

Implementation Status of National Food Security act (NFSA) in Drought Prone Bankura District of West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the implementation status of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 in a drought prone district of Bankura in West Bengal. The “Khadya Sathi Prakalpa”, a scheme of Government of West Bengal, coordinates NFSA and Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana (RKSY) to increase the scope of NFSA to ensure food and nutritional security to the vulnerable and poor. The scheme was implemented on 27th January 2016 in Bankura. Simple analytical approach is used to analyse data collected from randomly selected 424 households spread over 4 blocks of the district. In spite of delayed implementation of NFSA, there is a wide coverage (85.6% of sample population) of the Khadya Sathi Prakalpa of the people living in Jangalmahal areas in West Bengal. Government supportive system towards the food basket improves cereal consumption to the great extent of about 20-22% across different social groups in between before and after NFSA. Share of PDS in household's cereal consumption requirement is estimated to be 98, 80.18, 70.25, 68.18 and 69.88 per cent for AAY, OBC, ST, SC and Others respectively. The scheme has great potentiality to remove hungry people particularly those are living in drought prone areas of West Bengal. The major concern is that it creates people's dependency more and more on this highly subsidized scheme and it distorts normal behavior of both agricultural labour and food grains markets. The complexity in issuing different types of ration cards in West Bengal may be minimized by the development of computerized PDS supply management and the expansion of digital- bar coded ration card to update list of beneficiaries transparently with inclusion and exclusion criteria on regular basis and to save government subsidy.

Keywords: NFSA, PDS, Food Security, Social Welfare, West Bengal, Bankura District

INTRODUCTION:

The National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 (No. 20 of 2013), was enacted by the parliament of India on 10th September 2013. The Act has come into force on the 5th day of July, 2013. The target is to provide food and nutritional security to the people at a highly subsidized price. The NFSA act, undertakes life cycle approach of food security. The mission of food security is now changed from entitled based approach to right based approach. Some of the important features and provisions of this act are: (i) It was stipulated to cover 81.34 crore i.e. 66.67% of Indian population of which 75% rural population and 50% urban population as per 2011 Census, (ii) It combines and expands the scope of some existing food-based welfare schemes (Saini and Gulati, 2015): Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mid-Day Meal schemes (MDM), and Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). They have estimated that the annual food grain requirement is about 61.43 million tonnes with annual food subsidy of around Rs. 1.31 lakh crore, (iii) There are two types of beneficiary households- Priority household beneficiaries (68.84 crore) and Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries (12.50 crore), (iv) Allotment of foodgrains is 35 kg per month per family of 5 members for AAY beneficiaries and that of 5 kg per month per head for priority households at a very highly

subsidized rate (Table 1 and Table 2), (v) It has a special provision to the children, adolescent, would be mother and lactating mother, (vi) There is also provision of food security allowance in case of non supply of food grains or meal, (vii) Grievance redressal mechanism at the district and state level is one of the important provisions of NFSA along with provisions for transparency and accuracy (setting up transparency portal, computerization of TPDS operation, digital ration card etc.), (viii) the Socio-Economic Caste Census is the basis for identification of NFSA beneficiaries.

Identification of beneficiaries/eligible households is one of the key steps towards the implementation of NFSA. Comptroller and Audited General (CAG) Report 2016, mentioned that some states with early implementer, stamped old ration card to identify NFSA beneficiaries. For the issue of AAY beneficiary ration card each state and UT government have to follow central government guideline for the year 2000, 2003, 2004 and 2009. Most of the states did not identify AAY beneficiaries. The act directed (under section 10) the state and union territory government to initiate certain steps to identify the beneficiaries, issue fresh ration card, computerization of TPDS operation and update the list of eligible household from time to time. Uttar Pradesh and Anadaman Nicobar Island accuse that they did not get final SECC report. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim and Nagaland accused about the lack of infrastructure, insufficient fund and manpower. For selection of NFSA beneficiaries, Government of West Bengal has been decided to use Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data based on the following criteria (Notice No. 1913- FS/Sectt/Food/14R-01/2013 Dated: 11.08.2014):

Naturally, the questions arise that: what is the ground level reality of implementation status of NFSA in drought prone backward areas? Are the beneficiaries identified as per NFSA guidelines? How far public distribution system (PDS) ensures food security to the target groups? What are the constraints for effective implementation of NFSA? The present paper tries to explore some answers to these questions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study accomplishes the following major objectives:

