mailto:layarc@gmail.com)



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