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## INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE: FREEDOM FROM HUNGER

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**H**unger listens not to reason nor cares for justice nor is bent by any prayer. Scientific breakthroughs together with synergetic socio-economic infrastructures and poor-friendly policies along with a strong and determined political will only can solve the problem of hunger. Therefore, a combination of all these in a national perspective but with the international alliance is essential in our country to eliminate hunger in the long run and reduction of hunger as a short term national policy.

Poverty is the main root cause of hunger. Lack of purchasing power of nutritious food is the basic issue. In India 320 million people live below poverty line. Nearly 50 per cent of children below five years are malnourished, one third of the new born are to low weight. The vulnerable groups include small and marginal farmers, landless labour, urban poor, etc. Within these groups women and children are more effected. Hunger has its own complexities along with poverty such as higher population growth, low agricultural production and productivity, unemployment, starvation, etc. The fact is that as income rises, consumers spend more money on food.

The vitamin A supplementation coverage rate, the GNP, purchasing power parity are very low compared to the world figures also apart from those of USA. The human development index shows India to be in 124<sup>th</sup> rank while USA is in 6<sup>th</sup> position. The percentage of children under five years suffering from underweight, wasting and stunting also shows higher figures than the world average. The GNP per capita and the purchasing power parity reveal a much lower values than the world average Unless the economic growth is improved, we cannot reduce the poverty coupled with malnutrition and hunger.

### **Malthusain Theory and the Green Revolution**

Famine leading to hunger, starvation and finally to death was profounded by Malthus as an important natural check in controlling population growth. However, the green revolution in India was achieved with great success inspite of population growth. This was possible due to steep increases in the food grain production fourfold from 50million tones in 1950 to above 200 million tones as of now. The revolution happened because of collaboration with premier research institutes of CGIAR, viz., CIMMYT and IRRI concerned with wheat and Rice improvement, the primary sources of food together with changes in public policies and political will coupled with wisdom.

### **Equitable Food Access**

India though self sufficient in food grain production due to the green revolution, the irony of millions of hungry stomachs persisting year after year taunts of nation. The issue is regarding the accessibility of food and more specifically of nutritious food. Noble laureate Amartya Sen prefers to call it as “issue of food entitlement”. The lack of purchasing power of food by those below poverty line (35 per cent of population) thus making it possible to have huge buffer stocks in Food Corporation of India is to be seriously pondered over. This has implications of economical dimentions together with political, social and environmental in nature. Hence food for all require alliance on many inter-related fields.

### **Towards Building a National Food Security with International Alliances**

The components of national food security would be production and productivity security, buffer stock security, social security and nutrition security. Solving one and all of these components could better be done through International alliances for flow of collective wisdom as well as for enhanced international development assistance through basically agricultural and rural development. The central and state government's involvement in the development of research, extension, infrastructure development, marketing, public distribution system, rural development, etc can be boosted with international alliances.

### International Alliances

**FAO:** Food and Agricultural Organization is the premier international organization to fight hunger. FAO is supporting the National Agricultural Research System through various programmes supporting the national production system, rural development and related areas for promoting overall production and nutrition.

**WFS:** World food Summit (1996) has been striving to bring a general awareness regarding the issue of hunger and obtain support of public, private, NGO's etc. However, prevention and preparedness are given priority.

### CGIAR Institutes, IMF, World Bank and UNDP

The various institutes under the consultative group on International Agricultural Research, vi., ICRISAT situated in India, CIMMYT, ICARDA, CIAT, IITA, ILRI, etc for the improvement of wheat maize, dryland crops and livestock etc., International Food Policy Research Institute, International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the United Nation's Development Programme, etc are contributing directly or indirectly to eliminate/reduce hunger.

**WFP:** World Food Programme supported by FAO and the UN caters to the needs of poor countries including India from time to time and has been a source of hope for the downtrodden. This programme needs to be strengthened and expanded too in pursuit of relentless fight to end hunger.

**International alliance with IRRI:** Rice being the staple food of Indian subcontinent and the whole of Asia, the Indian NARS (National Agricultural Research System) has close cooperation with IRRI (International Rice Research Institute) based at Phillipines.

### New Concepts of Rice Development

**Super rice:** IRRI is developing "Super Rice" which embodies a 25 per cent genetic potential yield gain over the existing high yielding varieties. The new plant type of rice is being touted as the foundation breeding material for the next green revolution in developing countries. The traditional tall paddy varieties typically has a total biomass of around 12 tonnes per hectare, of which the harvestable grain matter was 30 per cent. The first generation HYV's

enhanced the biomass to about 20 tonnes, with a harvest index of 505. Super rice would enhance these further to 22-23 tonnes and 55 per cent respectively.