- 1) To examine the status of implementation of NFSA in West Bengal and particularly in a draught prone district of Bankura.
- 2) To examine how far the supportive system of PDS improves the food security status of the people of draught prone Bankura District across different social groups.
- 3) To identify the constraints of implementation of NFSA in the backward regions.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section III reviews literature of the subject, Section IV describes the Data and Methodology, Section V presents the socio-economic profile of the study area, Section VI examines the Implementation Status of NFSA in West Bengal based on secondary data, Section VII examines the Implementation Status of NFSA in Bankura district based on the primary data, and finally major findings and conclusions are given in Section VIII.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

In a study of implementation status of NFSA, Puri (2017) has shown that there is an increase in coverage of eligible beneficiaries, a decline in exclusion error, a rise in the purchase-entitlement ratio (PER) and improvements in the transportation of food-grains. States/UTs that have implemented reforms such as doorstep delivery of food-grains, end-to-end computerisation of TPDS (procurement, transportation and distribution), simplifying eligibility criteria and improving grievance redress mechanisms are reaping benefits in the form of more food security as well as political success. Though NFSA has improved the general functioning of TPDS, several areas require more focus. The delay in the implementation in most states/UTs was a major violation of the Act. Many states/UTs did not issue new ration cards and some made all old TPDS beneficiaries eligible for NFSA benefits. More importantly, states/UTs that did not use NFSA as an opportunity to initiate TPDS reforms have been unable to reap all the benefits.

Gulati and Saini (2015) have estimated the proportion of grain that was diverted/ leaked from the PDS grain-chain in 2011-12. This is done by mapping the difference between the grains off-taken by states from the Central pool and the grains consumed by the PDS beneficiaries. The result finds that at an all-India level, 46.7 per cent or 25.9 MMTs of the off-taken grain did not reach the intended PDS beneficiaries in 2011-12. The percent share of total leakage increased with states where greater percent of India's poor is resided. The paper prescribed that shifting the support to poor from highly subsidized price policy to income policy of cash transfers through Jan-Dhan Yojana dovetailing UID of Aadhaar scheme is the best global practice, can plug leakages, reach the vulnerable segments of population, not interfere with markets of food, and save more than Rs. 30,000 crores annually to the government of India.

According to different reports of Government of India (2016), greater access to subsidised grains for the poor is

expected to reduce malnutrition, leading to a concomitant fall in the number of underweight children. However, using the data of national level surveys including the National Family Health Survey-3, Annual Health Survey and District Level Health Survey did not find any correlation between PDS use and decline in malnutrition. Another expectation which has been believed is that with a rise in income, households would increasingly buy higher quality grains from the market rather than the PDS shops. Research findings instead document that rather than declining, PDS use has risen sharply in both urban and rural areas for the poor as well as the non-poor.

A Macro-level study (Banga and Sekhar, 2015) analysed possible distortion of international trade on account of India's grain stock due to grain requirement under the NFSA. Findings of the study suggested that India is unlikely to possess the requisite exportable surplus to distort international trade.

Thus, there is no such study at the district level or micro-level to examine implementation status of NFSA based on primary data, particularly in a drought prone area. The present study may fill such gaps in the existing literature of the subject.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

The study is mainly based on primary data collected from randomly selected 424 households spread over 8 villages of 4 blocks in Bankura District. Primary data was collected in the two phases – (i) September 2014 - August 2015 for details of households (mainly for Ph D work) and (ii) re-survey of sample households during the months of June-July 2016 to understand the changing pattern of availability and accessibility of food grains through the ration shop (PDS) after implementation of NFSA in Bankura district. Out of four selected blocks three blocks namely, Ranibandh, Chhatna and Saltora belong to draught prone areas and the Raipur block belongs to non-draught prone areas of the district. Ranibandh and Raipur are chosen from Jangal Mahal and Saltora block belongs to mine belt and Chhatna block is the most backward block in the district. Another criterion for choosing blocks and villages is the concentration SC/ST population. Households were selected from each village for survey on purely randomized choosing. Household head was targeted to ask about the food habit, Ration Card, availability and accessibility of food from different sources along with PDS. The amount of cereals consumption by household is calculated with respect to requirement of cereal to meet recommended dietary allowance (RDA) of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Again calculation of the diets consumed per capita of family will not yield accurate data. Adult Consumption Unit Coefficient (AUC) overcomes these difficulties. The study also uses Secondary information collected from the official website (www.wbpds.gov.in) of Government of West Bengal. Simple analytical approach is used to analyse collected data to infer results of the study.

