

## **Diet and Nutrition During Drought in Western Rajasthan, India**

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**KEY WORDS** Drought. Western Rajasthan. Diet. Nutritional Status.

**ABSTRACT** Rajasthan had experienced drought conditions in the beginning of the millennium resulting drop in agricultural production, acute shortage of drinking water and fodder for cattle. Large number of cattle deaths was also reported. About 63% of the households stated that they were benefited by special ration supplied through PDS, 45% of the households had drinking water supply through tankers, while about 23% of the households participated in drought relief works. Coping strategies adopted during food scarcity were, borrowing cash/kind from neighbours (51.4%) managing with available food stocks (39.4%), reduced food consumption (35.6%), opting low cost foods (31%). The intake of all the foods except cereals & millets, roots & tubers and milk & milk products were lower than the recommended level. The intake of nutrients revealed that the diet was deficient in energy, vitamin A, and vitamin C and was also marginally lower than those observed during non-drought period. The prevalence of undernutrition (<75% of weight for age) among preschool children was higher (50.7%) during drought compared to non-drought period (43%). Similarly about 49% of adult males and 40% of adult females had chronic energy deficiency (BMI<18.5). The factors, which deserve immediate attention, are strengthen the ongoing rehabilitation measures, ensure the supply of food, fodder and drinking water. Health and veterinary care have to be improved to minimize the untoward effects of consequences of severe drought.

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