**Golden rice:** This type of rice is being developed for higher nutritional values. The enhancement of protein and the essential amino acids for betterment of nutritional security is the aim of this development. The problem of malnutrition and under nourishment would be reduced with golden rice. In countries where rice is the staple food, even a small increase in nutritional value will contribute significantly to the health of people.

**SYS Net programme:** The world needs 50 per cent more rice in another 20 years and if succeeded about four billion people in Asia will be able to have enough food. However, in a solution of this great demand, systems research network for ecological land use planning in Tropical Asia-SYS net was formed. Farmers, scientists, politicians, bearcats, community leaders formed this system to discuss the management of natural resources and to plant for the future. The great success is that all the stakeholders discuss with each other and find an acceptable way out. SYS net was created in 1996 by a team set up at IRRI.

The National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) of India Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines are involved along with the Wageningen University and Research Centre in the Netherlands. After seeing the system in action, high ranking Malaysian officials wanted the system methodology applied to their national planning programmes. It has been recommended for adoption by provincial governors and research managers throughout the Phillipines.

Scientists with SYS net experience have become more flexible. They are changing from supply driven to demand changing from supply driven to demand driven research. They are more willing to ask and better able to respond to what end-users need and this is an enormous change.

### Flood Prone Rice Research Consortium

About 13 million hectares of rice land mostly in south and southeast Asia experiences uncontrolled flooding and hence produce low yields. To evaluate and adopt promising technologies through farmers participatory Research, IRRI helped to establish Flood-prone Rice Research Consortium in 1999. Scientists from India, Bangladesh, Thailand,

Srilanka and Vietnam have joined this consortium with the international fund for agriculture development providing financial assistance.

**WTO:** India is a signatory to the world trade organization. WTO rules govern 97 per cent of world trade with an impact on the global food economy. India should and is using the WTO's rule-based system to protect its interests in economic and political adversities. Advisory centre on WTO law was established in 2001 as an independent organization. This provides low cost legal counseling services to disadvantaged members. These initiatives need encouragement and expansion. Enhancing the enforcing the rulings under the dispute settlement mechanism needs to be found. The very recently held WTO meeting held at Cancun in Mexico faced tough time in trying to resolve the differences in matters of farm subsidies between the development industrial nations and the developing agricultural nations, India taking a lead role.

**NATP:** National Agricultural Technological Project in India is underway with funding from World Bank. Positive results are being obtained which in the long run would help in reducing hunger.

### **FFW Mid Day Meals Programme, etc**

Food for work programme is a long term programme launched to temporarily remove the hardships of hunger in the poverty stricken people of the drought prone areas with assistance from NGO's world bank etc. Similarly the Mid-Day Meals programme tends to feed the poor children studying in government schools. These programmes need to be strengthened with more international alliances from philanthropic organizations.

### **Regional Alliances at the Sub-Continent Level**

**SAARC:** South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation was established in 1985. This alliance comprises of seven countries viz. India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Maldives. Agricultural development with rice as the focus and fight against hunger is prior in the associations agenda. SAIC (SAARC Agricultural Information Centre) is an offshoot of SAARC agricultural development and publishes information on matters of agricultural importance every quarter. SMRC (SAARC Meteorological Research Centre) is working on meteorology while SHRDC (SAARC Human Resource Development Centre)

promotes development of training, skills and other activities related to human resource development. The SDC (SAARC Documentation Centre) is involved in documentation of the developmental activities of the member countries.

### **Conclusion**

The budget allocations for agricultural and allied sectors needs to be increased further. Specific priority for international alliances is the need for the day and this concept needs further support and expansion, so as to take the components of the National Food Security effectively. This strategy would better promote in an enlightened and collective wisdom, sustainability in agricultural production rural development a long term strategy for increasing food production and nutritional security while conserving and managing natural resources. The aim is to meet the needs of the present generation without damaging the interest of the future generation by promoting development. The environment is not to be degraded. Technology is to be appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable. However, accessibility of food to all is to be taken care of.

With globalization, the concept of international alliances can be taken in our favour for solving the food problem. Policy issues for various organizations like WTO are to be created and those formed modified including the subsidies issue, etc to suit our agricultural development and farmers interests. Wholistic technology, collective wisdom and more money would flow in through these alliances the goal of which is to start with reduction and finally to eliminate hunger (IA).

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