DISTRICT PROFILE:

Draught prone Bankura district lies in the Western part of West Bengal, eastern state of India and is popularly known as 'Rarh' from time immemorial. Among the study blocks Chhatna, Saltora and Ranibandh belongs to the region "hilly country to the west. This part has lot of undulations and suffers from very high run off. According to 2011 census 43 per cent population belong to SC and ST in Bankura district. It occupies 4th highest rank among all the districts of West Bengal and the 1st rank among the southern districts in West Bengal in terms of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe inhabitants. The study selected 4 blocks amongst the top 6 blocks in terms of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population. With marginal and small land holding (89 per cent of cultivable total land), poor fertility of the soil, monsoon dependent mono-cropping (Aman paddy) agriculture is becoming less and less remunerative and unable to meet the food and other livelihoods of a particular household. More than 65 per cent of total worker is engaged in combined workforce of agricultural labour and cultivator. Unemployment has increased among youth due to lack of industries. The most important alternative sources of employment are wage labour, collection and sale of non-timber forest produces (NTFP), wage-employment based on public works schemes, and in some areas, small industrial and mining wage-labour. It has been generally experienced that there is more food insecurity exists in the study region resulting into migration.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF NFSA IN WEST BENGAL:

The first phase of NFSA implementation is started in West Bengal on and from the 1st April 2015 in Dakshin Dinajpur and Uttar Dinajpur district (Notice No. I051-FS/O/Sectt/Food/14R-05/20 13 dated 1st April 2015). In the second phase, the NFSA is implemented in Hooghly district from 1st July 2015 (Notice No. 2000-FS/O/Sectt/F00d/14R-05/20 13 dated 26 June 2015). Different complains are raised in these districts about ration card and regarding inclusions and exclusions of beneficiaries. State government immediately notifies and issues

several forms several times for necessary inclusions and rectifications in the NFSA beneficiary list. Application is accepted through specific green form (I-R for rural and I-U for urban areas) from the person whose name or any family member's name is included in SECC but excluded from the NFSA list. Names of those persons and or households is not included in SECC can also apply for NFSA beneficiaries in white form (II-R for rural and II-U for urban areas). Last date of submission of form in respective BDO offices initially was 31 August 2015 and it was extended several times. According to the notice (No.68-SS/FS/SECTI/14R-01/2013 Dated: 23/12/2015), the state government had contemplated to launch a 'State Food Security Scheme' to provide benefit of subsidized food-grains to the ordinary residents of the state. Applications were invited from the general public to enlist for receiving such benefit. The "Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana" (RKSJ) scheme is divided into two categories: RKSJ-I and RKSJ-II. The scale of distribution and price of food grains per month for RKSJ is given in Table 3. The selected beneficiaries under RKSJ-I and RKSJ-II were provided with separate ration cards.

Implementation of NFSA is commenced in all over the state of West Bengal with effect from 27th January 2016 (G.O. no. 142-FS dated 15.01.2016). West Bengal Chief Minister (CM) Ms Mamata Banerjee has launched the 'State Food Security Scheme' on January 27, 2016 from a programme held at the 'Red Road'. Coordinating National Food Security Act (NFSA) and Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana (RKSJ), CM has given the name of food scheme as 'Khadya Sathi' Prakalpa. The NFSA scheme is divided into three categories: AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana), PHH (Priority Household), and SPHH (Priority Household with Sugar). NFSA card holders will be distributed with rice, fortified Atta and sugar.

