

## State of Food Security & Nutrition in the World Report

### What is the issue?

- The latest edition of the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report was recently released jointly by five UN organizations.
- It highlights the shortfalls on part of the government to handle the pandemic, which has led to increase in the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity.

### What are the highlights of the report?

- India was home to the largest number of undernourished people in the world even before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity in India rose by about 6.8% points in 2018-20.
- The number of persons facing moderate to severe food insecurity has increased by 9.7 crores since the outbreak of Covid.
- India, the country with the largest stock of grain in the world [120 million tonnes as of July 2021] accounts for a 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the world's food-insecure population.
- Globally, in 2020, over 237 crore people were grappling with food insecurity, which is an increase of about 32 crores from 2019.
- South Asia alone accounts for 36% of global food insecurity.

### What are the key indicators used?

- Estimates on food insecurity presented in the SOFI report are based on two globally-accepted indicators of food insecurity:
  1. Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU)
  2. Prevalence of Moderate and Severe Food Insecurity (PMSFI)
- **PoU** - The PoU estimates the proportion of people suffering from a chronic deficiency of calories.
- It is based on estimates of the per-capita supply of food and distributional parameters estimated using the national consumption surveys.
- **PMSFI** - It is a more recent experience-based indicator developed through surveys.
- These include eating less, modifying diet to eat cheaper food, skipping meals, and eating less than adequate food because of lack of money or other resources.
- Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the Indian government has not undertaken any official assessment of food insecurity in the country.
- So, the PMSFI estimates are the only national-level valid and reliable estimates available on the pandemic's impact on food insecurity in India.
- PMSFI estimates show that there were about 43 crores of moderate to severe food-insecure people in India in 2019.
- As a result of the pandemic-related disruptions, this increased to 52 crores in one year.
- In terms of prevalence rates, moderate to severe food insecurity increased from about 31.6%

in 2019 to 38.4% in 2021.

### **What are the reasons behind?**

- Despite being self-sufficient in food production, India faces problems of hunger and food insecurity due to **widespread economic distress, high unemployment & high levels of inequality**.
- A large proportion of the poor is dependent on the informal economy in which incomes are too low and uncertain.
- They do not have assured access to adequate and nutritious food.
- High (and fluctuating) food prices, shrinking public investment, and the economic slowdown have added to the distress among the working classes and the peasantry.
- These problems were aggravated in the recent year due to the lack of preparation to deal with the pandemic.

### **What is needed now?**

- Regular monitoring of the food security situation in the country.
- Universalizing access to the public distribution system, at least during the pandemic.

**Source: The Indian Express**

