National Food Security Bill

VIJAYA KRUSHNA VARMA, Mr
National Food Security Bill – Ideal or Quasi?

The National Food Security Bill, 2013 is a direct admission by the Congress party that it could not or, more accurately, was not willing to provide food security to 67 per cent of the Indian population (which includes 75 percent rural and 50 percent urban) even though it has been in power at the centre for over 57 years. Thus the Congress party failed miserably to provide full food security for the poor people of India in the past.

Let us examine what the NFS Bill promises to do in the future.

The Bill promises to provide 5 kilograms of rice/wheat per head per month which means a mere 166 grams per day or 83 grams per meal. However the minimum daily requirement of cereals (wheat/rice) is 450 grams per adult per day (for one who does moderate amount of work). Those people who do heavy work need 600 grams per day.

This implies that a person needs a minimum of 13.5 kilograms of rice/wheat per month. If a person gets only 5 Kgs of cereal per month, he has to buy the remaining required cereals (8.5kgs) in the open market at exorbitant prices. An individual will have to spend more money for buying the required cereals in the open market.

The minimum daily requirement of pulses is 50 grams per adult per day who does moderate work. But the total pulses production in 2011-12 is 18.45 million tonnes. That means the average availability of pulses is 42 grams that is well below the required level. Hence total food security for all the poor people can be achieved only when India becomes self sufficient by producing all the food grains it requires without depending on imports.

Since the NFS Bill promises to provide only 5 Kgs of cereals per head per month it is definitely not a full food security bill, it can at most be termed as a quasi food security bill. Full food security means two things: a) availability of sufficient quantities of nutritious food that
includes cereals, pulses, milk, vegetables, fruits, etc., and b) all people must have enough purchasing capacity.

The total production of cereals (rice, wheat and coarse cereals) in 2011-12 is 230 million tonnes which is scarcely sufficient to meet the demand for 120 crore people of India at 525 grams per head per day.

To achieve ideal national food security we have to produce every year at least 20% more quantity of cereals than the actual requirement in order to meet any emergency that arises out of failed monsoon or any other unforeseen calamity.

Congress party says the Food Security Bill will help drive away hunger and malnutrition. 5 Kg of cereals per head may keep hunger away for the day but not malnutrition (In India malnutrition is undernutrition). Hunger and under nutrition are two different things. This food security bills may address the hunger problem partially. To say honestly, the NFB will wipe out only 1/3 hunger. In order to satiate the 2/3 hunger an individual will have to depend upon the high priced cereals in the open market. The gain got by the subsidised cereals (5kg cereals per month) will be negated by the very high priced cereals in the open market (8 kg cereals per month). The net gain will be zero. But under nutrition will remain the same. Under nutrition can be wiped out only when an individual’s purchasing capacity is increased to buy sufficient and nutritious food that should include cereals, pulses, milk, vegetables, fruits, etc., which contain proteins, carbohydrates, fibre, vitamins and minerals to meet his dietary needs. The purchasing capacity will be increased only when employment opportunities are increased. Only when there is sufficient nutritious food that is affordable by all will child mortality decline. It will also prevent many diseases caused by deficiency of minerals (micronutrients) and vitamins. Total food security for all can be achieved solely through development in all spheres.

Congress party is trying to use this food security bill as a mask to cover up all its past misdeeds such as the scams, its poor
governance and economic mismanagement. Unless and until the Government augments the indigenous food production substantially over present production; modernise and increases the storage capacity for food grains; streamlines public distribution system and selects genuine beneficiaries; the dream of providing the balanced nutritious food for all people will not become real.

VIJAYA KRUSHNA VARMA
RAJA VENKATA NAGARMA
GUDIVADA P.O;
Via PEDAGUMMULURU
VISAKHAPATNAM Dt.- 531083

http://singletax.org