Under the 'Khadya Sathi' Scheme, 7 crore 49 lakh people out of 10 crore people, that is almost 80% of the State's population, would get rice and wheat at Rs 2 per kg each. The state government provides an additional subsidy of Rs. 1 per kg over central subsidized rate of Rs. 3 per kg. The number of beneficiaries (7cr 49 lakh) in 'Khadya Sathi' Prakalpa is larger than that stipulated by central government (6cr 1 lakh beneficiaries). Another 70 lakh people will be able to buy rice at a price half than the market price, under this scheme. Recipients would include 33 lakh people of the Jangalmahal region, 12 lakh drought-affected people of Purulia district, 11.24 lakh people including tea garden workers and their families, 3.11 lakh Cyclone Aila-affected people, 3569 people of Singur who had lost their land, 1700 homeless people of Kolkata and the people living in the Hills region of Darjeeling.

The 'Jungle Mahal' beneficiaries are continued receiving rice @ Rs. 2 per kg in the scale of 8 kg per adult unit per month. In case of wheat, they are continued receiving 3 kg fortified Atta per adult unit per month for BPL labelled as Special package fortified Atta @ Rs. 2.63 per 750 gm packet (@ Rs. 3.50 per kg instead of Rs 6.66 per kg) and AAY consumers are getting 3 kg fortified Atta instead of wheat labelled as special package AAY fortified Atta @ Rs. 1.50 per 750 gm packet (Rs. 2.00 per kg).

The beneficiaries in 'Singur' and 'Aila' affected area is getting this special package rice over and above of their normal entitlement based on the ration cards in their hand, they will continue to receive the same over and above their normal entitlement under NFSA/RKSJ. All ration card holders under closed tea gardens and living under the jurisdictional area of Tea Gardens, is treated as AAY under NFSA. The entire population of the hill Subdivisions is treated as NFSA plus state special package for Hill (NFSA-Hill) allotted with 6 kg rice and 5 kg fortified Atta per head per month @ Rs. 2.00 per kg in both cases.

The study observed that government of West Bengal has used the Socio Economic and Caste Census data (draft and or final) as base for the criteria of selection of eligible household to be included in NFSA beneficiary list. Households eligible under compulsory inclusion will have the highest priority. Government of West Bengal has been applied each of the above criteria for selection of eligible households under NFSA Act 2013 is as follows: The number of families under automatic exclusion in each district shall be automatically excluded from the SECC list. The number of families under automatic inclusion shall be automatically included as the first priority under the NFSA beneficiaries list. Such families shall also automatically fall in the category of AAY beneficiaries. Thereafter, the households which satisfy the entire 7 deprivation criterion shall be treated as AAY beneficiaries subject to the ceiling (for WB 759333 AAY beneficiaries and Bankura district 76205 AAY beneficiaries) on the number of households. If such number of households are not exhausted by application of 7 deprivation criteria then the selection up to the number of households shall proceed by application of 6 deprivation criterion and onwards till such number of households are achieved. Once the AAY households ceiling is achieved, the households consisting of families at least 1 deprivation criteria shall be treated as priority households (ceiling of priority households in WB are 40854918 and 1682340 in Bankura District).

This, in effect, would mean that about 7.59 lakh households in the entire State may be treated as AAY households under NFSA, and another approximately 408.54 lakh individuals will be treated as priority household beneficiaries thereby leading to a total of 442.01 lakh beneficiaries in rural areas. In the Urban areas, number of selected AAY households is 236129 and number of priority households are 1749264. Hence total

number of beneficiaries is 8477628 households.

To distribute subsidized food-grains, according to the NFSA, West Bengal Government issued three types of digital ration cards with barcode. Type 1: Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY); Type 2: Priority household (PHH); Type 3: Priority household with sugar (SPHH). The selected beneficiaries under RKS-Y-I and RKS-Y-II are provided with separate ration cards.

The work for preparing bar-coded photo-ration cards on the basis of the National Population Register and Socio-Economic Caste Survey is introduced in October 2013 by the state government to ensure effective public distribution system in the state, weed out bogus beneficiaries and check hoarding of food grains. In the later stage schedule time for capturing ration card data is extended time to time (Memo No. 91-JS/FS/P/Sectt/IT-03/2013 dated 27th December, 2013; Memo no- 117-JS/FS/P/Sectt/IT-03/2013 Date-24th February 2014). Working of digital ration card is also called off in the 'Fair Price Shop' and in the 'Special Camp'.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF NFSA IN BANKURA DISTRICT:

The NFSA act directed to all the state and union territory to implement the law within 1st July 2014. But it is implemented in Bankura on 27th January 2016. Regarding coverage of the food scheme it is observed that the 'Khadya Sathi Prakalpa' in Bankura includes about 85.6 per cent population. Social group-wise such rate of inclusion is 90 per cent of ST, 86 per cent of SC and 83 per cent of OBC population in AAY, SPHH and PHH schemes which may indicate that the design of NFSA in Bankura district is on the right track.

