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PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (PDS) IN INDIA

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Abstract

India's Public Distribution System is built around a network of roughly 1, 77,391 'Fair Price Shops', often referred to as 'ration shops', making it one of the biggest such systems in the world. India's Planning Commission estimates that 160 million families purchase commodities at ration shops every year. Food Corporation of India, a Government-owned corporation, procures and maintains the Public Distribution System. The primary Policy objective of the Department of Food & Public Distribution is to ensure food security for the country through timely and efficient procurement and distribution of food grains.

Introduction

Public Distribution System (PDS) is an Indian food security system. The public Distribution System considers the system of management of food economy and distribution of food grains at affordable prices. Established by the Government of India under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution and managed jointly with state governments in India, it distributes *subsidized food and non-food items to India's poor. Major commodities distributed include staple food grains, such as wheat, rice, sugar, and kerosene, through a network of Public distribution shops, also known as Ration shops established in several states across the country.

People Involved in PDS: The PDS is not only enormous in terms of its expenditure and its reach, but also in terms of the range of agencies involved in its operation.

1. Agencies of both the central and state governments,
2. Private-sector traders (who run the ration shops) and
3. Representatives of civil society

Working system of PDS

State-level ministries of food and civil supplies regulate networks of ration shops within their administrations, and are thus responsible for allocating licenses to the private traders who operate the shops. State governments also issue 'ration cards' to their residents and determine the quantities to which consumers are entitled. These vary from one commodity to the next. The prices are determined by state governments.

Operations of PDS

Both the central and state governments shared the responsibility of regulating the PDS. Under PDS scheme, each family below the poverty line is eligible for 35 kg of rice or wheat every month, while a household above the poverty line is entitled to 15 kg of food grain on a monthly basis. The Central Government is responsible for procurement, storage, transportation, and bulk allocation of food grains. State Governments hold the responsibility for distributing the same to the consumers through the established network of Fair Price Shops (FPSs). State governments are also responsible for operational responsibilities including: - Allocation and Identification of families below poverty line, - Issue of ration cards, - supervision and monitoring the functioning of FPSs

Logistical Management of PDS:

Central Government:

1. Procurement
2. Storage
3. Transportation and
4. Bulk Allocation

Procurement: It is done by the central government. They procure the food materials from the Food Corporation of India and the State Agencies at Minimum Prices which include wheat, rice, kerosene and sugar. Other essential commodities like salt, Palm oil, candles, Ghee and cloth etc. have also been purchased.

Storage: Inadequate storage could lead to wastage of food. Thus proper storage becomes an essential factor in Logistics Management. The Food Corporation of India does the job of storing the grains. There is a regular monitoring mechanism under which inspections at all levels are carried out to ensure safe preservations of food grains in Food Corporation of India (FCI).

The steps taken to monitor the warehouse are:

1. Food grains are to be stored by adopting proper scientific code of storage practices.
2. Adequate materials are to be used to prevent entering of moisture from the floor to the food grains.
3. Spraying of insecticides.
4. Effective rat control measures taken in godowns.
5. Regular periodic inspections of stocks.

Transportation: The most common means of Transportation are as given below:

1. *Roadways:* Choice of Transport depends on volume of food grain
2. *Railways:* Economical over short distances. It is better than roadways transportation services in terms of high speed, suitable over long distances, large carrying capacity, protection, bulky goods, etc.

Bulk Allocation: Bulk Allocation is met to all the locations where the demand is projected and divided as per the projection. It plays a very vital role in placement of the products. It gives a huge saving to the corporation. Bulk in excess is kept as an emergency reserve in case of uncertainty to avoid last moment crisis.

State Government:

1. Distribution
2. Fair Price Shops (Ration Shops)
3. Consumers

Distribution: Distribution is done by the state governments. The food grains once received are monitored and inspected properly and then further distributed to the Shopkeepers of the Ration Shops

Fair Price Shops (Ration Shops): Fair Price Shops (FPS) are called at ration shops in layman terms. Here the consumer gets a Ration Card on the basis of which he is given food grains. The state government has given license to the Ration Shops to sell the food grains at comparatively lower price.

Consumers: Consumers are the people who buy the food grains from the FPS at Minimum Market Price. They are availed to purchase food grains only if they own a ration card. The most frequent consumers belong to the BPL category. Which includes marginal farmers, pottery, and craftsmen etc?

Table: 1 National Food security Act-2013

Per capita availability of Food	
Food grain	~185kg
Edible Oil	~16kg
Milk	295 gm/day (higher than world avg.)
Eggs	55/year
Fruits	172gm/day
Vegetables	350gm/day

Conclusion

The PDS is a critical resource for the food security of the poor, especially the urban poor, and particularly women, who manage household food supplies. The question thus becomes how to make it serve its objective of increasing food availability to the poor – better than it has. It has played a great role in serving the poor people who earlier died of malnutrition and also those who couldn't

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