Those who are eligible in the 'Khadya Sathi' Scheme, 3.6% belong to RKS-Y-II. Before 27th March 2015, 72.7% of the eligible household got their respective digital bar-coded ration card. Still there are 27.3% persons are waiting for their respective bar-coded ration cards. For example, newly married house wife and/or new born baby who are eligible but they got no bar-coded ration card. There are huge clerical mistake in ration card. Spelling, father's name, ration dealer's name, even there is difference of card type among the members of same family. State government has also given scope again to apply to include the name in the beneficiaries list (memo No. 91 SS- FS/Sectt/Food/14R-0112013 (Part-I) Dated 1st February, 2016) by making applications in the designated forms (III-R, III-U, IV-R, IV-U, V-R, V-U, VI-R, VI-U). February 8, 2016, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that those who haven't received their digital ration cards would get them soon. The system is in place, so there is no need to worry. Also, those with old ration cards can still get their subsidized food grains. A delay in getting ration cards won't hamper their in getting their rations. In fact, rations would be valid for a period of two months, so that even if one is unable to take one's share due to a delay in getting new cards, there is two months' time. With this announcement no eligible beneficiaries are left from the 'Khadya Suraksha' Yojana. As a result 27.3% people has no bar coded ration card but they got ration after they applied for ration. Those persons (14.4%) who are not eligible for 'Khadya Sathi' Prakalpa was retain their old ration card and got non-PDS items and kerosene.

The Study looks at the percentage distribution of eligible beneficiaries of different social group in different categories of ration card in Bankura district. It is found that major beneficiaries in AAY scheme are belong to disadvantage section of the society ST and SC. 38.30 and 36.77 percent of ST and SC population respectively are included in AAY scheme, whereas 5.4 and 8.2 percent of OBC and other category people are included in AAY scheme (Table 4). Again in the scheme of priority household with sugar (SPHH) inclusion of disadvantage section is higher. The percentage of ST, SC and OBC population who are included in SPHH scheme are 44.68 percent, 41.94 per cent and 40.65 per cent, whereas only 14.75 percent of other category people are included in SPHH. The scheme AAY, SPHH and PHH are designed for the people who are mostly vulnerable. The inclusion of 90 per cent of ST, 86 per cent of SC and 83 per cent of OBC population in these three schemes indicates that the design of NFSA in Bankura district is on the right track. Side by side the rest of people who are willing to get subsidized ration are also included in RKS-Y-I and RKS-Y-II. As a result 96.38 percent of eligible beneficiaries are obtaining 5 kg cereals per head per month @ Rs 2 per kg rice and wheat and Rs 3.5 per kg fortified Atta. Hence the study concludes that the Khadya Sathi Prakalpa has the ability to remove hunger from the people of Bankura district.

Problem of exclusion/ inclusion:

Those are automatically excluded according to their asset base, can remain outside the 'Khadya Sathi' Prakalpa, the idea is not recognized in the 'Khadyasathi' Prakalpa. For example 1) households with any member as Government Employee or income above Rs 10,000 per month are automatically excluded from priority household in NFSA. In practical field there are some household with large household size are really needed subsidised food but are excluded due to one member is government employee in group D staff. Conversely some small size households with government employee do not require subsidized food

but are included in RKSII-I beneficiaries list. 2) There are some household with three or more pucca room needed subsidised food as present earning is very minimum (due to loss of earning member or loss of job or business or loss of asset in natural calamity, damage of crop, loss of cattle asset etc) but are excluded from RKSII-I beneficiaries list. 3) Some household has previously poor but with time any member can get government job or shine in business so that at present they need no subsidy but are included in NFSA beneficiaries list. So there is needed a system of continuous evolution of exclusion and inclusion of beneficiaries. The system should be easy and within the reach of general public. In NFSA the people belongs to the backward class (SC and ST) are getting priority, but in reality some ST households are excluded from NFSA even if from RKSII-I and listed in RKSII-II. This list should be corrected.

Quality:

There are few beneficiaries who complain (6.4%) about the quality of rice but there is reasonable complain (31%) about wheat and 43% beneficiaries complain about fortified Atta. Sometimes ration shop supplied damaged wheat. Low quality, leakage, absence of manufacturing date and expiry date are the example of various complain raise against fortified Atta. Again price of 1 packed fortified Atta is Rs 2.62 but dealer charge Rs 3.00 in terms of round off. So in case of Atta beneficiaries have to pay more prices which is goes to the hand of ration dealer. It is not clear against why this absurd price is set by the administration. It is an instrument by which ration dealers exploits poor beneficiaries. The best way is to sell Atta in a packet of 1 kilo for which price is Rs 3.5.

Quantity:

96% people agree that they with draw their whole entitlement. That means purchase entitlement ratio is 96. Before implementation and after implementation of NFSA there is number of announcement, advertisement, campaign is done in different level of government office and society. So all person knows their food-grain entitlement. Till date there is no change in the scale of distribution of food-grains. So there is no such difference of consumption among the social classes. 20.63% household belongs to AAY scheme and get 35 kg of food-grain every month by each family. 3.62% of eligible household got 2 kg food-grains per head per month at a higher price. The rest 76% households (PHH, SPHH, RKSII-I) got 5kg food grains per capita per month. The name of the category is different but there is no difference in benefits. Discrepancy among social classes and major economic classes (PHH, SPHH, RKSII-I) about PDS consumption is very low. There is a problem of carrying a lump sum amount of food-grains in every two weeks for the whole family. Some (5.28 per cent) responded complain that they got fewer amounts of food-grains mainly rice and wheat compare to entitlement but have to pay price for whole entitlement. As they pay price for entitlement amount, so they believe that they are getting their right quantity. After returning home some (2.20 per cent) person tries to judge the actual weight and found shortage. All of them who are getting less in terms of weight, do not approach to the ration dealer for complain. Some (1.30 percent) who approach to the dealer, dealer says that he did not know what the reason behind the mismatch, and there was no wrong in the weight. But if powerful person complain then dealer asked sorry, the mistake may done by labour who is on the duty of making weight, come another time when we are free and collect your shortage amount. The phenomenon indicates that the dealer deliberately cheat those person who are weak in calculation, or weak in judging weight, poor health status, weak in social status, weak power to protest and complain against shortage. In villages of Bankura district majority of people belong to socio-economic weak section. Ration dealer using this weak point, run their business of diverting food-grains from PDS to open market and makes illegal profit. In the new system of PDS diversion of food grains taking place. Again there is a provision in NFSA that customer can withdraw their entitlement in installments within two month but in practice most of the ration dealer is refused to give amount of grains in two or three installment. So if a person is unable to with draw their whole entitlement at a time due to problem of carrying, they did not get the rest amount in future time. The difference is dealer's profit. In ration shop there is a long queue. So everybody has to wait a long time. This is due to the complexity of calculation of prices for different categories of consumers. Main drawbacks are to distribute subsidized grains to all rich and poor, and it is difficult for a dealer to memories different quota and price for different beneficiaries. We do not face any respondent who is unable to with draw their entitlement of food-grain due to lack of liquid money. So diversion is also taking place in the initial phase of NFSA.

INCREASE IN SOCIAL WELFARE (FOOD SECURITY):

Supportive system & Implication of supportive system:

After implementation of NFSA, social welfare increases in terms of consumption of PDS food-grains as a percentage of total household's requirement of cereal consumption. Average share of PDS in consumption

requirement is now 70.62% which is 21.24% more compare to previous PDS system (Table 5). Among the social groups the percentage share of PDS consumption in total household's consumption requirement of cereal ranging from 68.18 to 80.18. The increase in PDS share in total household cereal consumption requirement is observed in all social groups ranging from 20.38% to 22.39%. ST household's gains highest in the new system by 22.39 per cent of their cereals consumption requirement from 47.86 per cent to 70.25 per cent. SC households gains lowest in the changing era of PDS by 20.38 percent of their cereal consumption requirement from 47.80 per cent to 68.18 per cent. In both Phases of PDS households belonging to OBC got maximum support in the consumption of cereals. In the previous system of PDS, 58.08 per cent of household cereal consumption requirement was supported by PDS which is 80.18 percent in the new system. Beneficiaries under AAY fulfilling 98.82% of their consumption from PDS supply (Table 6). They are the poorest of the poor. Nearly cent percent support to them may reduce the number of people who remain un-food to zero. On the other hand 76% priority households included in SPHH, PHH and RKS-Y-I got 65.39% support of their cereal consumption from subsidized PDS. As a result government supportive system towards the food basket improves a lot. The new program of Khadyasathi has focused greatly in a right path to remove food insecurity from the Bankura as well as from West Bengal.

Cash memo:

No people respond that they got cash memo from ration dealer. Only date of with draw ration is entered in the back of ration card. So there is no proof about how much amount is withdrawn at what price. This is required not only for right price but also for right quantity. 22% respondent complains that if they withdraw a part of their entitlement, the ration dealer is refused to supply rest of the amount in the next visit. The amount is diverted to the open market at higher price. Without cash memo there is a provision of cheating beneficiaries of 'Khadya Sathi Prakalpa' by Ration dealer. Transparency is hampered in this type of practice.

Computerization of supply chain management:

At the dealer level computerization of supply of food-grains is totally absent. The prime motive of the digitization of bar coded ration card is to stop large scale diversion of food-grain to the open market. Computerization of PDS supply to the beneficiaries will keep record the amount and corresponding price of each item in each transaction. It is difficult to cheat beneficiaries and protect illegal diversion by the process of computerization. It becomes easy to monitor PDS supply from the district level and or state level. Without Computerization and digital record transparency of PDS supply is breaks down and paves the way of illegal diversion.

Transparency portal:

No transparency portal (such as mobile update) has been started in any villages of the district till date. Without cash memo if beneficiaries will got SMS alert about the transaction details then customers will be satisfied with their price and quantity and there will be less provision of cheating customers.

83% responded told that there is a sign board in front of Ration shop. 42% people told that they able to read scale and price of ration. 11% told that there is opening balance of food-grain with date in the sign board. They also told that we saw the same figure in every visit of ration shop.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism:

18% people respond that signboard in the ration shop shows a toll free number 1967 or 1800345505 to call for complain within 8 am to 8 pm. Some people (7%) told that they are unable to make complain with repeated trials. Overall view of the responded is that grievance by ration dealer is low in some respect. It is right that the relation between ration dealer and beneficiaries is improved. Dealer got food-grains from distributor at door step. Dealer is bound to supply as per new list of beneficiaries which includes all members of each family. Grievance is done in malfunctioning of weight and to forfeiting part of ration amount which is not withdrawn at a time.

Doorstep delivery of food grains:

Each distributor is now bound to deliver food-grains at door step of Ration dealer.

Secondary Market:

A Secondary Market is evolving out from the wrong inclusion of beneficiaries. There are some wealthy people who need no support of subsidized food-grains. They sell their PDS entitlement in the open market at a higher price instead of self-consumption. Again some household use PDS food-grains in feeding their cattle. Again dealer also sells the surplus of food-grain in the open market which is not withdrawn by beneficiary.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS:

In the 'Khadya Sathi' Prakalpa of government of West Bengal coordinates NFSA and RKS-Y in order to ensure food and nutritional security to the vulnerable and poor. In spite of delayed implementation of National Food

Security, the coverage of the food scheme in West Bengal is found to be significant. There are additional provisions under state food schemes for the people living in certain disadvantaged areas like Jungle mahal, Singur, hill areas, tea garden labourer, Aila affected areas. The number of beneficiaries (7cr 49 lakh) in 'Khadya Sathi' Prkalpa is larger than that stipulated by central government (6cr 1lakh beneficiaries). In Bankura, the 'Khadya Sathi Prkalpa' includes 85.6% population.

'Khadya Sathi Prkalpa' provides a substantive amount of supports to the food basket of the people in Bankura district. 96.38 percent of eligible beneficiaries are obtaining 5 kg cereals per head per month @ Rs 2 per kg rice and wheat and Rs 3.5 per kg fortified Atta. Purchase entitlement ratio is 96:100. AAY beneficiaries got 98% of their cereal consumption from PDS and rest of the beneficiaries got 65% of their cereal consumption from PDS. After implementation of NFSA, social welfare increases in terms of consumption of PDS food-grains as a percentage of total household's cereal consumption. Average share of PDS in household's cereal consumption requirement is now 80.18, 70.25, 68.18 and 69.88 percent for OBC, ST, SC and others. The increase in PDS share in total household cereal consumption is observed in all social groups ranging from 20.38% to 22.39%. Discrepancy among social classes and major (PHH, SPHH, RKSJ-I) economic classes about PDS consumption (rice and wheat/Atta) is very low. There is an improvement of relation among ration dealer and beneficiaries in the new system.

Along with great benefits the Khadyasathi Prkalpa also faces some limitations. 27.3% beneficiaries are waiting for their respective bar-coded ration cards. The automatic inclusion and exclusion criteria are not properly executed. The provision of inclusion and exclusion mechanism fails to capture dynamic demographic character and economic status of households. Quality of fortified Atta does not satisfy beneficiaries. The dealers deliberately cheated weak and poor person by weight of food grains, price calculation and refusing to purchase ration in installments. A Secondary market is evolving out from diversion of food grain due the wrong inclusion of beneficiaries, inability of withdrawal of full entitlement and cheating by ration dealers. Household has to wait a long time in queue before ration shop. It is difficult to lodge a complaint in toll-free number. Without cash memo and computerization digital record, transparency of PDS supply may break down and it paves the way of illegal diversion.

Thus, the "Khadya Sathi Prkalpa" has great potentiality to remove hungry people from the West Bengal and particularly from the drought prone and other disadvantaged areas. There is a need to develop a system of continuous updating of beneficiary lists through exclusions and inclusions. The major concern is that it creates people's dependency more and more on this highly subsidized scheme for their food grains consumption and it distorts traditional normal functioning of both agricultural labour and food grains markets as reported by the sample responded farmers. The complexity in issuing different types of ration cards in West Bengal may be minimized by the development of computerized PDS supply management and the expansion of digital- bar coded ration card to update list of beneficiaries transparently with inclusion and exclusion criteria on regular basis and to save government subsidy.

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TABLES

Table 1: Scale of distribution of food grains per month in NFSA

	Scale of Rice per month	Scale of fortified wheat/ Atta per month	Scale of sugar per month
AAY	15 kg per family	20 kg per family	500 gm per head
PHH	2 kg per head	3 kg per head	X
SPHH	2 kg per head	3 kg per head	500 gm per head

Source: www.wbpds.gov.in

Table 2: The consumer prices for distributed food grains in NFSA

	Rice	Wheat	Fortified Atta	Sugar
AAY	Rs 2 per kg	Rs 2 per kg	Rs 2 per kg	Rs 13.50 per kg
PHH	Rs 2 per kg	Rs 2 per kg	Rs 3.50 per kg	
SPHH	Rs 2 per kg	Rs 2 per kg	Rs 3.50 per kg	Rs 13.50 per kg

Source: www.wbpds.gov.in

Table 3: The scale of distribution and price of food grains per month for RKS

	Rice		Wheat	
	Scale per month	Price	Scale per month	Price
RKS-I	2 kg per head	Rs 2/kg	3 kg per head	Rs 2/kg
RKS-II	1kg per head	Rs 13/kg	1kg per head	Rs 9/kg

Source: www.wbpds.gov.in

Table 4: Percentage of eligible beneficiaries of different social group in different categories of Ration Card in Bankura district

	AAY	PHH	SPHH	RKS-I	RKS-II	ALL
ST	38.30	7.09	44.68	2.84	7.09	100
SC	36.77	6.45	41.94	13.55	1.29	100
OBC	5.40	36.69	40.65	15.11	2.16	100
OTHER	8.20	21.31	14.75	47.54	8.20	100
ALL	20.63	21.26	39.37	15.12	3.62	100

Source: Authors' calculation from primary data

Table 5: PDS consumption as % of total consumption requirement of cereals

	ST	SC	OBC	OTHER	ALL
Before NFSA	47.86	47.80	58.08	48.40	49.38
After NFSA	70.25	68.18	80.18	69.88	70.62
Gain in new system	22.39	20.38	22.10	21.48	21.24

Source: Authors' calculation from primary data
